

DISCUSSION OF HURLIN-McMILLEN STATISTICS

THE standards of Jewish social work are, in a large measure, dependent upon the standards which social work as a whole has attained. Statistical evidence of similarities and differences offer, therefore, supporting data for the problem of measuring the nature and the quality of the service concerned with Jewish clients. It will be conceded that the material here presented, although valuable, is limited in extent and is offered with no pretension that it will serve adequately to describe the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish case work service. The writers of these articles indeed have been explicit in cautioning against the temptation to draw inferences from partial evidence of this character. We have been so prone in the past, however, to interpret Jewish social work although substantiating evidence was entirely lacking, that inferences that might now be offered would constitute much less of an offense against the scientific spirit in social work.

With due caution let us proceed to analyze one of the items concerning which statistical information is now available, the average amount of relief per family given by Jewish agencies. From the Russell Sage statistical material we may accept the fact that the average amount of relief per family for the Jewish agencies is greater than the average for the entire list of family agencies, and that individually the Jewish agencies are all in the upper quartile in so far as amount of relief per family is concerned. When, instead of the general relief case, the relief per allowance case is taken for comparison, we find that although the Jewish agencies are still in the upper limits of the table, they share this position with a number of non-Jewish agencies. Frequently in the same city the amount of relief per allowance case for the Jewish agency approximates the non-Jewish organization, although it is inclined to be slightly higher in several instances.

Information offered by Mr. McMillen similarly indicates that there is a fair degree of positive correlation between the amount per major relief case of the Jewish agency and of the principal non-Jewish family agency in the same community. The latter figures, however, have not been separated for allowance cases as distinguished from the general relief cases. Four Jewish agencies, however, out of the 23 agencies listed, fall below the median for the principal family welfare agencies as a group.

If we leap from these known facts into the dubious field of interpretation and inferences, several possible explanations out of many might be offered for further speculation,—first, the possibility that Jewish families as a group present a different distribution of problems associated with dependency than do the general run of families known to family case work agencies. This would seem to be borne

out by such further information as we have available, indicating a smaller proportion of intake and the consequent longer carrying time for major care cases. From other sources the supposition is made that in many communities there has been a stationary, if not a dwindling, case load of Jewish families assisted with relief. (See discussions of Hyman Kaplan and Dr. I. M. Rubinow, concerning the effect of arrested immigration on Jewish dependency, in the Proceedings of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, 1925 and 1926.)

The Russell Sage reports since 1926 also indicate that the seasonal fluctuation of case loads is very much greater in the non-Jewish agencies. We may assume from this fact that the population with which the Jewish agencies deal includes a smaller proportion of families who are poorly established economically and who are, therefore, more easily subject to the minor economic variations, such as seasonal unemployment. This supposition is further borne out by the rather curious experiences of a number of Jewish family agencies during the early months of the 1930 depression. The trend of relief cases seemed to be lower in the winter of 1929-1930 than it had been in the comparatively prosperous winter of 1928-1929. In several of these cities during this period there was a continuance of the transfer of long time dependent families from the lists of the Jewish agencies to the responsibility of the Mothers' Assistance or Public Mothers' Pension Agency in the same community, and that not until the summer 1930 did the natural increase due to unemployment counter-balance the diminishing relief load. In long time dependency, in which a greater degree of responsibility for family maintenance rests upon the community rather than upon the individual, larger expenditures for relief are usually required. A large concentration of such families in the relief case load would thus result in larger monthly averages per family. On the other hand the practice of supplementing public aid might act to reduce the average amount of relief per family. Boston District Service may be an indication of this influence.

Whether for the same type of problem the Jewish agency is able to offer a greater degree of responsibility and adhere more rigidly to budgetary standards for assistance cannot, of course, be determined from the statistical averages available to us. If light is to be thrown upon this problem, it must be attacked from a study of the budgets of dependent families rather than from monthly relief tables. At this time it would be foolhardy for Jewish agencies to derive satisfaction from a belief in their ability to deal more adequately or more conscientiously with the problem of economic need which confronts them. In the first place, there

is an agency variation in the average amount of monthly supplementation from \$7.90 to \$66.33. This range in the Jewish group, no doubt, indicates that standard relief practices have not been attained by the group as a whole.

In addition, there is always the question as to whether large expenditures for relief may not be an indication of failure on the part of the case working agency to stimulate and develop the independent resources which many families potentially enjoy, rather than of generosity in meeting actual needs upon a high standard of living. The same tables which indicate that some Jewish agencies have a higher average amount of relief than others also tell us that many organizations have so high a case load that intensive service is not professionally possible, and that there are agencies whose relief average is high but whose reported case load gives indication of superficial service. Even if this fact were not already known through other channels of information, in one of the tables offered by Mr. McMillen we have evidences of two communities not far distant from each other, one of them spending a very small amount on relief per family and the other spending an amount near to the maximum for all agencies, yet both carrying major case loads more than twice the size of the average Jewish agency. On the other hand, there are Jewish agencies with exceedingly small case loads per worker that also report less than average amount of relief per family.

