

DISCUSSION ON ADOLESCENT REFUGEES

rivalry and the use of freedom began and were overt before his life commenced in a concentration camp existence. This child could conform only under the authority of threatened punishment while confined and the exercise of freedom denied to him. This was clearly seen during the period that he was in our Juvenile Detention Home, pending placement in the institution. In the Detention Home his behavior was so exemplary that the authorities clamored for his removal. How then can we account for the other fifteen-year olds who have lived through the same harrowing experiences over similar periods of time and who do not present these problems? Or how account for these problems among the group who came to us before the war? Even where children have lied and cheated under oath, we have not found these patterns to persist in most of them, but where they do persist, how then can we look upon these symptoms, except as expressions of a disturbed personality? To block out for ourselves as professional workers any recognition of the part that pre-war family influences play in the development of the individual child's personality is to deny the validity of an important concept in case work so far applicable to all human beings and to the gamut of human experiences. I do not mean to imply that of our 23 children we have had only one who has problems. But we have had only this one child who fits Miss Meyerowitz's description of these refugee children's distinct group characteristics.

What we have found to be character-

istic of this group is their common need to be taken care of for a time, their desire to live in a family setting, to become integrated into our ways of life, to learn our language rapidly, to dress as the American youth dresses, to enlarge their social contacts with native children, and to catch up on their loss of education with the goal of completing at least high school. As for the ways in which they meet and react to the limitations inherent in achieving their wishes—that is, their expressions of insecurity, their feelings of frustration, their hostilities, rebellion, suspiciousness or aggressiveness—these vary so with each child as to make it impossible for us to characterize the group.

I would like to return for a moment to my difference of opinion on the need for a re-interpretation of our concept of helping. Perhaps there is no real difference of opinion but rather a lack of clarity in the use of words. As Miss Meyerowitz has outlined and developed the helping process with these children, I cannot find where the concept of helping has undergone re-interpretation as a result of the initial experiences and errors with the earliest arrivals. It seems to me rather that the concept was applied with a greater understanding of its use and of the flexibility inherent in it so that the material and psychological realities of these refugee children could be met through those very same interpretations which enable us to meet the needs of all children in this age group for whom we would have as much direct responsibility as we must for those discussed in the paper.

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WHITHER, THE JEWISH FAMILY AGENCY?

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THE following comments represent a brief presentation of a new point of view on the future possible objectives of the Jewish family agency.

Due to lack of time, the material represents only a rough and hurried presentation of the main ideas, and is divided into four sections:

- (A) Changes which have occurred in Jewish Family Agency structure and function;
- (B) The four most important Jewish communal organizations;
- (C) What are the Jewish needs which require radical changes in the objectives, the program and the techniques of the Jewish Family Agency?
- (D) In what manner should the Jewish Family Agency adapt itself to these new Jewish needs?

A. Changes in Jewish Family Agency

Nothing happens haphazardly.

Developments and changes in Jewish social work are the direct result of the

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impact of changing conditions, and the influence of new forces and new movements which give it its present-day complexion and character. As far as the Jewish family agency is concerned, its structure and function today are much more the result of Christian and of so-called "non-sectarian" pressures than of Jewish tradition, of the needs of Jewish community life and the demands of the organized Jewish community. The Jewish family agency, therefore, currently represents the *only* important Jewish communal activity, utterly unrelated to those objectives which have been the basis for "distinctiveness" not only in Jewish religious life, but in every one of its communally supported secular organizations, such as the Hebrew School, the Jewish Center, the child care agency, the Home for the Aged, the vocational guidance and placement service, yes, even the Jewish hospital. Only the Jewish family agency is becoming more and more of a stranger in the association of Jewish communal organizations—with a vanishing interest in problems of Jewish life, in problems of Jewish adjustment, and in positively motivated objectives toward the preservation and the enrichment of Jewish individual and group life.

This situation raises the very legiti-

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mate question: If this change in the Jewish family agency is necessary and desirable then it should be no longer a *Jewish* community responsibility. It should depart from the Jewish scene and become the responsibility of the community as a whole.

On the other hand, if there is a place for a *Jewish* family agency in any Jewish communal program, then what should be its objectives, what should be its structure and function, and how should it be related to all the other distinctively Jewish community organizations?

Any scientific approach to a problem cannot overlook its biographical or historical aspects. Work with Jewish families, at different periods in this country may be described as follows:

Before 1800

Whatever services were rendered to Jewish individuals and families in the earliest days of Jewish settlement in this country were based on Jewish traditional practices which had a distinctive character and were motivated by principles and values drawn from Jewish religious writings and practices: from the Bible, the Talmud, the commentaries, Karo and Maimonides. Family service was a function of the religious life of the community, the term "religious" broadly conceived.

