

SOCIAL AND VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF MENTALLY RETARDED ADULTS LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY AND IN TWO INSTITUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main effects of the movement toward the integration of the mentally retarded in the community is that an increased number among them remain in the community after graduating from school rather than in an institution. Several surveys (Saenger, 1957, Cohen, 1961, Katz, 1968) and follow-up studies (Miller, 1965, Baller, Charles & Miller 1966) done on the integration of mentally handicapped adults in the community indicate that a high proportion among the mildly mentally retarded adults achieve satisfactory adjustment to community life (Cobb, 1972), while the moderately and severely mentally retarded encounter more difficulties (Saenger, 1957, Katz, 1968). While a high proportion among the latter achieve some independent living skills which enable them to function adequately in their local communities, most of them remain socially isolated and not all of them find commercially productive employment.

In a previous study we found, however, that moderately and mildly retarded adults who were socially active in a special club for the mentally retarded did have friends while others who did not attend the special club were lonely and had neither handicapped nor non-handicapped friends (Reiter & Levi, 1980). This finding raised the question of the contribution of special frameworks to the quality of life of mentally retarded adults.

An extreme example of a special framework is the institution. The dilemma of present-day progressive institutions, is the balance between the dependency of their clients on the institution as a place where social, vocational and recreational needs are all provided for, and the encouragement of independent behaviour. In the community, on the other hand, a certain degree of independent behaviour is achieved by the mere fact of living in the community, but this does not necessarily lead to the fulfillment of the individual social and vocational needs (Reiter & Levi, 1980).

From the extensive research done by Zigler and Balla (1977), it is evident that institutions differ in their impact on the development of their clients. We therefore chose, for the purpose of the present study, to investigate two progressive institutions, each one representing a different philosophy, and to compare their clients achievements with the achievements of a group of mentally retarded adults living in the community. Comparisons were made on the following: social competencies, social integration, work skills and employability.

One of the two institutions chosen emphasises independent living skills by simulating a small urban town on its premises. Thus, the institution has a cafeteria, a boutique for clothes, a branch of the national bank, a hairdresser salon and a jewellery shop. Clients are encouraged to make use of these facilities (Nadan, 1978). Furthermore, the institution is located not far from the town of Acre and clients are encouraged to make use of the town's facilities. We named this institution "mini town".

The other institution is based on the philosophy of the Israeli kibbutz. This institution emphasises the interpersonal relations among the clients and their productive work. It consists of 20 dwellings, a modern kibbutz-like dining room, a

community centre containing a club, a music hall and several educational classrooms. On the site are an open and closed sports field, workshops, laundry, infirmary and a swimming pool (Pencovici & Newman, 1979). We named this institution "mini kibbutz".

The community based group was chosen among graduates of special schools from the town of Haifa and small towns in the north of Israel. At the time of the study each lived with his parents (Reiter & Levi, 1980).

METHOD

The sample consisted of three groups of subjects matched on I.Q.

One comprised 30 mentally retarded adults living with their families in the community, with a mean I.Q. of 57.7 (range: 35-70) and a mean chronological age of 20 (range: 16-27).

The second group comprised 30 subjects from the "mini kibbutz" institution. The mean I.Q. was 53.5 (range: 35-70) and their mean chronological age was 23 (range: 18-27).

The third group comprised 25 adults from the "mini town". The mean I.Q. of this group was 50.5 (range: 38-69) and their mean chronological age was 21 (range: 16-27).

For the purpose of the study, all subjects were individually assessed on the "Progress Assessment Charts of Social Development" (Gunzburg, 1977). Details were also gathered on the existence of friendship patterns among these subjects. A questionnaire on the work skills of the subjects (Speake and Whelan, 1977) was completed by the subjects' work supervisors and their place of employment and types of work done were recorded.

RESULTS

Comparisons were first made between the community group and the two institutional groups by using an analysis of variance procedures on each category of the Progress Assessment Charts (P-A-C) (Gunzburg, 1977). Table 1 represents the means, standard deviation and F values obtained by each group. From Table 1 it appears that the community group achieved significantly better results on social competencies than either group in the institutions in the following areas: mobility, care of own health, money handling, time concepts, writing, reading, help at home, finance, and social initiative.

