

become an additional function of the family agency.³⁵

In planning for the needs of single-parent families we must not assume everything must be provided for them. Single parents themselves have developed effective organizations, such as Parents Without Partners, which have done a magnificent job in helping these parents cope more effectively with their situation.³⁶ Our agencies must find ways of reinforcing such mutual efforts among the single parents themselves. If possible, self-help groups under Jewish auspices should be developed. We should establish relationships with such groups to provide back-up services as well as more specialized professional services. Coordination and emphasis on standards are necessary to insure the most effective and economical program of services. In an area where there are such gaps in service needless duplication should be avoided.

Such social services must be closely integrated with efforts by synagogues and other Jewish organizations to involve single-parent families and enable them to relate to the Jewish community. It is particularly important for the children to be able to obtain the necessary education and experience for developing a sound Jewish identity. Many synagogues are already re-examining their dues structures and membership requirements in order to make it possible for single-parent families to remain with or to join the congregations. It is essential to reach out to single-parent families to make Judaism more meaningful to them and to provide them with

means of maintaining their connections. Such an effort can be one means of breaking through the recurrent feeling of isolation so common to this group. For the children, the sense of Jewish identity, strengthened by participation in Jewish activities could provide an ego-enhancing element helpful to them in achieving healthy, normal maturity.

Conclusion

We can reiterate that the single-parent family is a significant component of Jewish communal life, resulting primarily from an increasing rate of divorce. While reaffirming the centrality of the two-parent family for Jewish continuity, we see the single-parent family as an effort to sustain family life despite the disruption of the marital relationship. In this sense, the community must learn to accept and to make a place for the single parent and her children and provide them with sufficient support and assistance to enable them to cope effectively. To accomplish this task will involve relinquishing stereotypes and overcoming negative attitudes. Existing services must be made more accessible and new services developed to meet the special needs of the single parent. Such services should be integrated insofar as possible with general services available to the total community. Of paramount importance to the single-parent family are those services which will make it more secure economically, which will sustain the children while the mother is working and will help both parent and children to become more integrated into the Jewish community. While the single-parent families present a challenge to the Jewish community, they represent a potential strength. We must respond to their ever-continuing efforts to continue as families and their reaching out to the Jewish community for the assistance they so desperately need in their period of crisis.

³⁵ Elsa A. Solender, "Matchmaker, Matchmaker Where Are You Now That We Need You," *Jewish Digest*, June 1977, pp. 7-10.

³⁶ See particularly, Patricia C. Clayton, "Meeting the Needs of the Single Parent," *Family Coordinator*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (October 1971), pp. 327-37.

The Survivor As A Parent

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... a forum needs to be set up to enable the two generations to talk to one another. Only by exchanging their thoughts will they learn one another's pain. Only through this exchange and dialogue can the children free themselves from guilt and work toward a healthy separation. In order to separate truly, permission needs to be given by the parents.

For a long time I was obsessed by the idea of what is happening to our children. By ours I mean not only mine and my husband's, but children of a group of people called Survivors.

Scarred as we are, how are we perpetuating our trauma? Then I read a short article in *Time* entitled *Legacy of Terror*.¹ Dr. Davidson, an Israeli psychiatrist, was quoted as saying that many Jews who survived the war were scarred for life by "survivor syndrome." They, in turn, according to Dr. Davidson, have transmitted much of this to their children and grandchildren.

Shortly afterward, I came across many articles and books all testifying to Dr. Davidson's findings.

I was greatly moved by an article in *The New York Times Magazine*² written by Helen Epstein, entitled "Heirs of the Holocaust—The Lingering Legacy for Children of Survivors." As I read it I was convinced more than ever before of the need for a dialogue between the survivors and their children.

My interest in this area is twofold. First it is personal. Both I and my husband are survivors. We lived with our families in the Warsaw Ghetto from the beginning. We escaped through the sewers on the second night of the ghetto uprising. Secondly, it is professional. I am a caseworker working for a number of years at the Jewish Family and Community Service in the northwest suburb of Chicago.

Ours is a large, middle-class Jewish community, recently in the news because of the attempted Nazi march.

¹ *Time*, February 21, 1977.

