**Open–Closed–Open: How Israeli Families Coped during the Coronavirus Lockdown**

Since China’s official announcement on December 12, 2019, about the eruption of COVID-19 in Wuhan and the World Health Organization declaration, on March 11, 2020, of the disease caused by the virus as a pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020), the realities of life of millions of families worldwide have changed. Fear of infection and its pernicious effects on human life, healthcare systems, and the economy prompted governments to declare states of emergency and adopt a series of stringent measures to promote physical distancing, such as sealing international borders, closing schools and nonessential workplaces, and transitioning to study and work at home, among others. In some countries (China, Spain, Italy, the UK, Australia, South Korea) (Chau and Yip, 2020) people were instructed to isolate themselves from others wherever infection or proximity to infected people was suspected, and the additional step of lockdown of neighborhoods, cites, and entire districts was invoked to break the contagion chain.

This state of affairs, typified by uncertainty, genuine concern for the health of individuals and their dear ones, livelihood worries, and uninterrupted stays in a shared space with no possible respite, placed families under crushing stress. Even for those not infected with the novel coronavirus, it was undoubtedly one of the most stressful events that humanity has experienced in recent decades.

Exposure to stress is a risk factor for the development of distress. Research evidence from China confirms this. Thus, in the first stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, Wang et al. (2020) found that more than half of respondents (53.8 percent) experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress at medium to high intensity. Li et al. (2020) discovered that after the official announcement in China about the eruption of the epidemic, there was an upturn on the Chinese social network Weibo of manifestations of negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and a decrease in expressions of positive ones such as happiness. Concurrently, the findings illuminated protective factors that attenuate stress and anxiety, including living with parents.

In a recent survey on the implications of lockdown, Brooks et al. (2020) reported psychological effects such as acute stress disorder, disengagement from others, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, indecisiveness, concentration difficulties, deteriorating work performance, thoughts of quitting one’s job, and depression and anxiety, some evolving into post-traumatic symptoms.

Whereas many studies looked into the effect of COVID-19 on the individual, few were written with an eye on families (Lebow, 2020; Prime et al., 2020). Among studies of the latter kind, initial findings point to a steady increase in rates of domestic violence (Taub, 2020) and child abuse (UNICEF, 2020). These are challenging times for families worldwide. As a result of escalating economic stress and concerns about future employment, livelihood, and wellbeing, parents are prone to depression and disorders in relations with their children (Riegler et al., 2020). For families in more vulnerable population groups, coping with the lockdown may be especially complex. These families were dealing with challenges and concerns even before the COVID-19 lockdown era. They include families headed by separated or divorced parents who live in separate households (Sorek et al., May 2020); those headed by single parents, mostly women; and those that have children with special needs, *inter alia* (references)

Furthermore, in a major repercussion of the lockdown for families, support declines precisely when multiple forms of stress are experienced. Essential workers such as medical staff were away from home, thus protecting their families from potential infection. Some parents coped with working from home and others confronted financial concerns occasioned by the loss of a job. These coping challenges were augmented by tasks related to at-home childcare due to the closure of schools, providing support for distance learning, and doing household chores. Families are differentiated by the scale of resources that they may call on to cope with an event of this magnitude, associated with their level of education, physical and mental health, income level, living space, and access to technological resources (Fischer et al., 2020).

As social workers who engage in research and caregiving in the family system, we are eager to find out, both by consulting the theoretical and research literature and by interviewing people during the lockdown period, how the family unit, already coping with a highly stressful environment, encounters an extreme stressor akin to a natural disaster. Lavee et al. (1987) emphasize that families’ wellbeing is affected adversely by a pileup of stressful life events, changes in the family life cycle, and intra-family strains. In this article, we expand the family point of view as a whole and seek to understand how families coped with the imposed lockdown by describing the coping of families in Israel.

These families experienced the outbreak of COVID-19 as a new and unfamiliar stressor on top of other stressful challenges that they face. Some are outcomes of global processes such as poverty, migration, and changes in family structure; others are specific to Israeli society, e.g., the Jewish–Arab conflict; polarization between religious and nonreligious members of society; ethnic tension; the effects of the Holocaust on the first, second, and third generations, and life-threatening events such as wars, security threats, and terror (Katz, 2003; Younes and Lavee, 2007). The cumulative findings of research in Israel suggest that stressful events may deal a dire blow to family wellbeing and trigger distress, at least in the short term (Solomon 2013; \_\_\_\_\_ ) The various studies also, however, point to a lengthy string of variables that may influence the extent to which individuals and their families are aware of the patterns that they use to cope with the stress and, ultimately, on the scope and duration of the assault on their wellbeing.

A conceptual framework that may explain how families perceive the demands of reality, their abilities to cope with these demands, and what can be done to keep them in balance is the ABC-X model. This model, originally formulated by Hill (1949) and subsequently expanded into the double ABC-X model by Patterson and McCubbin (1983), relates to factors that shape families’ various responses to stressful situations. It describes a dynamic process in which a stressful event (A), in interaction with the resources on which the family may call (B), in interaction with the family’s perception of the stressful event (C) will affect the family’s response to the stress (X). Thus, a family that confronts additional stresses and can draw on new resources may perceive the stressor positively, while one experiencing degradation of its available resources may construe it negatively.