

to change institutional roles, policies and priorities. Based on her personal experience, she estimated that it takes about five years for these crusading attitudes to be tempered by experience, for the development of deeper insight into the respective roles of professionals and laymen, and for a sounder appreciation of the importance of skill. She therefore concluded that my views were too sharp a reaction to a group of young people, and that time would lessen the dangers of tension and conflict between ideology and skill.

My own experience suggests that the problem is of wider scope than she believes. It seems to me to be the better part of wisdom that we, as a professional group deeply concerned with the survival of meaningful Jewish life and community, come to grips with the problem before it begins to hamper the achievement of our objectives.

There are those who will be quick to say that any questions raised in this paper about commitment and ideology is really an attack on these dimensions. They will insist that there is no real or potential conflict, and that it's all a straw man issue. To them I can only say that experience does not support that viewpoint. On the other hand, there *are* professionals in Jewish communal service who are excellent tech-

nicians, but who are ideologically neutral. They are not opposed to ideology, but simply do not understand its relevance to their professional practice. And they too will be right, because there *are* many areas of professional practice in which ideological components are not necessarily relevant. All of which illustrates that if we are to move ahead to higher and richer levels of professional functioning, our attitudes must be those of tolerance, a desire for mutual understanding, objectivity, and a readiness to communicate in a mutually helpful way—in a word, professionally. Above all, that means no tampering with valid professional objectives, functions and services which have established their right to exist as essential human services. That right has been granted by the communities which created them and wish to continue to support them.

The problems we face as a professional and ethnic group are serious. The integration of ideological and ethnic objectives requires a very special kind of clarity about their respective roles. Commitment to Jewish life and survival is basic to the directions in which we must move, but to set a direction is only the beginning of the job, and in a sense the easiest. What we need more than ever is the creative use of skill.

Building Bridges: Towards Realistic Links Between Research and Planning in Jewish Communal Life*

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... much is necessary to improve Jewish communal programming. With all its failings, "action research" has the potential to bring greater rationality to Jewish social planning.

Three-quarters of the Jewish children of school age in New York City receive no religious instruction. The quarter given some training hardly fares better. Incompetent teachers, shabby quarters, and a sterile approach to education combine to estrange many of the young. Of the approximately 51,954 children who receive instruction, 27 percent (13,952) supplement their public school session in 468 small, improvised, private schools, the ignominious *hadarim*. These schools are run by one, two, or three men who wish only to eke out a livelihood which they fail to obtain by other means. Classes meet in the basement or upper floor of some old dilapidated building where rent is minimal. The provisional classrooms are usually filthy, the light dim, the air stuffy, and the learning minimal.¹

These were the conclusions of Dr. Mordecai Kaplan's 1909 epic study on New York Jewish education. This 1909 investigation was important for two reasons: it conclusively demonstrated that Jewish education was characterized by public apathy and educational ineptitude and second, the study was the first of its kind. It was one of the first systematic attempts to diagnose scientifically a Jewish communal problem. Prior to Kaplan's research, conducted under the aegis of the New York Kehilla, Jewish educational problems were the province of a handful of philanthropists. Subsequent to the study, religious educa-

tion became central to the Jewish communal agenda. From 1909-1911 the New York Kehilla went on to develop model schools, textbooks, teacher-training programs, and curricula. In each of these endeavors, Samson Benderly, Judah Magnes, Mordecai Kaplan, and the other Kehilla zealots relied on an article of faith—research was the necessary step in solving a social problem.²

Although the Jewish polity has become more variegated since 1909, scientific research is not as prominent in planning as in the days of the Kehilla. In this paper we shall explore the current and potential relationship between research and Jewish social planning. In particular, we will analyze the action research design; the functions of Jewish action research; programmatic constraints; and the future of research conducted in turbulent settings.

Action Research

Kurt Lewin developed a style of research which is applicable to Jewish communal planning. As Director of the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lewin tested various models to improve inter-group relations. Out of these experiments came cooperative links between practitioners and social scientists. The hallmark of Lewin's approach was "action research." He describes the approach in *Resolving*

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¹ Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehilla Experiment, 1908-1922*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 88-89.