² *New York Times Magazine*, June 19, 1977.

For this and many other reasons the spotlight now again is on the Holocaust and the main actors are our children.

Learning that there was a group of the children of survivors meeting in our area, I discussed the possibility of extending it to include their parents with its leader. The man in charge was strongly disapproving of my suggestion. His answer was short but firm, "absolutely no," he said, "this would be dynamite."

This statement puzzled me. After all, these young people have lived with their parents under one roof with presumably some sort of communication between them. Why, then, would an open dialogue in a non-threatening, benign situation with two trained group leaders be so threatening? I wondered what his fantasy was.

We talked briefly about the denial and other issues that the children of survivors are struggling with. I wondered what was his intended goal for the rap group. He felt that groups like these could free these young people from guilt and from their parents' hang-ups.

This seems to be the belief of many people. I, for one, must protest. And because I feel so strongly about it, this article is being written. Much of what I have to say needs to be substantiated, many in-depth interviews with parents and children need to be conducted. At this time my statements are based on experiences of a few, some of my clients, some of my friends and acquaintances and, of course, my family.

I have always been bothered by generalizations. I do realize that they have to be made. They simplify life and are of some value. Yet,

there is a great danger in overusing them. Speaking of survivors as one lump is an over-simplification, but maybe this is something that for the time being cannot be avoided. Yet, we must not forget that these people had a life prior to the war, a life that to a large degree shaped their personalities.

Without question the Holocaust had been a massive assault on these people in every sense: physical, emotional, economic, social, etc; yet, each of the survivors had been involved in his own growing up, in his own network of relationships and conflicts prior to the war.

Most of us have experienced loss of parents, siblings and family. These most intimate and closest relationships ended or changed suddenly, and most of us did not have a chance to resolve them.

In the normal course of events children grow up and their relationship with their parents and siblings gradually change. Development evolves through many phases, and the child's perception of the world is shaped by how he completes his tasks of growing up and how he resolves his conflicts with significant people around him.³

For most of us this evolution stopped suddenly. Almost from the very beginning of the war, much premature reversal of roles took place. Parents, because of their Semitic looks, or because they sounded Jewish, could not venture out into the hostile world. Children, for one reason or another, were safer and, of course, more daring. Life for our parents changed instantly, and we witnessed their inability to cope. This in itself was a shock. Depending on our ages, the degree of trauma affected us forever. We were in constant danger, unprotected by the people who, by "divine right," were on this earth to protect us. This arrested relationship, this so-called "unfinished business" is, in my own mind, responsible for many, if not most problems with our children.

It is true that many of us became dehumanized and that experiences of that sort

³ Eric H. Erikson, *Childhood & Society*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc. 1950, pps, 147-273.

had serious repercussions. It is true that it is more difficult for many of us to feel trusting and safe, and, above all, to experience a feeling of belonging. It is true that guilt and depression rage supreme in my generation. But most of all it is true that we had not completed our own growing up and did not resolve our own relationships as adults with our parents.

We have a tendency, therefore, to idealize them, and to believe that they were the perfect parents that we now need to be. We confuse our need for a certain kind of parent with the needs of our children. We constantly want to do for them what we think now we would have wished then to be done for us when we were their age. In addition, we have not a memory of how it was for us to be a young adult attempting to separate from his or her parents. The issue of separation, therefore, is especially difficult, not only because to many of us our children are everything we have, but also because our separation was abrupt and never truly resolved.

My husband today bemoans the fact that his children are not delighted to play tennis with him, as he would have wanted his father to do with him.

My friend is constantly disappointed that her daughter does not confide in her. She is positive that if she had had her mother when she was her daughter's age, she would have loved to talk to her.

Mr. and Mrs. S. came to the agency because their son was dropping out of the school of pharmacy. They told me that this was only one of many things he does to alienate them. They were hurt, puzzled, and totally bewildered. How did they err? Both were loving, devoted parents. Neither had had an opportunity for higher education. They had invested all in their children, and now the son seems totally alienated. After a few family sessions it became clear that separation was an issue for both the parents and the son. He felt the love and warmth at home and had great difficulty breaking away. The only way out, it seemed, was to make it rough, to create dissension and to walk out in anger. Neither of the parents could identify

with this, nor could they recognize the situation without help. They, of course, had not experienced any of this, as the parents of both were taken away before they had a chance to effect a gradual separation.

