

Child Welfare History

Session 2

Tensions Throughout Child Welfare History

These tensions include:

- parents' rights vs children's needs
- saving children/youth vs supporting families
- federal vs state vs local responsibility
- public vs voluntary financing and service provision

Child Welfare History

- developmental vs protective services
- in-home vs foster family vs institutional care
- appropriate boundaries between the child welfare, family service, juvenile justice, mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse and mental retardation systems

Child Welfare History

- Individualized modes of interventions vs uniform standards and treatment, i.e., evidence based practices
- Formal specialized professional services vs informal, natural helping networks
- social costs vs benefits of providing varying levels of care

Child Welfare History

- All of these issues appear and reappear in the major historical documents on the American child welfare system.
- The one theme that never disappears is the search for a panacea, a solution to the problems of children and youth whose parents are unable to provide adequate care.

Child Welfare History 17th & 18th Centuries

- Early American settlers were preoccupied with issues of freedom and survival for themselves and their new country.
- The demands of exploring, settling, and cultivating vast expanses of land were enormous, and because of the small size of the population, contributing members of society were at a premium.
- The family was the basic economic unit, and all members were expected to contribute to the work of the household.

Child Welfare History

- The concept of childhood, as it is currently understood, was unknown except for very young children.
- Although there was a high birthrate, approximately two-thirds of all children died before the age of four. Those who lived past this age were expected to start contributing labor as soon as possible by helping with household and farming chores, caring for younger siblings, and so forth.

Child Welfare History

- Children moved quickly from infant status to serving essential economic functions for their families.
- Children were perceived as a scarce and valued resource for the nation, but little attention was paid to individual differences or needs, and the concept of children's rights was nonexistent.

Child Welfare History

Although there was no child welfare system as such in those early days, two groups of children were presumed to require attention from the public authorities, one viewed as deserving, one as not deserving

- orphans
- children of paupers

Child Welfare History

Because of the high maternal mortality rates and high adult male death rates caused by the vicissitudes of life in the new world, large numbers of children were orphaned at a relatively young age and required special provisions for their care.

Children of paupers were also assumed to require special care because of the high value placed on work and self-sufficiency and the concomitant fear that these children would acquire the “bad habits” of their parents if they were not taught a skill and good working habits at an early age.

Parents who could not provide adequately for their children were deprived of the right to plan for their children and were socially condemned.

Child Welfare History

- *Children and dependent* adults were treated alike and were generally handled in one of four ways:
 1. Outdoor relief, a public assistance program for poor families and children consisting of a meager dole paid by the local community to maintain families in their own homes
 2. Farming-out, a system whereby individuals or groups of paupers were auctioned off to citizens who agreed to maintain the paupers in their homes for a contracted fee

Child Welfare History

3. Almshouses or poorhouses established and administered by public authorities in large urban areas (or the care of destitute children and adults)
4. Indenture, a plan for apprenticing children to households where they would be cared for and taught a trade, in return for which they owed loyalty, obedience, and labor until the costs of their rearing had been worked off.

Child Welfare History

- In addition to these provisions under the public authorities, dependent children were cared for by a range of informal provisions arranged through relatives, neighbors, or church officials.
- A few private institutions for orphans were also established during this early colonial period. The first such orphanage in the United States was the Ursuline Convent, founded in New Orleans in 1727 under the auspices of Louis XV of France.
- Prior to 1800 most dependent children were cared for in almshouses and/or by indenture until the age of eight or nine, and then they were indentured until they reached majority.

Child Welfare History

- Thus, the social provisions for dependent children during the first two centuries of American history can be characterized as meager arrangements made on a reluctant, begrudging basis to guarantee a minimal level of subsistence.
- The arrangements were designed to insure that children were taught the values of industriousness and hard work and received a strict religious upbringing. Provisions were made at the lowest cost possible for the local community, in part because of the widespread concern that indolence and depravity not be rewarded.

Child Welfare History

- Parents who were unable to provide for their children were thought to have abrogated their parental rights, and children were perceived primarily as property that could be disposed of according to the will of their owners—parents, masters, and/or public authorities who assumed the costs of their care.
- The goal was to make provisions for dependent children that would best serve the interests of the community, not the individual child.

Nineteenth Century

- Massive social changes occurred in the United States during the nineteenth century, all of which influenced the nature of provisions for dependent children. The importation of large numbers of slaves and the eventual abolition of slavery first reduced the number of requests for indentured white children and later created opposition to a form of care for white children that was no longer permitted for blacks.
- The emergence of a bourgeois class of families in which the labor of children and wives was not required at home permitted upper-income citizens to turn their attention to the educational and developmental needs of their own children as well as the orphaned, poor, and delinquent.