² Jewish education as a communal responsibility is discussed in Goren, *ibid*, pp. 86-109. The role of the Bureau of Philanthropic Research in social reform is examined on p. 70.

Social Conflicts, a text which has become a classic sourcebook in social psychology:

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of *action-research*, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.³

Lewin understood that basic research was necessary to understand social reality. However, Lewin urged that researchers must do more than analyze the laws governing human affairs. Above all, research should help produce social change.

Research Categories

There are two types of action research which have been used in Jewish communal planning—needs assessment and program evaluation. Jewish agencies frequently undertake “needs assessments;” we estimate the prevalence, severity, and distribution of communal “needs” and problems. Agencies sometimes engage in *epidemiology*, the study of who develops a problem, where, and under what circumstances. Examples of epidemiology include estimating the need for Jewish day-care facilities, assessing the needs of elderly Jews, or reviewing the adequacy of Jewish family and children’s service information and referral.⁴

A landmark in Jewish epidemiology or needs assessment was the Cleveland Survey of 1908 and 1923. The surveys examined thoroughly the Jewish population and each Federation institution to identify the unfilled needs of Cleveland Jewry. The Federation adopted virtually every recommendation of the 1923 population study. These

recommendations charted the direction of the community for the next twenty years. Although the survey results would be taken for granted today, some of the findings were then considered revolutionary. It was found, for example, that a prime Jewish occupation was peddling. As one novice scavenger reported:

Instead of heading toward the isolated farms away from the city, where the farmers were eager to receive peddlers amicably, my uncle, who was the manager of our business, rode out only a mile or so from our house. He began to “huckster” at the top of his voice: “Paper! Rags! Paper! Rags!” But the only immediate response to this announcement was the jeering cries of the street-urchins: “God-damn-Jew-Sheeny!” These insults cut me to the heart and this bitter taste was more than I could bear.⁵

The Cleveland study demonstrated that most Jews were working under such grueling routines. In response to the Cleveland studies, the Federation developed a far-reaching series of welfare, health, recreational, and Jewish educational activities.

The other major type of Jewish action research is program evaluation. It is important to distinguish between “evaluation” and “evaluation research.” In “evaluation,” we simply make judgments of program worth. We need not apply any systematic rules to gather and assess evidence. On the other hand, “evaluation research” necessitates the use of scientific methods to make an assessment of program impact.

When we undertake evaluation research in the Jewish community, we should be aware that there are five levels to judge program success or failure.⁶

³ The 1908 investigation and 1923 Bureau of Jewish Social Research Study are reviewed in Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary American Jewish History Center, 1978, pp. 123-126 and 284-287. The quotation is on pp. 125-126.

⁶ For an enumeration of “Types of Categories of Evaluation,” see Edward Suchman, *Evaluative Research: Principles and Practice in Public Service and Social Action Programs*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974, pp. 51-73.

1. *Effort*. This level analyzes the quantity and quality of service. Here we focus on input rather than output. We seek answers to the questions: “What did you do and how well did you do it?” This type of evaluation can be compared to measuring how many times a bird flaps his wings. One does not measure how far the bird has traveled.

Evaluations by counting the number of students in Jewish day schools, by counting students attending Hillel functions, or by counting the volume of case service in a Jewish family agency are examples of evaluation of effort. Much Jewish communal evaluation is concentrated in this category.

2. *Performance*. The focus is *effect* rather than effort. This criterion requires that program goals be formulated in terms that are clear, specific, and measurable. We want to know how much change occurred relative to the goal(s). Our interest is in how far the bird has traveled not how many times he flapped his wings. When performance is our concern, we study how many Russian immigrants received “appropriate” job placement as a result of Jewish vocational service interventions; the impact of various types of Jewish schooling on adult behavior; or the effects of a Jewish family life education program on client parenting abilities and inter-personal communication.

