

Changes in the Model of Child Care in 21st Century through “Historical Records” of Child Care Centers in Greece: The Child Care Centers Tell Us Their Story

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Abstract

Introduction: Our research investigates the changes in the Model of Child Care in 21st Century in Greece (Model of “laissez – faire and patriarchy”, Model of “Familistic welfare capitalism” & Model of “Sate Paternalism and Child Protection”), as a consequence of changes in the political sphere and in the social economic characteristics of children and their families who accessed a representative number of Child Care Centres from 1970 to 2016, through the analysis of reasons are responsible for their introduction and the duration of their stay in Centers. **Methods:** The data derived from a survey conducted in the context of the author’s doctoral dissertation. Is an observational, descriptive study. Participants were recruited from various Institutional Homes/Child Care Centers, in Greece. A sample of 1355 children with an admission mean age 10.8 years (3.75) participated in the research. **Results:** As a conclusion, the Model of the Child Protection (Lorraine Hardling-Fox, 1997) has been influenced by the changes occurred on the legal, social and economic spheres the last decades (Plant, 1974), (Hardly, 1981). This model is transformed (Model of “laissez – faire and patriarchy”, Model of “Familistic welfare capitalism” & Model of “Sate Paternalism and Child Protection”), as the Greek society gradually does not tolerate the violence directed against children. Nowadays, the Greek society adopts legal actions against child abuse or neglect. These actions are considered as criminal offences which break the Greek, the European and the international laws. **Discussion and Conclusion:** Finally, the research findings confirm the new trend in childhood study in sociology, which emphasizes that childhood, perceptions around child protection and Model of Child Care are influenced by a wide range of economic, political and ideological factors, and that children can become a separate observation unit and can constitute a separate statistical category, in order to gain an insight on these factors.

Keywords

Model of Child Care, Social Care, out-of-family care, welfare states, Institutional Homes, Child Care Centers, Child protection, children

1. Introduction

It can initially be said that the measures and policies for social protection change over time (Taylor-Gooby, 2001) and as loads of the past disappear and the historical depth of empirical research and data increases the prevailing perceptions are changing (Skocpol, 1992). The social status of children has undergone radical changes since the 19th century up to the last decades (Zelizer, 1985), (Gittins, 1998, pp. 4-6). In this light, the childhood, the perception of child protection and the Model of Child Care, have not existed as a natural, timeless category but finally determined by the same conditions which are perceived the cultural products. The research findings indicate how perceptions around childcare have evolved through the various changes that took place in Greece in the last 46 years. Through our research the child protection considered as the dynamic nature of a social and historical structure, as a continuous sustainable and generated social phenomenon which is distinguished by its value at the present, at the past and future days, and it is perceived as part of the social structure which affects and is affected by the social relations.

Theoretical framework on social status of children

There is a constant evolution of the measures and approaches which derive the social care policies through the years. The past theories of childhood, represented primarily by Aries, Sieder and Pollock, withdraw under criticism whereas further experience is gained through increase in the data from empirical observation and current social research, which challenge the established perceptions of childhood. The social status of children has undergone radical changes from the 19th century until recently (Schnell, 1979). More specific: There are three sociological approaches have been developed over the years in the field of childhood studies (Sociology of Childhood): (1) Historical Sociology of Childhood. The concept of historicity in Sociology, is based on epistemological standards which are different from those of the traditional historiography. In this field, the concept of historicity is considered in connection to the social structures and institutions of societies which belong to the past. By this way a field of study is created which defers to the classical views of historicity. Aries was one of the firsts who expressed an interest on the history of childhood. He suggested that the notion of childhood emerged in Europe during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. The idea of childhood did not exist prior to this period where the children were perceived as miniature adults (Aries, 1962); (2) Socialisation Theories and Social Learning Theory. This theory considers childhood as a preparation for adulthood and children as “beings”. It examines the means which the human infants utilize in order to begin to acquire their social skills which will allow them to perform as functioning members on their society (James & Prout, 1997, pp. 216-218); (3) A Critical Sociological Approach. An academic intervention developed by the debate of the aforementioned approaches which determined the aspects of a “new sociology of childhood” (James & Prout, 1997; Alanen, 2014, pp. 3-4). The “new sociology of childhood” criticizes the previous two approaches (Bertalanffy, 1973), and aims to construct a new conceptual and empirical field in the sociology of childhood. The fundamental idea of this approach is that the childhood is not universal. It is rather a dynamic cultural product which varies across the time and place. Additionally, childhood is perceived as a social construction and the children are seen as active social agents. Jame and Prout attempted to establish this new conceptual and empirical field while they emphasized on the socially and culturally constructed nature of childhood. However, Qvortrup focused more on the macro-structural approaches (Quortup et al., 1994). Our findings, taking into consideration all the aforementioned, unfold how the perception for the childcare has influenced from changes that have occurred through history as conditions have changed in Greece. Through our research’s results is confirmed the new trend of childhood study in sociology highlighting how childhood, perception on child protection and Model of Child Care are influenced by a wide range of economic, political and ideological conditions and how children can be a separate observation unit constituting an independent statistical category (Pollock, 1983).