With final judgments reserved until additional facts are available, tentative conclusions at this time might consist of the following assertions:

1. Many Jewish family agencies, but not all, contribute amounts of relief to the support of dependent families which average among the highest relief distributed by family agencies.
2. There is a greater proportion of families receiving relief and service over long periods in the Jewish agency case load.
3. The average non-Jewish family agency over the period of a year deals with a larger number of families in proportion to its continuing monthly case load than does the average Jewish family agency. (General median monthly intake 1929—13.7; six Jewish agencies below lower quartile of 10.2.)
4. Explanation of (3) might include factors of efficiency or inefficiency of treatment, intensity of service, intensity of problem. Probably all three factors are involved.

From these conclusions there is evident the need for a systematic study of the distribution of problems among the families coming to the attention of Jewish agencies in comparison with public and with other private relief organizations. Studies of the effectiveness of case treatment in

Jewish agencies would be called for if it is found that more extended service cannot be accounted for upon the basis of the severity of problems. There is a further need at the same time to study the variations which exist among the group of Jewish agencies as a whole. Clearly if the average is accepted as a criterion of minimum standards, some Jewish family agencies are lagging behind, a few of them badly. How to study and, if possible, how to influence the situation by joint action is a matter that might well receive the earnest attention of the family agencies themselves.

H. L. LURIE.

MR. HURLIN'S concluding statement to the effect that it would probably be possible to select a number of non-Jewish agencies that would compare favorably with the larger Jewish agencies should be borne in mind when we discuss the subject matter of these papers. Such caution is indeed essential as a leavening qualification of Mr. McMillen's data. Miss Taussig rightly called attention in her discussion at the Boston meeting to the incomparability of the Jewish and non-Jewish averages because of the widely differing circumstances surrounding the work and type of agencies set side by side by Mr. McMillen in a previous number of the Quarterly. I have already pointed out some of the dangers in drawing hasty conclusions from such material. They apply more than doubly to the statistics compiled by the University of Chicago.

It is rather dangerous to ascribe qualitative significance to quantitative results. The latter are of value, where a relationship between the two is sought, in focusing our minds on the spots where the former may prove of value. The numerical aspects of the problem may then be used to explain and support the other. The dangers of hasty conclusions from one to the other, however, are well illustrated in Mr. McMillen's paper, particularly in his discussion of average case loads and intake ratios. In the former, he points to the lower average case loads of Jewish agencies and then qualifies the effect of this by noting the disturbing factor in minor care cases. The validity of the results in his Table III dealing with intake ratios is disturbed by the extreme non-comparability of the agencies. Thirteen of the twenty-three Jewish agencies are so small as to have a case load of less than 100. Also the Detroit Public Welfare Department, dealing as it does, mainly if not wholly with the relief problem, naturally would carry its cases on the average for a longer period of time than the Jewish agency where the relief problem is not great in proportion to its total case load. Moreover, we must bear in mind that in the smaller Jewish agencies, the professional worker generally

has a large non-case work responsibility which also complicates the factor of comparability.

If we compare the twenty-three Jewish agencies and the corresponding most important family welfare agencies from the point of view of their rank in average monthly amounts of relief, we find but a negligible relationship between the standard of the Jewish society and its non-Jewish counterpart. This point is worth further study, particularly for those communities in which both are affiliated with the community chest. We hear a good deal of the difficulty of the Jewish agency in maintaining its standard in the face of a generally lower one practiced by the rest of the community. Mr. McMillen's study evidently concerns cities of both types and no separation of data is made.

I can only comment on one point in Mr. Hurlin's analysis—namely, average case load. As it now stands, the average is not a true one because it includes all persons dealing with case work whether they actually carry a load or not. It has always seemed to me possible for data to be collected in this respect so that the real average might become available. The additional labor involved on the part of cooperating agencies would be slight, and the resulting accuracy would be of real value because of the considerable discussion everywhere as to what is or should be the typical case load. This could then be supplemented from time to time with the amount of supervisory service being given which would furnish an additional norm toward which agencies could strive.

MAURICE TAYLOR

What Makes Jewish Social Service Jewish?

By SOLOMON LOWENSTEIN

This contribution is part of the series featured in our previous issue.—The Editors.

IN the desire increasingly manifest among American Jewish groups for more and more complete assimilation with American life generally, there is an increasing tendency even among Jewish social workers to question the desirability or the necessity for differentiation of Jewish social work from American social work generally. This attitude is even more prevalent among the larger contributors to the funds required for Jewish social service, and annually those responsible for the collection of such funds are met more frequently with the question why there should be increasing demands for money for Jewish social work when so large a part of the field is already or presumably ought to be covered by public effort.

It may be taken for granted that Jews should cooperate with all their fellow social workers, both lay and professional, in securing the largest measure of public support for those fields that are distinctly non-sectarian. Public health, housing, workmen's compensation, state aid to widows, general recreational and educational facilities, etc. are areas in which there is no distinction whatsoever between Jews and other groups of citizens.