Nineteenth Century

- The large-scale economic growth of the country after the Civil War helped to expand the tax base and to free funds for the development of private philanthropies aimed at improving the lives of the poor. The massive wave of immigrants from countries other than England created a large pool of needy children, primarily Catholic and Jewish, from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Finally, the Industrial Revolution changed the entire economic and social fabric of the nation. New industry required different, more dangerous types of labor from parents and youth and created a new set of environmental hazards and problems for low-income families.

Rise of Institutions

- Perhaps the most significant change in the pattern of care for dependent children during the early nineteenth century was the dramatic increase in the number of orphanages, especially during the 1830s.
- These facilities were established under public, voluntary, and sectarian auspices and were designed to care for children whose parents were unable to provide adequately for them, as well as for true orphans.

Rise of Institutions

- A major expansion in almshouse care occurred in the years succeeding the publication of these reports. But what was not foreseen by the early advocates of the use of almshouses were the physical and social risks to children posed by housing them with all classes of dependent adults. Although facilities in some of the larger cities established separate quarters for children, most were mixed almshouses caring for young children, “derelicts,” the insane, the sick, the blind, the deaf, the retarded, the delinquent, and the poor alike.
- By mid-century, investigations of the living conditions of children in poorhouses had started, creating strong pressure for the development of alternative methods of care.

Rise of Institutions

- State after state issued similar reports, characterizing almshouses as symbols of human wretchedness and political corruption and calling for special provisions for the care of young children in orphanages under public or private auspices.
- But reform came slowly, in part because public funds had been invested in the poorhouses and in part because there were no readily available alternatives for the large number of children housed in these facilities.

Rise of Institutions

- Black dependent children who were not sold as slaves were cared for primarily in the local almshouses. They were explicitly excluded from most of the private orphanages established prior to the Civil War. Consequently, several separate facilities for black children were founded during this period, the first of which was the Philadelphia Association for the Care of Colored Children established by the Society of Friends in 1822.
- To insure the survival of these facilities, their founders attempted to separate the orphanages from the abolitionist movement, with which they were identified. However, the shelter in Philadelphia was burned by a white mob in 1838 and the Colored Orphan Asylum in New York was set on fire during the Draft Riot of 1863.

The Beginnings of Foster Care

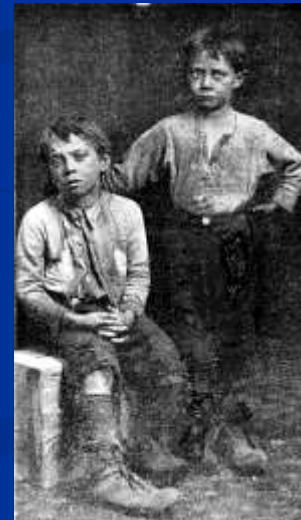
- With the recognition of the condition of children cared for in *mixed* almshouses, the stage was set for a number of reform efforts. One such effort began in 1853 with the founding of the Children's Aid Society in New York by Charles Loring Brace. By the end of the century, Children's Aid Societies had been established in most of the other major eastern cities.
- Brace was strongly committed to the idea that the best way to save poor children from the evils of urban life was to place them in Christian homes in the country, where they would receive a solid moral training and learn good work habits.

Orphan Trains



The trains, and their destinations, were a mystery to the orphans on board.

- Between 1854 and 1929 100,000-200,000 children were placed in new families via the Orphan Trains.



<http://www.orphantraindepot.com>

- Children were taken in small groups of 10 to 40, under the supervision of at least one adult, and traveled on trains to selected stops along the way, where they were taken by families in that area.

The Beginnings of Foster Care

- Consequently, Loring Brace recruited large numbers of free foster homes in the Midwest and upper New York State and sent trainloads of children to these localities. By 1879 the Children's Aid Society in New York City had sent 40,000 homeless destitute children to homes in the country.
- A somewhat parallel development was the establishment of the Children's Home Society movement. These societies were statewide child-placing agencies under Protestant auspices, also designed to provide free foster homes for dependent children. The first such society was established in Illinois in 1883. By 1916 there were thirty-six Children's Home Societies located primarily in Midwestern and southern states.

The Expansion of Services

- Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century state intervention in a child's life occurred, for the most part, only when the child threatened the social order. Dominant members of society feared that dependent children would grow up without the moral guidance and education necessary to enable them to become productive members of society. Children violating the law posed not only an immediate threat but also the fear that, without intervention, they would grow up to be adult criminals.

The Expansion of Services

- During the latter part of the last century the focus of concern began to change. Voluntary organizations founded during this period recognized that families had an obligation to provide for their children's basic needs. If they did not, it was argued, society had the right and obligation to intervene. Thus, the concept of minimal social standards for child rearing was introduced.

The Expansion of Services

- The founding of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1874 signaled the beginning of this broader concept of societal intervention on the child's behalf. Similar societies were quickly established in other areas of the country, and by 1900 there were more than 250 such agencies the New York society was established in the wake of the notorious case of "little Mary Ellen".

