

The Role of Jewish Community Center Camping Programs in the Modification of Jewish Identity*

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THE Jewish Centers Association of Los Angeles (JCA) conducts an extensive summer program for teenagers. The administrative staffs of JCA and the National Jewish Welfare Board felt that an examination of several of these programs with respect to their possible effect on the Jewish identification of the participants would be of benefit in evaluating and possibly revising them. Three programs were chosen for examination: the *Israel* program, the TASC (Teenage Service Camp) and the CIT (Counselors in Training) program.

Camp JCA-Israel is a program in which students from the 10th to the 12th grades spend 8 weeks in Israel travelling, working on an archaeological dig, living and working on a kibbutz and generally experiencing life in Israel. They spend the summer in separate groups of 35 to 40 students.

The Teenage Service Camp is for students entering the 11th grade and lasts for 3 weeks. The primary dimension of the program is a service oriented project which is planned, developed and carried out by the campers. The project usually involves physical improvement of the camp.

The Counselor-In-Training program is for students entering the 12th grade and lasts for 6 weeks. Through a program of observation, discussions and

direct work with young campers, the CITers learn about group function, activities appropriate to the camp setting, and the general functioning of a camp. Two different sessions of the CIT program are held at two different camp sites.

The major facets of this study were:

1. A description of those attitudes and behaviors by which individual campers identify themselves as Jewish and are identified by their community as Jewish.

2. An examination as to whether or not these attitudes and behaviors change as a result of the campers taking part in these individual programs.

Purpose:

The major purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not Jewish identity as manifest through Jewish attitudes and behaviors would show change as a result of experiences in Jewish community center camp programs. The camper groups going to Israel were compared to those remaining in the United States in order to ascertain whether or not going to Israel would result in a higher level and/or retention of Jewish identity. Jewish identity was examined through the administration of a questionnaire which was designed to assess various aspects of Jewish attitudes and behaviors.

Attitude and Behavior Scales:

The behavior and attitude scales (originally designed by Dr. Fred Mas-

sarik) were broken down by means of factor analysis† into clusters of questions (known as factors) which examined specific aspects of Jewish attitudes and behaviors.

The behavior clusters included:

- I. General Jewish Culture
- II. Holiday Participation
- III. Inter-dating/Inter-marriage
- IV. Childhood Jewish Education
- V. Universalism
- VI. Israeli Dancing

The attitude clusters included:

- I. Essentially Individually Directed (Items relating to attitudes towards personal Jewish practice).
- II. Essentially Community Directed (Items relating to attitudes towards community participation).
- III. The Passover Phenomenon (Items relating to Passover participation).
- IV. Inter-dating/Inter-marriage
- V. Jewish Cultural Knowledge

Administration of the Questionnaires

The campers received the questionnaires a total of three times. All questionnaires were initially administered in person by the same research staff member. At this time, all campers were given an identical explanation of the study's purposes and procedure.

The Israel-bound campers, numbering 106, received their first questionnaire at a preliminary meeting prior to their trip in June of 1972. The TASC and CIT groups, numbering 44 and 37 respectively, received their first questionnaires on the first day of their respective programs during the summer of 1972. The Israel groups received their second questionnaire in the mail within a week after they returned from Israel, in August of 1972. The TASC group also received their second ques-

† The details of the study with statistical analyses, literature, review and the like is available from the JWB-Florence Heller Research Center.

tionnaires in the mail at the end of their program. The CIT groups received their second questionnaires in person on the last day of their programs. The third questionnaire was administered to all campers through the mail during June of 1973. In those cases in which the campers received questionnaires through the mail, each camper was telephoned within one week of receipt of the questionnaire and requested to complete the form and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

A total of 162 questionnaires were received from the 3 groups on the occasion of the first test administration; 108 were usable. Of this number, 101 were returned in response to the 2nd administration of which 82 were usable. 73 were returned during the third administration, of which 71 were usable. Thus, out of a universe of 167, this study deals with the comparative responses of 71 campers.

Groups Comparisons:

1. A comparison was made between the combined scores of the groups that went to Israel and those of the groups that stayed in the United States. Another comparison was made amongst the scores of the individual groups that went to Israel and a third comparison was made amongst the scores of the individual groups that remained in the United States. These comparisons were made from the data collected from the first administration of the questionnaire.

2. The same comparisons were made using the data from the second administration of the questionnaire.

3. The same comparisons were made, using only the data from the third administration of the questionnaires.

4. For all factors and all groups, comparisons were made between the data from the first administration of

* Adapted from: G. B. Bubis & L. E. Marks, *Changes in Jewish Identification: a comparative study of a teenage Israel camping trip, a counselor-in-training program and a teenage service camp*. New York: Florence G. Heller-JWB Research Center, 1975.

the questionnaire and that of the second administration of the questionnaire to see if any observable changes took place during the time the campers participated in their programs.