There are however certain conditions in the European background of the masses of our people and in their own religious, cultural and social characteristics which make it equally obvious that for the present and probably for a long time to come, until at least the processes of assimilation shall be much more complete than is at present indicated, there must be distinctively Jewish social work under Jewish aus-

pices and supported by contributions from Jews, if justice is to be done to our co-religionists and if their needs are to be met with intelligent understanding and sympathy.

The chief problem of Jewish social service in its modern phases has been that of the immigrant and his adjustment to his life in this country. To make that adjustment complete, we must be aware of his European background and wherein it is differentiated from that of other immigrant groups to this country. In the countries of eastern Europe, from which come the great majority of our present American Jewish population, the Jews have for centuries been treated as distinct, separate groups. Their internal life in all its departments has been administered by self-sufficient groups and as a unity, without the differentiation that exists in this country between religious, social and other phases of communal life. The Gemeinde, or community was, so far as its internal affairs were concerned, an autonomous body. Thus there inevitably grew up certain attitudes towards these problems of communal organization and certain techniques for meeting them which were peculiarly Jewish.

Coming to this country with its intensive, individualistic life and with no comprehensive, authoritative form of communal organization, the Jew found himself cut adrift from everything that had given strength and reality to his life as a member of a closely knit community at home. New forms of organization had to be created and new relationships worked out suited to the new conditions in which he found himself. It was absolutely necessary that these organizations

should be of Jews, even though at the beginning of Jews who except for common religion and common racial origin were as alien to the newcomer as his non-Jewish neighbors. Nevertheless, just because of this common religion and this common race, presenting a common inheritance, there was a possibility of understanding, of sympathy and of mutual tolerance which afforded a hope of at least a partial solution of these problems and has actually resulted in a substantial achievement.

With the initiation of the policy of restriction of immigration and with the resultant cessation of an annual increment of large proportion of newly arriving immigrant Jews, profound changes will undoubtedly be effected in the forms of Jewish life in America. Those changes will undoubtedly be accentuated by reason of the fact that we have never developed any strong centralized control of our communal affairs. The complete divorce of the synagogue from other departments of communal life in American Jewry is in itself a most important and new development in the communal organization of our people. More and more we are associating ourselves with our non-Jewish neighbors in all forms of communal organization. The Community Chest, the Welfare Councils, Councils of Social Agencies and similar recent developments in American communal life unquestionably have had a great effect upon our own forms of organization and will have increasingly greater effects. The more complete individual assimilation of Jews to American standards and customs and the growing apathy among all groups in our population to strict religious observance will likewise play a part.

Nevertheless it will be conceded that there are still fields in which Jews as Jews must very definitely for a long time to come continue their separate and special activities, avail-

ing themselves of every advance in technical procedure that may be developed within the general field. In our case work agencies, family and otherwise, as long as their work is chiefly concerned with families of first or second generation of settlement in America, it will be necessary to have separate agencies, with workers grounded in a knowledge of Jewish tradition and Jewish culture. Without such knowledge, the worker will be completely ignorant of Jewish mores playing so large a part in the client's attitude towards life. These manners of life have been built up over centuries and no matter how changed the outward environment, their effects will persist and proper adjustment must be made. It can be done simply and understandingly only by a person profoundly conscious of their significance and at the same time thoroughly grounded in the new environment.

In our medical institutions, homes for the aged and child caring agencies, there must always be differentiations due to ritualistic, dietary and other religious requirements which still mean very much indeed to large numbers of our people. Conditions being what they are to-day, the Jewish medical agency alone offers opportunity for the proper post-graduate training and facilities for research for the vast majority of our professional group in that field.

As long as Jews gregariously flock to particular centers of residence in our larger cities, there must be recreational and educational activities with facilities for social life, physical education, etc. which are still inadequately supplied by our public agencies. As long as the perpetuation of Jewish religious training is a concern of our people, communal resources must be available for this purpose.

All these elements contribute to make Jewish social service Jewish.

Conference Notes

MR. SAMUEL A. GOLDSMITH of Chicago, Chairman of the Commission on Immigration, provided for at the Boston Conference, has as his associates the following: Isaac Asofsky, Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Society of America, New York. Dr. Maurice B. Hexter, The Jewish Agency, Jerusalem. Cecilia Razovsky, Dept. of Service for Foreign Born, National Council of Jewish Women, New York. Dr. I. M. Rubinow, B'nai B'rith, Cincinnati. Dr. Ben M. Selekmán, Associated Jewish Philanthropies, Boston. Morris D. Waldman, American Jewish Committee, New York.

The Commission is scheduled, according to the Boston Resolution, to present a preliminary report of its findings at the Minneapolis Conference in 1931. It is to study the changes in the immigration policies of the various countries of the world and the effects of these changes on Jewish life in European countries and in the United States.

Committee on Social Justice

Dr. Ben M. Selekmán of Boston has accepted the Chairmanship of a Committee to cooperate with the Committee on Social Justice of the Central Conference of American Rabbis which has been working for several years under the Chair-

(Continued on page 36)