2. Methods

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative variables were presented as mean and standard deviation. Qualitative variables were expressed as absolute and relative frequencies (N, %). Normal distribution of data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in duration of residency between boys and girls, when the normality assumption was violated. Pearson Chi-square test was used to determine the significant association between gender and various categorical variables. All statistical analyses were performed by IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0. The aforementioned statistical tests were performed at a 0.05 significance level.

3. Results

The research results mentioned above are depicted to the following tables and diagrammatically representation.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the institutionalized children/Out-of-family Care

	N	%
Decade		
1970-1979	370	27.3
1980-1989	324	23.9
1990-1999	313	23.1
2000-2016	348	25.7
Gender		
Boys	848	62.6
Girls	507	37.4
Admission age (years), Mean (SD)	10.8	3.75
Duration of residency (years), Mean (SD)	4.4	2.84
Reasons for children's admission to the out-of-family care		
Evidence of deficient moral character of the parents ("Moral deficiency of parent", "moral dysfunction").	45	3.3
Orphaned children	195	14.4
Abandonment by parent/parents	378	27.9
Father patient-needy mother, socio-economic reasons, financial weakness of parents	314	23.2
Divorced parents	97	7.2
Neglect, inappropriate family environment	171	12.6
Demand of prosecutor, abuse, dangerous family environment	155	11.4
Urban center/Province		
City	457	52.2
Province	418	47.8
Educational level		
Primary and secondary education	642	47.4
Technical colleges	276	20.4
Tertiary education	39	2.9
Public private institution	6	0.4
Continuous residency as adults	15	1.1
Under aged	377	27.8
Reasons for leaving the institution		
Return to mother (Monitoring committees are set up by the State).	206	20.7
Return to father (Monitoring committees are set up by the State).	24	2.4
Placement of children with relatives	67	6.7
Adulthood	445	44.4
Move to another institution	83	8.3
Escape	108	10.9
Adoption	2	0.2
Still remaining at the center	60	6.0
Parental occupation		
Farmer, Stockbreeder	173	17.4
Labourer	315	31.7
Employee	23	2.3
Domestic service	3	0.3
Household	51	5.1
Unemployed, Idle	236	23.7
Unknown	194	19.5

In our research a sample of 1355 children with an admission mean age 10.8 years (3.75) participated. Approximately 62.6% (N= 848) of participants were boys and 37.4% (N= 507) were girls. Among the 1355 children included in the study, 27.3% (N= 370) were in the 1970s, 23.9% (N= 324) were in the 1980s, 23.1% (N= 313) were in the 1990s and 25.7% (N= 348) were during the 2000-2016 period with a mean duration of residency of 4.4 (2.84) years. The reason that the majority of the children were in the institute was that they were either abandoned by their family (27.9%, N=378), followed by those that were subjected to a situation at home, in other words a father patient-needy mother, socio-economic reasons and financial weakness of the family/parents (23.2%, N=314). Most of the children in institutional homes originated from Greece and especially from urban areas (52.2%, N=457). Regarding the education level of the participants (47.4%, N=642) had completed a primary or secondary level while (20.4%, N=276) had completed technical colleges. As for the reasons these children left the institutions, they either returned to the mother / monitoring committees are set up by the State (20.7%, N=206) or reached adulthood (44.7%, N=445) vs adoption which reaches the percentage of 0.2%. According to Goody, the early Church, faced with the need to provide for people who had left their kin to devote themselves to the life of the Church, regulated the rules of marriage so that wealth could be channelled away from the family and into the Church. Thus, the Church became an “interitor”, acquiring vast tracts of property through the alienation of familial rights (Goody, 1983; Kertzer, 1993). Social-legal aspects regarding the institution of adoption in Greece have been influenced by the aforementioned issues. On the other side, it has been observed that in England, under different socio-political and religious conditions, the reports of the abuse of children led to a marked decline in the use of institutional homes for children and a drive towards fostering for most children entering care (Longfield, 2020; Csaky, 2018). Finally, our research’s findings highlight that, the children’s parental occupation was mainly associated with labour work (31.7%, N=315) or they were unemployed (23.7%, N=236).