The Expansion of Services

- A friendly visitor, named Etta Wheeler from the child's neighborhood was horrified by the abusive treatment the child had received from her caretaker and sought help from several child welfare institutions to no avail. Finally she turned to Henry Bergh, president of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who promptly brought the case to court, requesting that the child be removed from her caretaker immediately.

Photo of Mary Ellen Wilson



The Expansion of Services

- Newspaper accounts of the early meetings of the society indicate that the founders saw their primary function as prosecuting parents, not providing direct services to parents or children; in fact, the society was denied tax-exempt status by the State of New York in 1900 because its primary purpose was defined as law enforcement, not the administration of charity. However, this agency as well as the other early child protection societies quickly turned their interests to all forms of child neglect and exploitation, not confining their activities merely to the prevention of physical abuse of children in their own homes.

The Expansion of Services

- The establishment of the Charity Organization Society movement, starting in 1877, also contributed to the expansion of services to children. They were opposed to monetary giving and to any public sector involvement in the relief of destitution; government was not to be trusted to provide a “dole,” which would encourage laziness and moral decay.

The Expansion of Services

- In order to accomplish this mission, the societies enlisted the aid of “friendly visitors”—the forerunner of the modern social worker—whose responsibilities were to seek out the poor, investigate their need, and certify them as worthy for private help. They were to provide a role model, advice, and moral instruction to the poor in order that they could rid themselves of poverty. These ideas had a profound influence on the orientation of the early social workers in the family service field.

The Expansion of Services

- However, what the friendly visitors discovered was that much poverty was the result of societal forces far beyond the individual's control. Many children were destitute not because their parents were lazy or immoral, but because jobs were not available, breadwinners were incapacitated by industrial accidents, or parents had died. While the friendly visitors continued to minister to the poor on a case-by-case basis, their recognition of the social roots of poverty converged with the philosophy underlying the establishment of the first settlement houses at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Expansion of Services

- The settlement house movement was a middle-class movement designed to humanize the cities. It emphasized total life involvement, decentralization, experimental modes of intervention, and learning by doing. Their programs included “developmental” services such as language classes, day-care centers, playgrounds, family life education, and so forth. Convinced of the worth of the individuals and immigrant groups they served and the importance of cultural pluralism in America, they saw the causes of many social problems in the environment and sought regulations to improve them.

20th Century Time Line

- 1909 – First White House Conference on Children
- 1912 – Creation of US Children's Bureau
- 1935 - Social Security Act, Title IV, ADC; and Title V, Child Welfare Services Program
- 1961 – Social Security Amendment, AFDC – Foster Care
- 1962 – Social Security Amendment (75%-25% match for funding social services for current, former, and potential welfare recipients)
- 1967 – Social Security Amendments
- Title IVB (Child Welfare Services Program, originally authorized under Title V)

20th Century Time Line

- 1974 – Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, P.L. 93-247
(Amended in 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2003)
- 1975 – Title XX of the Social Security Act
- 1978 – Indian Child Welfare Act
- 1980 – Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, P.L. 96-272
(Title IVE)
- 1993 - Family Preservation and Support Services Program

20th to 21st Century Time Line

- 1994 – Multiethnic Placement Act
- 1996 - Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Act , P.L. 104-193
- 1997 – Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), P.L. 105-89
- 1999 – Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act
- 2000 – Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act
- 2001 – Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment

21st Century Themes

- Safety
- Permanency Goal Setting
- Well-Being
- CFSR Reviews in States
- Foster Parents Adopting Children
- Adoption Incentives
- Adoption Opportunities
- Adoption Openness
- Youth Permanency
- Cultural Competency
- Family Based Services
- Community Based Services

Array of Children, Youth and Family Services

- In Home Services
- Out-of-Home Services
- Child Welfare Services

In Home Services

- Services designed to ensure that children and youth remain safe in their home and prevent them from entering the foster care system: Services to preserve families
- Family Support/Preservation Services: counseling, parent skills training, substance abuse treatment, recreational services, linkages to community-based resources

Out-of-Home Services

- Driven by ASFA 1997 legislation
- Strong emphasis on safety, permanency, and well-being, especially permanency
- Time limited with ASFA; 15 of last 22 months in placement
- Reunify with family, find other permanent arrangement or terminate parental rights and free for adoption

Family Foster Care



I am changing the life of a child.
I provide a home.

Out-of-Home Services

- Community-based services in family's own neighborhood
- Least restrictive placement setting
- Frequent visitation to family
- Intensive work with family, building on strengths and resources
- Respect for culture and traditions of the family

Out-of-Home Services

- Kinship Foster Care: informal and formal
- Family Foster Boarding Homes
- Therapeutic Foster Boarding Homes
- Agency Operated Boarding Homes (SILP)
- Group Homes
- DRC/RTC (campus programs)
- RTF

Child Welfare Services

- Abuse and Neglect Investigations
- Independent Living Services –Chaffee Act
- Adoption
- Legal Services
- Parent and Children's Rights
- Child Performer Permits