5. For all factors and all groups, comparisons were made between the data from the second administration of the questionnaire and that of the third administration of the questionnaire to see if observable changes took place during the school year following their participation in the camp programs.

Findings:

Those campers tending towards a high level of Jewish behavior were more likely to come from families which observed major Jewish holidays. They were more likely to study and/or learn about themselves as Jews; feel themselves to be part of a world wide Jewry; discourage inter-dating and inter-marriage; have been Bar or Bat Mitzvah; be concerned with civil rights and enjoy Jewish and Israeli dancing. Those campers who felt that all religions were fundamentally alike tended to have a lower level of Jewish behavioral participation.

At the time of the first administration of the questionnaire, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) in attitudes between the groups which went to Israel and the groups that remained in the United States. In general, the Israel-bound group was found to have a higher level of positive Jewish attitudes.

Those campers using the JCA summer programs were largely homogeneous with respect to their Jewish behavioral participation. Those with slightly stronger Jewish attitudes were more likely to choose the JCA Israel program. Conversely, the campers who had stronger universalistic attitudes were more likely to be found in either the TASC or CIT programs.

After repeated administration of the questionnaires, no measurable change was observed and it appeared that exposure to either the Israel, TASC or CIT programs did not affect Jewish attitudes as measured by the questionnaire. At the time of the first administration of the questionnaire, there were no statistically significant differences in Jewish behavior scores found between those campers going to Israel and those staying in the United States. This pattern remained for the second and third questionnaire.

For both the attitude and behavior data, there was no significant change in scores from one administration of the questionnaire to the next.

It should be noted that while there was generally no significant change in behaviors, there was one exception. All three groups, Israel, CIT and TASC, showed an increased opposition to inter-marriage and inter-dating after the completion of their programs.

Conclusions:

The conclusions derived from the present study are as follows:

1. Program objectives should be developed that are more modest and more easily attainable and should be stated in a manner that allows for easy comprehension of those objectives. This would assist in the development of specific program activities and the measurement of the success of the program.

2. The expectation that major changes in Jewish identification will result from programs such as the ones examined in this study tends to disregard countless long-term factors which determine the strength and manifestations of the camper's Jewish identity. Among the factors that may be important are the camper's family income, social class values, age, his emotional relationship with his nuclear and ex-

tended family, Jewish norms within his family and community and the birthplace of the camper, his parents and his grandparents. It is unfortunate that the present study did not examine some of these issues but limitations inherent in the scales used made this impossible.*

3. Center staffs must be trained to understand the complex nature of the relationship between an individual's attitudes and his overt behaviors. Individual programs must reflect an understanding of the complexities of the psychosocial processes that underlie an individual's Jewish identity if they are to succeed in enhancing that identity.

4. The image that agencies or individual agency programs project in the community tend to pre-select the constituency they serve. This preselection should be considered in the development of goals and methodological approaches to the enhancement of Jewish identity. Successful approaches to enhancing Jewish identity among highly assimilated Jewish youngsters may be markedly different than those utilized with youngsters starting with a high Jewish identification.

5. The camper's intentions with respect to using the camp program as a means of enhancing his own Jewish identity must be considered in developing camp goals and programs designed to meet those goals.

6. It is important that camp staff have extensive knowledge about their Jewish heritage and imperative that they be clear about their own Jewish identity and comfortable with their self-images as Jews. While we have no guarantee that positively oriented Jewish counselors will insure positively oriented Jewish campers, we feel safe in

* For a more comprehensive discussion of Jewish identity scaling, see the Heller-JWB Research Center monograph on which this report is based.

assuming that lukewarm, ambivalent or assimilated counselors cannot transmit a caring for Jewish heritage.

This study indicated that Jewish organizations must be modest in their claims as to the benefits of the programs that they provide to their membership and disabuse themselves of the notion of the "magical" power of any one short term experience in radically modifying attitudes and behaviors of Jewish youth. Attitudes and behaviors are formed as a result of long-time repeated experiences. 15- to 17-year-olds have been shaped life-long by home, peers, school and community, and short-term experience with this group could not undo or overcome that shaping.

Self-selection as a factor looms large. This study suggests that a spectrum of programming options attracted somewhat different participants.