Table 2. Chi-square test for the reasons of admission to institutions between the different decades & according to gender, within the whole duration of the survey

Admission reasons	Decade				Gender, 1970-2016			
	1970-1990 (%)	2000-2016 (%)	Pearson X ²	P	Male (%)	Female (%)	Pearson X ²	P
Evidence of deficient moral character of the parents	4.5	0	310.161	<0.001	2.2	5.1	67.341	<0.001
Orphaned child	16.3	8.9			15.6	12.4		
Abandonment by parent/parents	31.6	17.2			22.1	37.7		
Father patient-needy mother, social-economic reasons, financial weakness of parents	24.8	18.4			27.7	15.6		
Divorced parents	7.9	4.9			6.6	8.1		
Neglect, inappropriate family environment	12.1	14.1			14.7	9.1		
Demand of prosecutor, abuse, dangerous family environment	2.8	36.5			11.1	12		

The Chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two genders and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions during 1970-2016 ($X^2 = 67.341$, $p < 0.001$). As for the boys the main reasons were the inability to be supported financially and socially (27.7% vs 15.6%) or they were neglected by both parents (14.7% vs 9.1%). Contrary to the boys, the reasons the girls were admitted were either due to the evidence of deficient moral character of the parent, moral deficiency of parents/moral dysfunction (5.1% vs 2.2%) or were abandoned (37.7% vs 22.1%) (Table 2). Additionally, the Chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two periods and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions ($X^2 = 310.161$, $p < 0.001$). As for the period between 1970-1990, the main reasons were that the children were either orphans (16.3% vs 8.9%) or abandoned by their parents (31.6% vs 17.2%). Antithetically, the period 2000-2016 the main reasons were that the children were either neglected (14.1% vs 12.1%) or came from abusive environments that led to a court order - abuse, dangerous family environment (36.5% vs 2.8%) (Table 2). Also, the Chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two genders and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions during 1970-2016 ($X^2 = 67.341$, $p < 0.001$). As for the boys the main reasons were the inability to be supported financially and socially (27.7% vs 15.6%) or they were neglected by both parents (14.7% vs 9.1%). Contrary to the boys, the reasons the girls were admitted were either due to the evidence of deficient moral character of the parents/ moral deficiency of

parents, moral dysfunction (5.1% vs 2.2%) or were abandoned by parent/s (37.7% vs 22.1%) (Table 2).

Table 3. Chi-square test for the reasons of admission to institutions according to gender between the period of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000-2016

Admission reasons	1970s				1980s & 1990s				2000-2016			
	Gender		Pearson X ²	P	Gender		Pearson X ²	P	Gender		Pearson X ²	P
	Male (%)	Female (%)			Male (%)	Female (%)			Male (%)	Female (%)		
Evidence of deficient moral character of the parents (moral deficiency of parents, moral dysfunction)	4.1	15.9	54.192	<0.001	3.6	2	23.217	<0.001	0	0	6.120	0.295
Orphaned child	18.7	13.2			17.9	16			9.9	7.5		
Abandonment by parent/parents, whorson	34.7	50.3			16.1	38			15.8	19.2		
Father patient-needy mother, social-economic reasons, financial weakness of parents	16.4	13.2			38.8	21			19.8	16.4		
Divorced parents	2.7	6			8.9	12			5	4.8		
Neglect, inappropriate family environment	10.5	1.3			14.7	11			16.8	10.3		
Demand of prosecutor, abuse, dangerous family environment	12.8	0			0	0			32.7	41.8		

The Model of “laissez – faire and patriarchy”

As concern 1970s

“Moral deficiency” was in the 70’s a reason for parent/nts to be removed from their houses (Model of “laissez – faire and patriarchy”, Goldstein, Freud & Solnit, 1979). **That was a period of dictatorship for the country and 20% of the children who attended to the residential care, during this period, were belonging to this category. “Moral deficiency” diminished considerably in the 80s (5.6%), and disappeared completely in the coming decades.** Nevertheless, the main cause of children’s admission, in the 70s, was their abandonment due to (or and) significant financial weakness of their parents in combination with social difficulties, parental illness or a large number of siblings within the family. Also, the Chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two genders and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions during the 1970s ($X^2 = 54.192$, $p < 0.001$). As for the boys a reason was an abusive environment that led to a court order (12.8% vs 0%) or they were neglected by both parents (10.5% vs 1.3%). Contrary to the boys, the reasons the girls were admitted were either due to the moral character of the parents (moral deficiency of parents, moral dysfunction) (15.9% vs 4.1%) or were abandoned by parent/s (50.3% vs 34.7%) (Table 3).