1800-1890

During this period Jewish communities grew in size, and the family service committees of synagogues became detached and developed a secular character, though not without a continuation of the same motivations and patterns of work as before, with distinctive Jewish content and with close relationship to the religious institutions of the community.

1890-1914

This was the period of the great Russian and East European Jewish mass immigration into this country. It was characterized by the merging of Jewish relief giving agencies and the emergence of case work as a professional technique. Although the efforts to Americanize and assimilate the new immigrants were successful, they resisted the melting pot and continued to maintain their interest in Jewish matters: their religion, Yiddish, Zionism and other aspects of Jewish ethnic existence.

1914-1930

Case work in this period reached its maximum development. Psychiatry began exercising a powerful influence toward changing the focus and the treatment in the case work process. The *individual*, his problems and needs, emerged as the special object of the case worker's attention, rather than his family, or his environment, per se. In this concentration upon the individual and his emotional problems, the orientation was away from all of the *cultural* implications of an individual's existence, and were directed exclusively to the individual's traumatic experiences, primarily sexual in the broadest sense—and in the thwarting of all those inner compulsions toward happiness in one's life work, satisfactions in one's social relations, and contentment in one's development and exercise of special abilities and talents. If any Jewish aspects whatsoever become apparent in the psychiatric treatment process, these are purely incidental and accidental, and the case worker's approach to the item is no different whether she be Jewish or not, culturally-oriented or not. The individual, as a non-sectarian being, is actually under treatment. There is no *Jewish* content in

the treatment-program, and certainly the case worker avoids any possible "contamination" that might result, in attempting to relate the individual somehow, to the *Jewish* community and to *Jewish* family life as such. Some will maintain that "good psychiatric practice says: IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO DO THAT!" And who wants to be a criminal by choice?

1930-1947

With the taking over of the relief needs of families by the public and social security agencies, the entire field of family welfare services has gone over to the psychiatric case work camp. Jewish agencies are increasingly serving non-Jewish clients because there are no visible or even invisible sectarian elements present in the process, and with fee-charging, following the opening of family-service offices on the Park Avenues and the "swanky" neighborhoods, there is not a single identifiable trace of any Jewish content in the program—except in the name of the agency itself, which has become meaningless. Essentially, there is absolutely no difference whatsoever, in New York City, for example, in the case work treatment of families, whether Jewish or not, by the Jewish Family Service Society, or by the so-called non-sectarian Community Service Society. Both compete for clients: Jewish and non-Jewish—both have Jewish and non-Jewish workers on their staffs, and both seemingly satisfy the needs of Jews as well as non-Jews.

Conclusion

The conclusion should be obvious. Jewish family agencies as they function today no longer justify their existence, neither as *Jewish* agencies, nor as legitimately entitled to continuing support

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exclusively from Jewish funds. They have no Jewish content. Their work bears no relation to problems of Jewish life and adjustment, nor to any positive Jewish philosophy or outlook. Nor do they have any relation whatsoever to the programs in the Jewish community making for a strengthening of the Jewish "clan," and for providing the Jewish individual and the Jewish family with those assets which build Jewish dignity, Jewish self-respect, and inner Jewish security and strength.

B. Historically, the Four Strategic Jewish Communal Agencies

In one form or another, the four most important Jewish communal agencies which traditionally have helped the Jew maintain his identity, aided in preserving a Jewish outlook and way of life, have been the synagogue, the Jewish educational agency, the Jewish community center, and the Jewish family agency.

These four organizations, by their inter-relationships not only give meaning and distinctiveness to Jewish life, but attempt to preserve, enrich and advance our cultural heritage.

In the medieval period when the synagogue served as the central force of organized Jewish communal life, all of these activities were employed in and radiated out of the synagogue.

In present day America centrifugal forces have made for a separation, but it is only in the case of the Jewish family agency where the break has been complete and absolute as well as irreparable.

It is interesting also, to call attention to the fact that the synagogue, the Hebrew school and the Jewish center cater primarily to *individuals* in the family unit and not to the family as a whole. Before psychiatry effected its re-orientation of family case work, the

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family welfare agency was the only communal organization that served the family as a whole or as a unit.

With the Jewish family agency gone from the *Jewish* scene, no communal agency exists to concern itself with the problems of *Jewish family* life.

The synagogue breaks up the family into father, mother and children, and ministers to each separately, except on festival occasions such as Passover, Succoth and similar family holidays. But throughout the year, possibly the father comes for Friday night services, the mother for Sabbath morning services, and the children for Sunday school. Religiously the family does not exist as a unit continuously.