3. *Adequacy of Performance*. This criterion of success refers to the degree to which the program affects the overall problem. Our concern is, for example, with the *total* Jewish illiteracy or non-affiliation in a given community. A *chavurah* may be effective in promoting a sense of community among its members and in enriching the Jewish identity of the participants. However, as a means to significantly increase the total level of Jewish commitment in a community, such a program may be thoroughly inadequate. To return to the previous analogy, we now measure how far the bird has flown in terms of his destination.

It is sobering, for example, to realize that despite massive financial investments in elementary Jewish education, studies suggest that this type of supplementary Jewish schooling has little long-range impact.⁷ Such schooling minimally affects the total amount of Jewish identification in a given locality. By the “adequacy of performance” criterion, Jewish supplementary elementary schooling is of limited utility.

4. *Efficiency*. A large portion of the evaluation in the Jewish community deals with efficiency. We assess alternative plans or methodologies in terms of money, time, and personnel. In regard to the bird analogy, we question whether the bird could have reached his destination more efficiently by altering his flight pattern. Did he maximize the air currents and fly at the optimal height? Such cost-benefit analysis has figured prominently in the Jewish community’s Russian immigrant resettlement effort. As agencies strive to reduce resettlement costs, they consider whether classes in English as a second language can be reduced in length; whether immigrants should be obligated to take the first job offered or wait for more suitable employment; and the propriety of limiting the months of dependence on communal assistance. Although such approaches may be dictated by economic necessity, we as yet have no evidence of the effects of such efficiency measures on the quality of immigrant absorption.

5. *Process*. Explanatory evaluation necessitates variable testing. We seek to ascertain whether, why, and how the program produced the sought-after effects. In evaluating a Jewish single-parent support-group, we ask:

What is the relative success of different aspects of the program, the experiential and lecture formats?

⁷ Walter Ackerman, “Jewish Education Today,” *American Jewish Year Book 1980*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979, pp. 130-148.

³ Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967, pp. 202-203.

⁴ Epidemiology, in its social scientific context, is analyzed in Alfred Kahn, *Theory and Practice of Social Planning*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969, pp. 76-92.

What type of individuals make the best participants? Why?

What are the negative unintended consequences of the program?

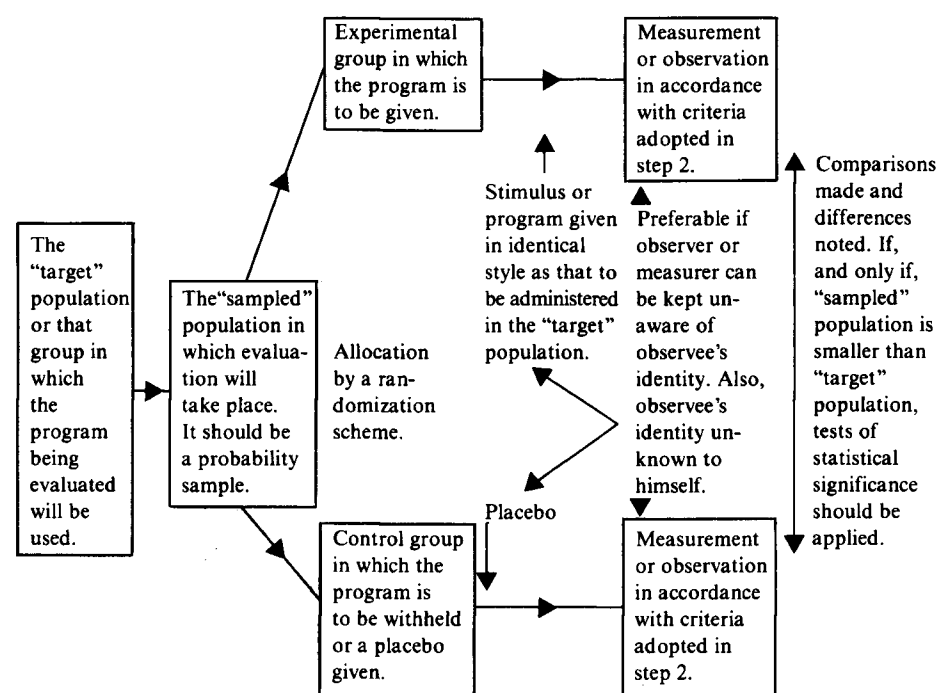
Which *theory* explains why this program does or does not enhance the coping abilities of the participants?