The Model of “Familistic welfare capitalism”

As concern 1980s & 1990s

80s: It was a sustained period of economic growth for the country. Changes started occurring on the legislation and the structure of the family (Model: Familistic welfare capitalism) (Venieris, 1996, pp. 260-261). The number of children who were hosted in out-of-family care was considerably lower than the previous politically unstable decade. The percentage of the abandoned children was reduced, and the parental “moral deficiency” was also limited to 5.6% as mentioned above. However, the number of the children, abandoned by their parents who were unable to look after them due to their financial deprivation, decreased by almost 18.6% for the boys & 12.3% for the girls and reached the percentage of 16.1% & 38% respectively of the import ratios in this decade. The negligence rates increased up to 9.7%. Moreover, the Chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two genders and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions during the 1980s ($X^2 = 23.217$, $p < 0.001$). As for the boys the main reasons were the inability to be supported financially and socially (38.8% vs 21%) or they were neglected by both parents (14.7% vs 11%). Contrary to the boys, the reasons the girls were admitted were either due to divorced parents (12% vs 8.9%) or were abandoned by parent/s (38% vs 16.1%) (Table 3). As concern 1990s, the analysis of the collected data leads to similar conclusions with above.

The Model of “Sate Paternalism and Child Protection”

As concern 2000-2016.

In 2000, radical changes appeared in the of out-of-family care system. We have the implementation of “The Model of Sate Paternalism and Child Protection” (Pringle & Kellmer, 1980; Dingwall, Eekelaar, & Murray, 1983). What has happened however? The legislation which covers the child protection in Greece, is divided into two main categories: 1. civil law: This category contains the fundamental legal provisions which prevents the parental harmful behaviour and provides civil protection to the children. It also contains the legislation against those who fail to meet their parental responsibilities. This fundamental declaration remained unchanged through all of the Greek Constitutions. 2. Provisions from a new law (3500/2006): A new law was first voted by the Greek parliament in 2006 which introduces new domestic violence orders. It creates new aggravated offences against the perpetrators while the domestic violence victims offered increased/advanced protection. This updated law also contains the ex officio indictment against the offenders. Nevertheless, more changes added to the child protection legislation, the last two decades. These changes refer to both child abuse as well as their abandonment and they are in alignment with the General Comments of EU such as: No 5 (2003), “General measures for the implementation of the Rights of the Child agreement”. No 7 (2005), “Implementing child rights in early childhood”. No 8 (2006), “The right of the child to be protected against disciplinary measures constituting corporal punishment and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment”. No 13 (2011), “The right of the child to be protected from any form of violence”. “The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection” (European Social Charter, Strasbourg, 3.V.1996, Article 17). **Moreover, the law 3500/2006 offers high protection to adults who witnessed child abuse. Consequently, and the Chi-square test indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the two genders and the reasons children were admitted to the institutions during 2000-2016 ($X^2 = 6.120, p = 0.295$) (Table 3).**

