

were magazine articles, 44 per cent in Cortland and 26 per cent in Oswego; books, bulletins and meetings, 33 per cent and 30 per cent; radio, 31 per cent and 12 per cent; public health workers, 27 per cent and 5 per cent. When queried as to what source was considered most dependable 83 per cent in Cortland and 74 per cent in Oswego said the family doctor.

The data which have been presented by the authors are most interesting and add valuable information to the field of the practice of medicine in rural areas.

DORIS TUCHER

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MATERNAL CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH¹

IN 1948, at the third session of the Social Commission of the United Nations, the decision was made to undertake a study of the needs of homeless children. The study was confined to "children who were homeless in their native country," that is, children separated from their families or orphans who were in need of care in institutions or foster homes. Refugees from war were not included in this analysis.

The World Health Organization offered to investigate the mental health aspects of the problem and appointed Dr. John Bowlby, consultant in mental health for WHO and Director of the Child Guidance Department of the Tavistock Clinic, London, to prepare the report. Dr. Bowlby visited France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.A., where he collected material and had discussions with child-care and child-guidance workers. The results are presented in the volume **MATERNAL CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH**.

The first part of the book deals with the adverse effects of maternal deprivation, while part two is chiefly concerned with the prevention of this kind of deprivation.

One of the most significant contributions made by psychiatry in past years is the concept that a child's future mental health

¹ Bowlby, John: **MATERNAL CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH**. *World Health Organization*, Monograph Series No. 2, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1951, 180 pp., 21 Tables. \$2.00.

is dependent upon the quality of parental care he receives in his early years. For mental well-being, it is essential that the infant and young child experience an intimate and warm relationship with his mother. Given such a relationship, the child will be adequately equipped to deal with the emotions of anxiety and guilt which undoubtedly will arise in the course of his life.

Maternal deprivation refers to the situation in which a child finds himself when a rich and rewarding relationship with the mother is absent. Deprivation produces adverse effects which vary with the degree of deprivation that exists. The results of partial deprivation are excessive need for love, anxiety, guilt, and depression. Complete deprivation with which Dr. Bowlby's report is mainly concerned, has even more shattering effects on the infant's or child's character development and may completely hinder his capacity to form lasting, meaningful, human relationships.

The author presents a review of several studies on the effects of deprivation. These investigations of the mental health and development of children in institutions, foster homes, and hospitals were done by people of different countries, and the extent to which they confirm and corroborate each other is extremely impressive. The conclusions reached by these investigators is that ". . . when deprived of maternal care, the child's development is almost always retarded—physically, intellectually and socially—and that symptoms of physical and mental illness may appear."

Follow-up studies made in the late 1930's reveal that children who were guilty of committing numerous delinquencies and who appeared to be totally devoid of feelings for anyone, were found to have experienced grossly disturbed relationships with their mothers in the early years of their lives.

Some typical features of children who have had an adverse mother-child relationship, or who are in institutions, are: no capacity to care for people, lack of normal emotional responses, a curious lack of concern about everything, inaccessibility, deceit, evasion, and stealing. Bowlby finds that prolonged breaks in the relationship of mother to child are harmful because the development of libidinal ties with adults and other

children fails to occur. Both Bender and Bowlby feel that there is a definite connection between long periods of deprivation in early life and the subsequent development of an affectionless, psychopathic character.

The magnitude of the problem of treating homeless children, or adults who as children were deprived of maternal affection, is therefore apparent. Because of the almost complete inability of these individuals to make relationships, the psychotherapist finds himself robbed of his cardinal therapeutic tool. For as yet, no therapist has devised a method of dealing with a patient who has no feelings towards him at all.

It is clear that the most practical solution of such a problem would be to arrange methods of care for infants and young children which will prevent these conditions from ever developing.

Part II of this report is concerned with the prevention of maternal deprivation. First and foremost in the prevention of maternal deprivation is the preservation of the family. The affection which the young child needs can be easily provided within a family group while it is extremely difficult to obtain such continuous and unreserved care outside of the home. Even bad or neglectful parents inadvertently provide much for their children, for unless there is total rejection, a child realizes that there will always be someone that he can turn to in times of stress. This is why children are happier and thrive better in bad homes than in good institutions.

In a study made by Theis, it was found that one-third of the children who spent five years or more in institutions turned out to be socially incapable in adult life. It is almost certain that these adults were equally incapable as parents. Thus, children who suffer neglect and deprivation grow up and become parents who are lacking in the capacity to care for their own children. The author is quite aware that this vicious circle is, without doubt, the most serious aspect of the problem.

The author then presents a review of the causes of family failure in Western communities, making special reference to psychiatric factors. The dependency of family life on the economic, social, and medical forces within a given social system is stressed.

To prevent family failure, measures of active assistance such as socio-economic and socio-medical, must be taken. Bowlby feels that under no circumstances should a child be removed from competent parental care when the granting of direct economic assistance would make such a removal totally unnecessary. Governments and voluntary agencies should make every effort to allocate funds for the care of children in their own homes. Long-term community programs, such as increased and adequate family allowances, personal health services, and psychiatric care of individual families, should be set into motion as quickly as possible. Such a program, aimed at the prevention of family failure not only demands great effort but will also require the services of large numbers of skilled workers. Widely extended professional training and retraining is the primary need today in the field of mental hygiene, the ultimate goal being the preservation of the family. Dr. Bowlby also discusses the measures to be taken when it is found that a child must be removed from his home. Adoption, boarding homes, and group care are dealt with. Special emphasis is laid upon the psychological techniques to be employed depending upon the type of substitute family the deprived child is to enter.

Throughout this excellent report, the author stresses the primary significance of maternal care for the preservation of mental health. Although it is by no means clear why some children are so adversely affected by maternal deprivation and some are not, when all the evidence is gathered together it is remarkably self-consistent, and leaves little doubt that Dr. Bowlby's main proposition is valid. It is apparent that deprived children are as great a source of social infection as are carriers of typhoid and diphtheria. It is to be hoped ". . . that all over the world men and women in public life will recognize the relation of mental health to maternal care, and will seize their opportunities for promoting courageous and far-reaching reforms." In the last analysis, the credit must be given to Freud whose principles and theories underlie most of this volume and who discovered that human nature can overcome the most distressing facts and appalling calamities if it is helped to face the truth squarely.

KATHERINE SIMON