The Talmud Torah, or the Hebrew school, or the Jewish educational society, is predominantly a school for those below the Confirmation age. Here and there attempts have been made for the development of institutes of Jewish study, but these have been primarily for adults. Jewish education inevitably resolves itself into age classifications and segregation, which tends to make it impossible to serve the family as a unit, except on special occasions, where holidays, festivals, etc., are concerned.

The Jewish community center, with its greater variety of appealing interests and activities is in a worse situation than either the synagogue or the Hebrew school, in the effort to deal with the family and serve it *as a unit*. With all the content that a Jewish community center might provide for different members of a family: the father of 56, who prefers the health club above everything else and occasionally an interesting and entertaining lecture; the mother of 50, who is very much overweight and delights in the special program for weight reducing and figure control, is also interested in Hadassah and the Council

of Jewish Women; the young adult son of 30, who graduated from college and obtained his law degree and is employed in the office of a prominent local attorney, is interested in dramatics, basketball and AZA; and finally a daughter of 24, unmarried, who is a member of the Jewish center symphony orchestra and enjoys no other activities besides social dances on Saturday evening. Each of these members secures some advantages of Jewish value or significance in the Jewish center, but even though all of them are adults, the nature of their interests and their activities is such as to make impossible service to this family on a *family unit* basis.

Only a Jewish family agency, were such in existence and functioning, could really meet this responsibility. And the responsibility could be stated as helping the synagogue, the Talmud Torah and the Jewish center, achieve through the instrumentality of the Jewish family agency, the type of integration and unification of these varied programs which each fails to accomplish individually. This would mean not only a re-orientation in the conception of what a Jewish family agency should be, but also would involve relating itself to the needs of the synagogue, the Hebrew school and the Jewish center, in order to assist in achieving the objectives for which all of these three communal agencies stand.

How best this might be done, will be presented in detail in Section D.

C. *What Is the Need?*

First, at no other period in the history of the Jews in this country has there been as much self-hate manifested, such warped and distorted reactions to anti-Semitism, and such personal and group demoralization, as is manifested in various methods of escape: changes of name,

inter-marriage, lying about Jewish extraction, and the convenient subterfuges of carrying on a business with the Jewish proprietors hidden under such business designations as the Green Front Dry Goods Company; Ketcham, Killam and Henderson; the Golden Rule Market, etc. Of course, such names are not at all illegitimate and very frequently are used by non-Jews. Witness the Standard Oil Co., United States Steel, General Motors, etc. It would not be surprising, however, to find that this tendency is much greater within the Jewish group than for any other.

Secondly, and as a reverse tendency, increasingly Jews and Jewish families, by virtue of outside pressure, current events, or by the pressures exerted upon them by their children, are seeking and are desirous of assistance in order to make their lives and their homes richer and more meaningful in terms of Jewish content, Jewish functioning and Jewish relationships, on a *family* as well as on an *individual* basis.

Whatever benefit the synagogue, the Talmud Torah and the Jewish center may bestow upon an individual in terms of making his life richer and more meaningful as a Jew, there is no communal instrumentality to bring together and to unify these influences *within the home*.

As in the case of the shift to psychiatry and fee charging services, it equally should be the responsibility of the Jewish family agency to prepare a brochure setting forth its interest and its desire to meet this new responsibility as above indicated. This brochure should be widely distributed, so that it reaches every Jewish home. It should set forth clearly the new orientation and the new objectives.

It is obvious that before any Jewish family agency would have the courage

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or the inclination to undertake such a test of community sentiment, that it must be prepared with proper content and methodology in order to meet the challenge—for the challenge would certainly come.

It is hoped that some far-sighted executive of a Jewish family agency, somewhere in the United States, will recognize the need and will have the understanding and the will to serve the Jewish community as it should be served by his agency. This will mean at least a one year's preparation in advance, in order to provide the re-orientation necessary and to develop the techniques that would be involved.

D. *How Should the Jewish Family Agency Re-Orient and Re-Adjust Itself to Meet This Need?*

In order more adequately to comprehend the problem, the presentation of two family situations may be helpful.

FAMILY A: This is a case of inter-marriage, the wife being non-Jewish. Although she has "accepted" the Jewish community, she is eager to bring into the home the kind of atmosphere and the traditions which give Jewish family life the color and the content which is of such importance, culturally and socially. Children are born, grow up, reach maturity, and the interest of the family continues throughout the entire period in the effort to supplement what each individual member of the family gains from the synagogue, the Hebrew school and the Jewish center. Apart from Jewish life, Jewish music, Jewish literature, the celebration of Jewish festivals and other occasions of religious or cultural importance, the Jewish family agency, on the basis of the initial request of the family, assists in the integration of all these forces and influences, in order to assure

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that the cultural content and the ethnic color which the family originally requested, will be provided.