How can one emancipate from a dead parent? Like these parents, most of us lack the first hand experience that other people have to draw from. This dilemma plagues many of us and it is, I believe, one of the greatest difficulties in the relationship with our children.

Though separation is one of the main issues, lack of differentiation often follows. Like many other parents, but with greater intensity, we often "know what is good" for our children, and confuse our own desires with theirs.

A client of mine insisted that the marriage of her daughter to a reform Jew would be a disaster. She believed that her daughter would resent deep down the fact that he is not Orthodox. It mattered little what the daughter had to say. She read it as self-deception. A friend of mine kept insisting that his son is depressed because of the lack of success in his early beginnings of a career. He knew, he said, how he would feel, and had no doubt that this is how his son experiences the struggle.

This lack of realization that our children are separate and distinct human beings is frequently the cause of our pushing them to accomplish, to become educated, to do what we had no chance to do for ourselves.

Not having parents to struggle with for our own independence, not having a model of how this can be done, and not experiencing first-hand the frustrations of that struggle handicap us greatly. In addition, how many of us can afford to see our parents realistically? How can we dethrone them without feeling guilty and suffering a psychological trauma? Some very difficult but essential gymnastics have to take place in our psyche for us to be able to do this without falling apart. Our children, therefore, are not only subject to our legacy from the horrors of the war, not only subject to our constant guilt and unresolved

mourning, but more often than not they are victims of confusion of identity. In one stance we confuse ourselves with our parents, our children with us, and even sometimes them with our parents.

Another very complicated issue is the fact that our children often view us as being omnipotent.

Only the other day, a young adult, intelligent and well educated, spoke about his father's alleged fatal illness. In discussing the prognosis he simply stated, "He survived the ghetto against all odds. He survived many other horrendous experiences against all odds. He became successful in his new country against all odds. How can you predict the course of his illness in terms of statistics?"

Hearing this I realized how many of our children see us as indestructible and how often do we play into such fantasies of theirs!

Helen Epstein⁴ reports movingly on some young adults who either never heard the parents' war stories or were continually exposed to litanies of them.

I myself have experienced and often witnessed in others a great deal of excitement, and even a certain fervor, in telling and re-telling some stories. I don't know how it is for others, but for myself, I believe it serves some purpose. Either I am trying to integrate them into my personality or I am attempting to expel them and become an observer together with my audience.

The few people that I discussed this with were also aware that the recounting of war experiences serves a need and probably quite different needs for different people. This subject also requires more exploring.

There are also the other stories, the pre-war ones, somewhat overblown and idealized, which sound often unreal, even to the person telling the story. They are full of funny anecdotes, mostly about the people the child only heard about and frequently confuses. But sooner or later the sequence of events brings the subject to "when the war broke out . . ." it

⁴ Epstein, *Op. Cit.*

is difficult to make a connection over the abyss of World War II.

The theme of Jewishness and the Jewish heritage is another area of conflict. Helen Epstein suggests that most children identified with their parents, and the anti-Jewish tenor did not come through. It seems, however, that in many situations the Jewishness became part and parcel of our relationship with our own dead parents. For some reason it frequently becomes synonymous with them and, therefore, sacred, beyond discussion. This, of course, can be construed as a reasonable, reasoned obligation to perpetuate Judaism. But I believe that, in addition, there is an emotional component present. Because this meaning of Judaism is most significant and subconscious, the whole message of our heritage is transmitted to our children with great intensity, thus becoming an avenue for conflict. It expresses everything—our guilt for surviving, our guilt for the death of others, our untenable memory of our parents which must not be shaken or examined, our unresolved mourning, and our need to be assured that our children identify with us and therefore accept us.

Alienation, rejection and loss are constantly in the air, preventing us from having a cool-headed discussion. Every issue involving Israel, Judaism and so forth, is loaded, and therefore a stage on which many of our frictions are played out.

There is also the other extreme. A number of survivors still continue their life as they did during the war—undercover, and are determined never to be Jews again. Friends of ours made a decision to forego being Jewish. Both had been incarcerated in several concentration camps, experienced humiliation and degradation, and were determined to spare their children a similar fate.