In summary, when Jewish communal programs are designed, these five criteria—effort, performance, adequacy, efficiency, and process—must be tested. This is an ideal. We now turn to some of the constraints which impede us as Jewish communal planners/researchers.

The Turbulent Setting of Jewish Action Programs

Unlike pure or basic research, most Jewish communal research takes place in an action setting. We are not simply doing research; programs servicing people are in operation. The service program has to take priority: the research is, at best, secondary; at worst, an unwanted appendage. There are several issues which can create serious problems. These issues have to be confronted if we are even to come close to implementing the "ideal experimental design" set forth in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Ideal Experimental Design



Flow Chart

This flow chart illustrated optimum principles and sequence to be followed in conducting a valid experimental design to evaluate a health program. (Reproduced from Greenberg, Bernard G., and Berwyn F. Mattison, "The Whys and Wherefores of Program Evaluation," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, vol. 46, July, 1955, p. 298.)

Source: Suchman, p. 92.

Resistance

Whereas planners and researchers are concerned with getting proof of program effectiveness, clients for the most part emphasize the immediate delivery of services. Clinical medicine has been successful in withholding measures until controlled studies have been completed. Human services have not been so successful. Withholding vocational services from a control group of Russian Jewish emigres that needs such help is likely to create public relations problems. Jewish communal professionals are reticent to assign clients to a control condition since they believe it is their obligation not to deny service.

To overcome such resistance "staged research" is advocated. For example, to test the Stanford Computer Assisted Instruction System, the client population was divided into two sections. Group one received the reading instruction and group two, the mathematics instruction. The two groups were then compared. Similarly, a Jewish vocational service can expose clients needing job development to two different types of programs and then compare the results. Another approach has been utilized in medical schools. Half the class receives the new program during the first semester and the rest of the class receives it during the second semester. During the first semester, the unexposed group were the controls and vice versa during the second semester. Jewish communal programs which are repeated twice per year or that have waiting lists could readily adapt this "staged" methodology.⁸

Program Shifts

Jewish communal programs are constantly in flux. Conditions change and it

becomes increasingly difficult to specify the program being evaluated. The clientele may change; the funding may rise or decline; different staff may be hired or resign. Such conditions require continual stock-taking.⁹

Resources

Jewish social research requires money, time, facilities, and, most importantly, properly trained personnel. Millions of dollars are spent each year for Jewish service programs without any attempt to determine if these programs are accomplishing anything worthwhile. This condition reflects the low priority given to research compared with direct services. Amateur research studies are being carried out by persons completely unskilled in research design, data collection, and analysis. As a result, the conclusion of Dr. Louis Finkelstein of the Jewish Theological Seminary is valid:

I am surprised by the dearth of information about the Jews of today. There are probably a hundred people, and more, whose profession it is to discover all that can be known about the Jews in Jerusalem in the first century. There does not seem to be one who has the same duty for the Jews of New York in the twentieth century. So it comes about that we understand Judaism in the first century better than we understand Judaism in the twentieth.¹⁰

The Future of Jewish Action Research: Outcome Assessment

While Jewish communities are increasingly undertaking needs assessments and demographic surveys, not as much priority is being given to evaluative research. Jewish social services are frequently provided on the assumption that they are effective. Although programs are informally evaluated, more could be done to insure ongoing verification that goals are being met. To

⁸ Examples of "staged" groups are contained in Carol Weiss, *Evaluation Research: Methods of Assessing Program Effectiveness*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972, pp. 60-91.

⁹ A summary of methodological problems is presented in Kahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-93.

