A Post-Residential-Treatment Follow-up of Socially and Emotionally Deviant Adolescents in Israel

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Fifty-five emotionally and socially deviant but normally intelligent adolescents who had spent 2-7 years in a children's and apprentice home in Israel were followed up 5-9 years after they had left the institution. Their postresidential social and vocational careers were evaluated by means of personal interviews, home visits, and reports from employers, and it was found that good adjustment was substantially related to family background variables (having lived with biological parents prior to residential placement, mutual positive relationship between parent and child, being first born) as well as to satisfactory behavior and performance in peer group, school, and workshop during residence. Level of intelligence, unrelated to overall adjustment, correlated positively with vocational status and income at follow-up. On the other hand, length of stay in the apprentice home had no impact on postresidential adaptation to work and society. Fewer than 10% of ex-inmates expressed retrospectively a negative attitude toward their stay in the institution. The importance of paying more attention to the eventual long-term and enduring impact of family relationship on the residential and postresidential behavior of adolescents is discussed, suggesting a shift of emphasis in evaluating factors involved in institutional treatment. Findings

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also indicate that later social and vocational success may be fairly predicted from observation of behavior during the stay in the institution.

INTRODUCTION

Although the literature on problems of residential treatment and institutional care is abundant (for comprehensive surveys, see Dinnage and Kellmer Pringle, 1967; Jaffe, 1969; Whittaker, 1972; WHO Report, 1963) — follow-up studies of young adults who had been institutionalized during late childhood and adolescence because of social and emotional maladjustment are relatively rare. As commented on by Dinnage and Kellmer Pringle (1967), the main focus of evaluation and research in the area of residential child care has been on the effects of early deprivation and institutionalization on the development of children, whereas the impact of institutionalization on adolescents, both while they are still in care and afterward, has been neglected to some extent. However, there are a number of studies indirectly relevant to the problem of following up institutionalized, emotionally disturbed adolescents, which will be briefly overviewed.

Ferguson (1966) investigated about 200 young adults, born during World War II, who had been in the care of the Glasgow Children’s Department and compared them with a control group of subjects who had stayed with their families during the same period. Taking into consideration family background variables, ratings of school performance, and employment records, he found that the overall scholastic and vocational adjustment of the institutionalized youngsters was worse than the adjustment of those placed in foster homes, while the home-reared control group was the best adjusted, as might have been expected. Bodman et al. (1950) compared social maturity, affiliation with youth organizations, interest in the opposite sex, and satisfaction and stability in first jobs of institutionalized vs. noninstitutionalized children, including family pathology as the main intervening variable in his data analysis. The institutionalized group was rated poorest on almost all measures compared.

Maas (1963) evaluated the adjustment of 20 young adults who as children had been placed in residential nurseries during World War II. The main independent variables of his study were family background and age at separation from parents. However, he also focused on the differences of orientation, educational atmosphere, and disciplinary style in each of the compared nurseries as intervening factors. Because of the small sample, the differences found between the postresidential adult groups on the dependent variables, such as “feeling life,” “inner controls,” “relationship with people,” “performance in key social roles,” “intellectual functioning,” etc., are of limited validity. Haggerty (1953) investigated the isolated aspects of intellectual achievements in postinstitutionalized groups.