Living the early post-war years in Poland they kept their "deep dark secret" to themselves and brought up both girls as good practicing Catholics. This masquerade lasted many years, years that were filled with many tense, apprehensive moments. Finally, the

entire scheme exploded. The children, by then in their young teens, experienced a terrible turmoil, a severe identity crisis and a disappointment and loss of trust in their parents.

In the process of growing up, parental approval is of great importance. The need for it and the striving to achieve it are worked on and resolved through all the stages of development and it is the fuel that promotes growth.⁵ As time goes on the child is able to arrive at some compromise between the parents' implicit and explicit commands and his own needs. Ideally by the time maturity is reached, one's actions are somewhat independent and not a reaction to parental hope replaying in one's head.

For the survivor, however, because of the fact that he did not have the opportunity of being an adult vis-a-vis his parents, this issue presents special problems.

I always thought that this was my own unique dilemma. Ever since the fog cleared and I was able to investigate some of my actions, I realized that I am still attempting to prove to my parents that I am bright. Scholastic achievement, greatly valued in our home, became my obsession, a rather strange one, considering the fact that as a youngster academics was my lowest priority. Later I realized that my husband's strivings for success in business had to do with his unwritten contract with his father. I became more alert to the possibility that this might be a common problem, and that the same theme resounds in others.

My client who was so upset at her daughter's marriage to a Reform Jew, agonized over the thought of what her father, who was a rabbi, would say to that. How terribly disappointed he would be, how hurt.

Living in a different world, often light years apart from the world today, it is no wonder that our view of our parents' expectations is out of step with the life of today.

In the normal course of events most people have the opportunity to review and revise their

⁵ Erikson, *Op. Cit.*

ideas, many of which they took on from their parents, and to modify them. We, on the other hand, have a certain rigidity, because of our distortions and projections which cannot be resolved.

My goal, therefore, will never be accomplished, because no matter how hard I'll try, and do well and succeed, I will never get a nod of approval from the other side. That is possibly why my husband always emphasizes pursuit, believing that it is more satisfying than reaching the goal itself, a subject of discussion that forever takes place around our dinner table with our sons.

"Anniversary reaction" is a common phenomenon. I am referring to a sadness, or depression, which takes over around the time of year that a traumatic event took place. For the survivor of the Holocaust it is particularly complicated by guilt, multiplicity of these reactions and often a vague idea of dates. Since the anniversary reaction is largely unconscious, it takes considerable investigation to connect it to the event. The High Holidays are often the most difficult times because of their meaning and also because they are loaded with memories.

I, for one, used to dread them, and was very aware that the children were apprehensive as the time was coming close. To my husband, who did not know the dates of his parents' death, this was the time to mourn. He would be withdrawn and listen to cantorial music, setting the stage of undescribable sadness. The very sound of that heart-tearing music would be a warning to the boys that father is in great pain. As the children grew older they dealt with it by rebelling against going to Temple, something that was seen as sacrilegious. Anger was much easier to bear than sadness.

Helen Epstein's subjects speak about being unable to ask parents questions because of this unspoken message of hurt and pain. This has been seen by me not only in my family, in the families of my friends, but also in my clients. One of my clients whom I saw briefly around her conflict with her daughter wondered why the child does not want to know about her

grandparents. She felt deeply hurt by this and also puzzled. Little did she know of her own double message to her daughter.

Sometimes I wonder, inquiry being so painful and danger-ridden, if it did not affect our children in other areas of curiosity.

Struggling with the fact of one's survival is in itself a strange dilemma. Striving for life is natural; it is the very essence of the universe. Having to excuse it seems to be a paradox. Yet each of us dealt with it in a different fashion, a few exploring it in some messianic terms—one's obligations to do for others, to make a mark. Yet as we grew older and more realistic about ourselves, many of us decided unconsciously that our children will pay our debt for us. As we invested in them our love, our hopes, our unattainable desires, did we also expect them in some way to redeem us?