Predisposition to intensive levels of Jewish identity on the part of the Israel program participants would suggest that a Center must offer different kinds of programs which reflect potential as well as actual constituencies. If a Center is perceived as minimalistic or unidirectional in its Jewish programming offerings, its constituencies are likely to reflect the perceptions as held by the community. Centers hope to enhance Jewish identity. Their programs must be perceived by the community as offering that possibility. The reinforcement necessary to bring the goal into reality would seem to be needed year around and should be consistently applied. Spasmodic and episodic Jewish programming attempts without continuity in the Center cannot be seen as sufficient devices unto themselves.

Several interesting questions arise for future consideration. An attempt was initially made to examine the counselors with respect to their position as

either positive or negative role models. However, while some of the counselors were very cooperative, others bordered on the hostile in their resistance to cooperating with the study and refused to fill out the questionnaires themselves. As a result of this, not enough data was gathered on the counselors to make it possible to come to any conclusions as to the effect of their roles as Jewish modes. A consideration must also be given to whether the questionnaire was actually measuring those aspects of Jewish identity that were meaningful to the campers. (The questionnaire was not originally constructed for this study but was an adaption of a questionnaire used by Dr. Fred Masarik in a previous study involving Jewish teenagers.) There is also the possibility that there were specific experiences involved with these programs of which we are not aware and which we cannot measure but which might have had an important effect on the campers. How "Jewish" were the experiences, for example even those in Israel?

We have to question some of the *a priori* assumptions made by many Jews in America that a trip to Israel will automatically produce, enhance or intensify Jewish identity and Jewish iden-

tification. Previous literature¹ suggests that substantial and repeated intense experiences over a long period of time are more likely to effect changes in Jewish identity and identification.

Dr. Richard Farson, former director of the Western Science Behavioral Institute in LaJolla, California reported on research done on therapeutic typologies indicating that no form of therapy had any lasting benefit and no difference in results could be measured between the various therapy approaches. When asked why therapy should be continued, he replied, "Because people like it."

People will not stop going to Israel and will not stop attending Jewish community center programs as long as they like them. However, there are many questions about these programs which elude being answered and many necessary changes in these programs which evade being perceived. At this time, we must wait for more sensitive instruments, new questions, or both. Future research will begin the questioning...again.

¹ Morris Levin, "A Survey of Research and Program Developments Involving Jewish Adolescents and Their Implications for Center Service," *this Journal*, Vol. XLVII, No. 3 (1971), pp. 208-228.

The Jewish B.A. Social Worker: A New Professional for Jewish Communal Services

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SCARCE attention has been paid to the baccalaureate social worker in Jewish communal publications. This lack is surprising when one realizes the amount of attention the BA social worker has received in the general social work community and when one realizes the significant extent to which baccalaureate level personnel are even now delivering social services within the organized Jewish community.

Only in 1969 did Irwin Golden explore the implications of the BA social worker for Jewish Community Centers.¹ Following the appearance of that initial examination, Pins and Ginsberg in 1971 broadened the scope of the implications of the BA social worker to include all the relevant Jewish communal services.²

If the recruitment of manpower for Jewish communal services is to be rationalized, then one of the chief ingredients is the early identification of Jewish persons who are interested in service to the Jewish community. The Jewish BA social worker can be an important element in the total scheme of manpower for Jewish communal service.

Who is a BA Social Worker?

In the general social work community, estimates of the percentage of

¹ Irwin Golden, "The Utilization of Social Work Manpower in Jewish Community Centers: Alternative Models," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (Fall, 1969), pp. 59-69.

² Arnulf M. Pins and Leon H. Ginsberg, "New Developments in Social Work Education and Their Impact on Jewish Communal Service and Community Center Work," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (Fall, 1971), pp. 60-71.

all social work personnel who hold the BA or less range as high as 80 percent of all persons who hold social work positions. It is important to make one distinction about these persons which is crucial for understanding the baccalaureate situation *vis-a-vis* social work. Among the persons who occupy social work positions, there are large numbers of workers as indicated above who hold the BA or who have not graduated from college. When we speak of the BA social worker we are not referring to all the persons who hold social work positions with a BA or less or who — because of their positions — identify themselves for census purposes as social workers. *The BA social worker is the graduate of an undergraduate social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education*, a person who is eligible for full membership in N.A.S.W. and is a beginning-level professional social worker. The fact that many persons hold social work positions but are not trained as BA social workers has important implications to be discussed at a later point.

The General Social Work Community

Not only are baccalaureate personnel (BA social workers according to our definition and others with different educational patterns) employed in many fields of service, but they are used even within highly professionalized fields, while little discussed. For example, 23 percent of the total number of professional positions in Family Service Association member agencies are practitioners in social work without com-