On the Predicaments of Jewish Families in Jerusalem*

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1. Introduction

THIS PAPER reports on the objectives, design, procedures and some initial findings of parallel studies of (1) the characteristic predicaments and attempts to resolve them as reported by a sample of Jewish families in Jerusalem, and (2) the predicaments imputed to clientele by the social service agencies, and agency attempts to intervene towards their resolution, as reported by a sample of service organizations and agencies in Jerusalem. The study was carried out in Jerusalem in 1965 and 1966, and included a) intensive interview studies of 30 underprivileged families in Jerusalem, b) an extensive program of interviewing in which information was obtained from a sample totaling 1100 Jerusalem families chosen without reference to economic status or any previous application for public or private assistance, c) a survey of some 300 public and private service agencies operating in Jerusalem, and d) analysis of records and reports concerning a sample of some 1200 clients of the service agencies surveyed. Mention of the intensive interview studies of the 30 families and of the survey of the 300 service agencies is confined here to the description of the overall design of the study. More detailed description and some preliminary findings of the extensive family interviewing programme and of the analysis of service agency clients are presented below.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study has three separate, though related objectives. In the first place the study seeks to develop a description and assessment, on the one hand, of the nature and extent of needs, predicaments, or privations and deprivations among the population of families in Jerusalem, and, on the other hand, of the nature and volume of services, assistance, and rehabilitation provided by the network of public and private service agencies and institutions in

* Research reported here was supported by the International Office, Welfare Administration, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Grant No. WA-1S-10-64), Washington, D.C.
Jerusalem. Heretofore there has been no attempt in Israel to portray or estimate the need for services of the various types, except as reflected in nature and volume of services reported by those agencies and institutions recording and reporting actual requests for assistance and units of assistance actually rendered.¹ Such reports, for their part, have been of varying form, quality, and reliability; and in consequence little has been known heretofore of the relationship between activities and services sought from or provided by the network of agencies in Jerusalem and the needs of the population served. There has been increasing recognition of the need for description and assessment of the needs of families, the services available to them, and the relationship between needs and available services as bases for more rational and effective administration, planning, training and provision of services.²

The second objective of the study is provision of a basis for a programme of experimental studies of modes of assistance to families: the projected programme of experimental studies would seek primarily to develop means, criteria, and tests for evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of alternative modes of intervention and assistance to families in need. The present study, in portraying the nature and extent of different types of need and of different current modes of assistance, lays the groundwork for the projected experimental studies.

Finally, the study is intended to serve as a first test and application of the proposition holding that a) family needs, predicaments, privations or deprivations recur and are identifiable, and that they can be observed or reconstructed, studied, described and classified; b) the prevalence or relative frequencies of the different types of family predicaments vary in different socio-economic and social psychological contexts; c) the modes, styles, or strategies and tactics for dealing with given types of family predicaments recur, are identifiable, observable, and may be classified; and that d) the prevalence of relative frequencies of the predicament-resolving tactics vary in different socio-economic and social psychological contexts.

This proposition asserts, in fact, that there can be a science of predicaments, privations, deprivations, and their adaptations and modes of resolution; and that social and welfare services may reasonably seek and develop a base of scientifically formulated and empirically verifiable knowledge. In the present study we attempt 1) to identify and classify predicaments reported by the families in our samples; 2) to measure the frequency of the different predicaments; and 3) to compare the relative frequencies of the different types of predicaments in the different population groups and categories. In addition,

¹ See, for example, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, published annually, and special series publications cited therein.
² The absence of such description and assessment and its effect on use of services has been described by one of us as the consequence of the "strangeness" between those who provide services and those need them: J. M. Rosenfeld, "The Strangeness Between Helper and Client: A Possible Explanation of Non-Use of Available Professional Help," Social Service Review, 38, No. 1, (March 1964).