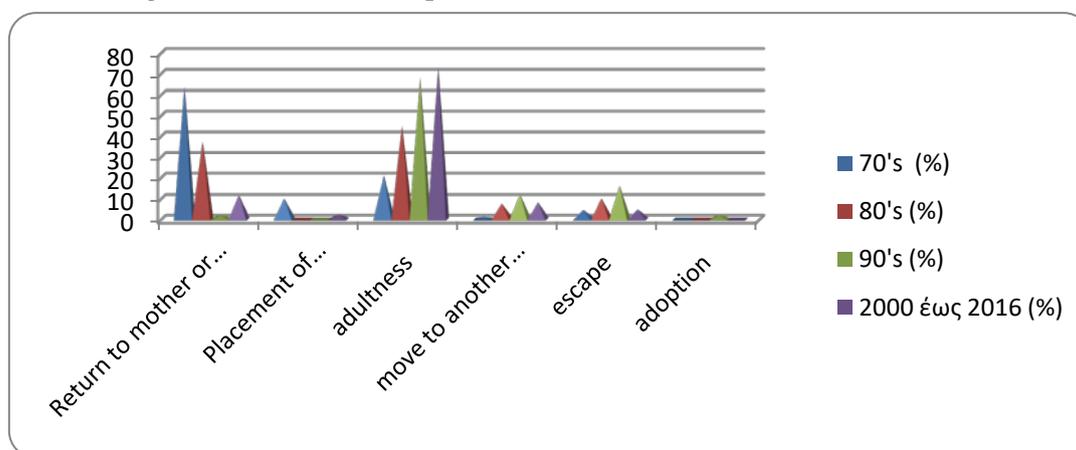


Figure 1. Reasons for getting out from Residential Care. The existence or non-existence of family networks. The length of stay on Residential Care.

According to Petmezidou (2006), Minigione (1998), Ferrera (1996) and Gough (1979), **Social Protection Model appeared in 70's which was based on the solidarity among the family members and within an extended family network. These family networks covered the absence of an effective Welfare State and allowed a high percentage of returns back to the family. These family bonds started to weaken the next decades** (Petmesidou & Mossialos, 2006), consequently, the rates of length of staying increased during the 80s and 90s. **Since 2000, 73% of the hosted children remained to the residential care until their adulthood.** This was due to lack of an appropriate family environment which could accepted them to return. **As consequence, the length of children's stay on Residential Care and their number has been increased the years between 2000 and 2016 in comparison to the previous decades (Figure 1).** In order to examine the difference of the duration of residency between the two genders, non-parametric Mann Whitney U tests were conducted, since the assumption of normality was violated. It was noticed that during the 1970s ($z = -6.187, p < 0.001$) and 1990s ($z = -2.229, p = 0.026$) the boys showed a longer residency compared to the girls (Median = 5 vs Median = 3; 1970s, Median = 4 vs Median = 3; 1990s), whereas during the 1980s ($z = -2.040, p = 0.041$) the girls remained for a longer period of time in institutions (Median = 3 vs Median = 4). Finally, between 1970-2016 ($z = -4.197, p < 0.001$) the boys showed a longer period of residency compared to the girls (Median = 4 vs Median = 3) (Table 4).

Table 4. Differences of duration between genders

Duration of residency (years), Median (q1-q2)	Gender		Z	p
	Male	Female		
1970-1979	5 (3-8)	3 (2-5)	-6.187	<0.001
1980-1989	3 (3-5)	4 (2-5)	-2.040	0.041
1990-1999	4 (3-5)	3 (2-5)	-2.229	0.026
2000-2016	4 (2-6)	4 (2-5)	-1.589	0.112
1970-2016	4 (3-6)	3 (2-5)	-4.197	<0.001

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The research's findings confirm the new trend in childhood study in sociology, which emphasises that childhood and perceptions around child protection are influenced by a wide range of economic, political, legal and ideological factors (Jessop, 1999; Bulpett, 2002), and that children can become a separate observation unit and can constitute a separate statistical category, in order to gain an insight on these factors (Qvortrup, 1985; Delamont, 1980). From this point of view, the perceptions of the childhood, the child protection and the Model of Child Care are not predetermined but they are affected by several factors and conditions similar to the other cultural products. While worldwide some characteristics are common to most institutional settings, the social environments are highly variable (Megan et al., 2019). The Child protection through the Model of Child Care (as concern our research: The Model of "laissez – faire and patriarchy", Model of "Familistic welfare capitalism" & Model of "Sate Paternalism and Child Protection"), can be considered as a dynamic social and historical construction (Lansdown, 2005), a continuously generated social phenomenon, which is regarded as having value in the present, past and future and it is being conceptualised as an integral part of the social structure, which affects and is affected by several social relations (Quinton & Rutter, 1983; Well, 2017). Furthermore, and as children living in institutionalized settings are always at risk (Desmond et al., 2020), the exploration of the political context in Greece over the decades, reveals that the social perception of the violence against the children (Rumble et al., 2018), (World Health Organisation, 2017, Violence, info. Child maltreatment), is affected by the changes occurred in the field of the legal and economic sections. While, the evolution on the field of the children's rights and the family structure influences this social perception as well (Frost & Stein, 1989; Burman, 1996).

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