¹⁰ Marshall Sklare, *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*. New York: Free Press, 1967, p.v.

rectify this situation, researchers, planners, and direct service providers need to collaborate in three areas:

1. Clarification of program goals
 - a. State goals in clearer, more specific, and, wherever possible, measurable terms;
 - b. Reexamine the assumptions which govern program operation;
 - c. Disaggregate programs into measurable component parts, e.g., How many single Jewish parents learned to communicate more effectively with their children through the Jewish family life education program of the agency?

2. Development of an evaluation process which would be applicable to many different Jewish communal activities, but which allows for agency and client uniqueness.

3. Establishing procedures to insure that direct service providers are directly involved in the evaluation process. This would help insure that the research product confronts issues which are pertinent to the practitioners and that the research findings are implemented.

Such a project is in the experimental stage in Boston. A *Program Assessment Form* (see Figure 2) has been developed to

Figure 2: Program Assessment Form

Descriptors:

1. NAME OF AGENCY: *A Jewish Family Service*
2. AGENCY MISSION: *Strengthen family life; deal effectively with social problems; make meaningful choices affecting their lives; to develop mutually gratifying personal and social relationships*
3. PROGRAM BEING ASSESSED: *Jewish Family Life Education*
4. OVERALL GOALS OF THE PROGRAM BEING ASSESSED: *To increase knowledge; to modify attitudes; to improve skills*

I Program Components (Service)	II Objectives of Each Program Component (Service)	III Measurement Process				IV Hoped For Results (Goals)	V Actual Achievement
		A Measurement Instruments	B To Whom Applied	C When Applied	D By Whom Applied		
Child Development Workshop	Increase information on child development	Before and after test on level of information	Workshop Participants	At beginning and end of workshop sessions	Group Leader	Participant achieves score indicating that he/she acquired 50% of the information that course was intended to impart	40% of information was actually acquired
Life Enrichment Workshop	Develop an improvement in communication skills	Self Evaluation Questionnaire Group Leader Report	Workshop Participants	At end of Workshop	Group Leader	80% of participants report an improvement in communication skills confirmed by Group Leaders observations during workshops	80% actually improved communication skills

get a better perspective on agency programs. This project was designed to get agencies to focus more systematically on program components, objectives, measurement procedures, measurable goals, and achievements.¹¹ As can be noted from the Form, such a system allows each agency to identify its own goals, program components, and measurements.

Some of the preliminary results of this project deserve emphasis since they underscore the problematics of doing research in an action setting. First, agencies must periodically review the realism of their service goals. This project demonstrated that program results frequently differed from expectations. Second, much of the data needed to do outcome assessment are in existing agency record systems. Pre- and post-tests, written and verbal client/staff reports, and data on client satisfaction are measurement instruments which are already employed. Third, outcome assessment must be coupled with input and efficiency data to arrive at an accurate portrayal of a Jewish communal program. Most agencies already collect information on effort expended and unit costs for services. When this information is combined with assessment results, our capacity to improve service delivery is significantly enhanced.

In conclusion, much is necessary to

¹¹ The Program Assessment Project was sponsored by the United Community Planning Corporation of Boston, a nonsectarian planning body. Further details on project methodology may be obtained from the author.

improve Jewish communal programming. With all its failings, "action research" has the potential to bring greater rationality to Jewish social planning. In considering how research and planning can interrelate, I am reminded of a dialogue between "Doc," leader of the street-corner gang, and William Foote Whyte, a Harvard University social researcher. The dialogue takes place in "Cornerville"—an Italian slum. "Doc" turns to Whyte and inquires: "You want to write something about Cornerville?"

Whyte replies: "Yes, eventually."

"Do you want to change things?"

"Well—yes. I don't see how anybody could come down to Cornerville where it is so crowded, people haven't got any money or any work to do, and not want to have some things changed. But I think a fellow should do the thing he is best fitted for. I don't want to be a reformer, and I'm not cut out to be a politician. I just want to understand these things as best I can and write them up, and if that has any influence . . ."

Doc answers: "I think you can change things that way. Mostly that is the way things are changed, by writing about them."¹²

Like Doc, I believe that research can effect social change. However, researchers, planners, and practitioners must work *together* to anticipate, measure, and shape Jewish communal change.

¹² William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, pp. 292-293.