These and many other questions cannot be answered at the present time, and yet I must ask still another. This last issue is hard to question and painful to even consider. Do we envy our children for having what we did not have: not just a bicycle or a car, but loving, caring parents? If we do, and don't recognize it, it might be expressed in very destructive ways complicating the relationship with them further. We must realize that one is subject to all kinds of emotions, some not very pretty, indeed. After all are we not just human?

Each of the points I have made needs to be enlarged on and investigated further. The intensity of how all these experiences are transmitted and how they are perceived by the children is different with each person and with each child. My own experience tells me that the first-born has been subject to our trauma most. My youngest son, born 14 years after the war and 12 years after coming to the USA, is certainly affected differently than my oldest born four years after the war and after two years in this country. But this, too, is in need of further study.

But time is of the essence and I do not think we have to wait for the studies to be completed in order to utilize our own knowledge of human dynamics.

In the meantime a forum needs to be set up to enable the two generations to talk to one another. Only by exchanging their thoughts will they learn one another's pain. Only through this exchange and dialogue can the children free themselves from guilt and work toward a healthy separation. In order to separate truly, permission needs to be given by the parents. Let's try to help these people to be able to work toward this goal.

In spite of much gloom, I do believe in an inherent human strength. Because of this belief, I feel we need not only to make help available, but reach out into the community to help the people to get involved.

As the young man I spoke to said "This is dynamite." However, the only way to defuse it is not by walking away from it, but by a dialogue between the two parties who have a lot to say to one another, but are unable or afraid to say it.

Jewish Education — A Federation Perspective*

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The constellation of agencies, institutions, and organizations within the organized Jewish community consists mainly of people working together, in accordance with agreed upon sets of relationships—lay and professional. Each "organization" is a tool for the accomplishment of specific tasks, and possesses certain features which contribute to its distinctive character, within a larger context of goals and objectives. Any organization tool can be only as effective as the individuals applying it to the purpose intended.

Attracting, involving, deploying and retaining high caliber individuals on the lay level where policy evolves and in staff ranks where it is implemented with professional skill and expertise, is crucial to the success of any communal endeavor. This is especially critical in Jewish education due to the particular history and character of this field. The idea has been succinctly phrased by Phil Bernstein, Executive Vice President of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare funds.¹

Jewish education is a vital area. Our Federations understand, more than ever, that there can be no effective Jewish community in the future without a rigorous meaningful Judaism . . . To help assure it, there must be the highest quality of Jewish education, from the preschool years through adulthood. It is Jewish education that embraces the formal classroom, informal education, youth programs, university studies, summer camps, parent-child family experiences, studies in Israel, and all comprehensively developed and planned community programs . . . In the final analysis organizations are people. They are as strong as the quality of the people they attract and hold. The highest quality and

most effective people in Jewish life will be attracted, involved and retained not only by the highest most meaningful purposes, but by the most productive actions . . . They are attracted and held by achievement. They are disaffected by mediocrity and by neglect.

The very term "organization of Jewish education" may well be a misnomer in this context. The special features which characterize the field of Jewish education often defy organization, while aims, goals and purposes are either too broadly or too narrowly defined to achieve their stated objectives. Yet, the loose meandering overlapping processes of Jewish education may have evolved in the Jewish community in the service of rationality rather than of madness.

At the Midwest Administration Center of the University of Chicago, Professor Jacob W. Getzels² has made some effort at theorizing about the relationship between educational processes, operating as social systems within society, and the observer behavior of individuals, who are the products of the systems which are set up to carry out goals and objectives.

In a diagrammatic model, comprised of two dimensions, he traces a social system which is represented by institutions, each institution by its constituent roles, and each role by its role expectations. This is the task performance or nomothetic dimension, in which agencies are expected to carry out the institutionalized goals of the social system as a whole. But, the social system, on the other hand is also defined by individuals, their personalities and their need disposition. This is the ideographic dimension, having to do with satisfaction or dissatisfaction in carrying out a task. Logical-

* Delivered at the National Conference on Jewish Communal Service June 1977, Washington, D.C.

¹ Philip Bernstein, speech before the Central Conference of American Rabbis, San Francisco, June 22, 1976.

² Jacob W. Getzels, "Administration as a Social Process" in Andrew W. Halpin Ed., *Administrative Theory in Education*, (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1958.)