In spite of the fact that the community group had more social competencies than either group in the institutions, they did not have more friends. While 27.3% of the institutionalised subjects had non-handicapped friends outside the institution, only 16.7% of the community group had non-handicapped friends. Furthermore, while only 1.8% of the institutionalised subjects admitted to having no friends at all (either handicapped or not), 53.3% of the community group said they had no friends at all.

We next compared the two institutions on the basis of the variables of social competencies and friendship patterns. Indeed, regarding social competencies, significant differences (on a t-test) were found. Table 2 represents the means, standard deviations and t values obtained by the institutional groups on each category of the P-A-C. Table 2 demonstrates that clients from the "mini kibbutz" were more competent in "knowledge of time" and in "reading" while clients from the "mini town" were better in "help at home" and "finance". In all other areas, there was a tendency for clients from the "mini town" to be better on independent living skills: "mobility", "care of own health", "money handling", "shopping" and "social initiative", while clients from the "mini kibbutz" achieved higher scores on skills related to interpersonal relations: "cleanliness", "table manners", "care of own clothes", "language", and "social graces". X^2 comparisons between the two institutions on friendship patterns reveal that clients from the "mini town" had significantly ($p < 0.001$) more non-handicapped friends outside the institution (56%) than clients from the "mini kibbutz" (3.3%).

Table 1: P-A-C 2 Means and SDs of the Community, the Mini-town and Mini-kibbutz Groups' Scores on Social Skills.

Social Competence	Community group		'Mini-town'		'Mini-kibbutz'		F
	Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD	
Table manners	5.27	0.88	5.04	0.78	5.13	0.34	0.774
Cleanliness	4.72	1.50	4.52	1.58	4.83	1.64	0.272
Care of clothes	4.34	1.44	4.60	1.25	4.93	0.63	1.920
Mobility	3.58	1.99	2.28	2.09	2.06	1.74	5.203**
Care of own health	4.00	1.92	3.04	1.05	3.00	1.14	4.393**
Language	3.89	1.52	3.76	1.30	4.06	1.20	0.358
Handling money	3.10	2.48	2.28	2.05	1.50	1.27	4.802**
Knowledge of time	3.65	2.07	1.88	2.04	3.10	1.64	5.899**
Writing	3.34	2.10	2.08	1.57	2.40	1.03	4.502**
Reading	2.51	1.82	1.48	1.61	2.36	1.40	3.153*
Shopping	2.62	2.04	2.48	1.78	1.76	1.54	1.893
Manners	4.75	1.35	4.28	1.64	4.60	0.85	0.928
Helping at home	3.86	2.01	3.68	1.70	1.56	1.16	17.263***
Knowledge of finance	1.93	2.17	2.96	1.90	0.96	0.92	9.012***
Social initiative	2.86	1.66	2.32	1.72	1.80	1.29	3.408*

Note. Maximum possible score on each item was 6.

* $p < 0.05$
 ** $p < 0.01$
 *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2: P-A-C 2 Means and SDs of the Institutional Groups' Scores on Social Skills.

Social Competence	'Mini-town'		'Mini-kibbutz'		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Table manners	5.04	0.79	5.13	0.34	-0.55
Cleanliness	4.52	1.58	4.83	1.64	-0.72
Care of clothes	4.60	1.25	4.93	0.64	-1.20
Mobility	2.28	2.09	2.06	1.74	0.41
Care of own health	3.04	1.06	3.00	1.14	0.13
Language	3.76	1.30	4.06	1.20	-0.90
Handling money	2.28	2.05	1.50	1.28	1.65
Knowledge of time	1.88	2.04	3.10	1.64	-2.40*
Writing	2.08	1.57	2.40	1.03	-0.87
Reading	1.48	1.61	2.36	1.40	-2.16*
Shopping	2.48	1.78	1.76	1.54	1.57
Manners	4.28	1.64	4.60	0.85	-0.88
Helping at home	3.68	1.70	1.56	1.16	5.27**
Knowledge of finance	2.96	1.90	0.96	0.92	4.78**
Social initiative	2.32	1.72	1.80	1.29	1.24

Note. Maximum possible score on each item was 6.