This emphasis upon Jewish content in the Jewish home does not imply that in all other respects this home should not be just as American as all other homes, Jewish and non-Jewish. All that is asked for is the utilization of those cultural elements which have given the Jewish group its distinctiveness, and whose benefits can so greatly enrich human personality—that these be not discarded as worthless or not having any value whatsoever.

FAMILY B: The paternal grandparents are orthodox, living with the head of the family and his wife, who are conservative, and with four of their children, two of whom are inclined to reform affiliations and the other two who look upon their Jewish origin as a terrific handicap, whose burden they wish to throw off at the earliest opportunity.

The head of the family has known that the Jewish family agency is becoming interested in such a cultural conflict problem as is presented in this family.

One cannot write a prescription as easily for this kind of a complicated family. There isn't a single Jewish communal agency that functions on a family basis, which would be in a position to give this family any real constructive help. To that extent the Jewish family agency has failed to recognize and to meet that obligation to the Jewish community. We have chased the false god of techniques without recognizing that this chase was taking us away more and more from Jewish life and from the needs of our people.

In the case of Family B, there are the orthodox needs of the grandparents which must be recognized and dealt with; the needs of the head of the family

and his wife who are anxious to maintain a meaningful relationship to Jewish life and its values; two of the children who do not wish to achieve separation, and the two others whose attachment to their family is emotionally disturbing and which must undoubtedly prove a traumatic experience.

What does one do under these circumstances? Has the Jewish community any responsibility? Can any technique be developed to serve this family's needs and those of the Jewish community as a whole, in relation to this particular family?

Were time available, a larger series of Jewish family situations could be presented, indicating the extent to which a Jewish family agency might find a rich field of usefulness in these troubled times.

One cannot come full-fledged with a set of techniques and their application to a group such as this unless one has carefully surveyed the need, experimented with a significant number of typical samples—and then developed out of that experience the kind of practice that these needs seem to dictate.

If we are to entertain any hope for the preservation and the advancement of Jewish life in this country, we must not only do all we can to strengthen and make more effective our religious institutions, our Jewish educational agencies, our Jewish community centers, but pressure must be exerted upon our Jewish family agencies, so that they are brought back into the family of Jewish organizations, whose only reason for existence is to preserve and make more meaningful those Jewish values and those culture components which have given the Jewish people their character and their *raison d'être* throughout the ages. Unless that happens, the sooner the so-called Jewish family agencies are discarded as a Jewish

responsibility, the sooner will large Jewish sums, running into millions of dollars, become available for other uses which have a more direct bearing on the preservation, the enrichment and the strengthening of Jewish life in America. In a word, it is time for American Jewry to issue this challenge to the Jewish family agency: Either you become part of the pattern of Jewish life in this country, with a program that is closely integrated with those of all other Jewish

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organizations, religious and secular, which are concerned with the preservation and the advancement of Jewish life, and aim to deal with the Jewish aspects of family and social adjustment—or go out of business and let the over-all, so-called non-sectarian community family agency which operates on a non-sectarian basis, is motivated by non-sectarian objectives, and has a "non-sectarian" staff, do the job—and perhaps, even do this non-sectarian job better!

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON FAMILY CASE WORK

By **FREDA MOHR**
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Comments by Freda Mohr:

"FAMILY case work deals with integration in the family to Jewish life. Members of the family are helped to live in their own family group. Jewish people come to Jewish agency because they are more familiar with it than non-sectarian agency. They know that it has always been there and that is the place to go to discuss problems. Jewish people coming for psychiatric care may also come to discuss problems of being a Jew when these are pertinent."

Comment from Floor:

It was suggested that communal structure of Jewish services be analyzed. For instance, it is bad if a hospital says "Jews only admitted." Jews must make contributions to welfare. In a well conducted synagogue all people are welcome, non-Jew as well as Jew. If a family wants

Jewish color in the home (we) condemn the Jewish agency that would not give color. Cases are accepted on basis of need, not race or creed.

When a man who finds it a problem to be a Jew goes to a family agency, he feels handicapped. Other Jewish agencies have a stake in what the Jewish Family Agency says to people.

On the subject of "People who say it is hard to be a Jew" the reply was made that families do not ask for this kind of service. It was pointed out that we can render a new service to help Jewish people live their Jewish life more richly and happily.

On comments made by Freda Mohr, it was argued, "We cannot ask Rabbi and Center to consult us. We must take the individual and the experience he goes through."

Rabbi White commented that rabbis are called in by the Jewish agency to