* $p < 0.05$
 ** $p < 0.0001$

Next, we investigated differences in work skills and in work patterns between the community group and the two institutions. Comparisons (t-tests) between them revealed that the institutional clients were significantly better in "level of work performed" ($p < .05$), "initiative at work" ($p < .04$), and "self confidence at work" ($p < .04$), while the community group was significantly better on "punctuality and attendance" ($p < 0.001$). X^2 comparisons on employability revealed that significantly more institutional clients were involved in regular work ($p < 0.01$) than the community group. Thus, while 44% of the community group were either not employed or had irregular work, only 12% of the institutional residents were not working regularly. On the other hand, 43% of the community group were gainfully employed in the open market (the remaining subjects being in a sheltered work shop) while only 5.4% of the institutional residents were so employed. Thus, even though some of the work skills of the institutional residents were better than the skills of the community group, fewer among them were gainfully employed outside the institutions. Comparing the type of work done in the institutions, it was found that 72% of the clients in the "mini town" were in maintenance of the institution. While only 26.7% of the clients in the "mini kibbutz" were doing so ($p < 0.001$). The "mini kibbutz" provided a wider range of work, both industrial and agricultural.

In our previous study (Reiter & Levi, 1980) one of the main issues investigated was the extent to which intercorrelations exist between social competencies, friendship patterns work skills and employment. No significant correlations were found regarding the community group. Similar analyses were made in the present study with the data gathered from the two institutions. Again, no significant correlations were found between work skills and social competence, employment and friendship patterns.

DISCUSSION

The present and previous study (Reiter & Levi, 1980) demonstrate three different types of social environments. One type can be subdivided into two settings and relates to living in the community, with and without a special social framework (A and B). The other types (C and D) relate to two distinct institutional settings. The critical evaluation of the social environments and lifestyles of handicapped adults can be accomplished by using criteria derived from the normalisation principle (Nirje, 1976). Accordingly, an ideal social environment should be one that enables mentally retarded adults to develop their independent skills, be gainfully employed and have friends, both handicapped and non-handicapped. None of the social environments which this study analysed seems to ideally fulfill these criteria. In social environment A, the mentally retarded adult is living in the community, has more adequate independent living skills, has less than a 50% chance to be gainfully employed and is socially isolated. In social environment B, the mentally retarded adult is living in the community, has more adequate independent living skills, has less than a 50% chance to be gainfully employed and is active in a special club where most of his friends are mentally retarded. In social environment C, the mentally retarded adult lives in an institution, has fewer independent living skills than his counterpart in the community, is regularly employed, mostly in commercially unproductive work, and has both handicapped and non-handicapped friends.

In social environment D, the mentally retarded adult lives in an institution, has very little independent living skills, is regularly employed, mostly in commercially productive work and has mentally retarded friends.

We are cautious not to conclude from the above analyses that there are causal relationships between each type of social environments and the behaviour of the subjects. However, the different social environments do seem to facilitate the development of different styles of life. In each environment subjects seem to have some advantages over the other. Living in the community seems to enhance tendencies toward independent behaviour and opportunities for gainful employment. The great risk, however, is that of social isolation, especially if no special frameworks exist to tackle this

problem. On the other hand, the advantage of the institution based on the principles of the "mini town" seems to lie in the opportunities it affords for creating friendship ties with non-handicapped as well as handicapped persons in and outside the institution. Its greatest limitations lie in the area of productive work. This last area of productive work is the advantage of the "mini kibbutz" institution which provides opportunities for its clients to work in a variety of jobs. At the same time, independent living skills are not highly developed.

The implication of the findings of this study to the issue of integration is that the dichotomous attitude towards community living versus special frameworks and institutional residence is over simplified. A critical examination should be made of each social environment, and services which seem to be missing, according to the criteria derived from the normalisation principle should be added. Workers in special frameworks, institutions, and the community should exchange views and learn from each other's achievements and failures.

SUMMARY

A sample of 30 moderately and mildly retarded adults living in the community was compared with 55 residents from two progressive institutions on the variables of: social competencies, friendship patterns, vocational skills and employment. Findings suggested that neither living in the community nor institutional residence fulfilled the criteria of normalisation.

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