

IMPLICATIONS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES FOR PRACTICE IN JEWISH GROUP SERVICE AGENCIES *

by IRVING CANTER, ED.D.

*Associate Professor, Jane Addams School of Social Work, University of Illinois, Research
Project Director, Jewish Community Centers of Chicago*

THOUGH one still finds references to "social work as an art,"¹ more and more practitioners are supporting the assumption that scientific knowledge, particularly from the behavioral sciences, will help our agencies and our professionals do a better job in relation to their functions, values, and goals. And with increased allocations from private foundations, and federal and state sources, there is certainly a growing involvement of academicians in the study of practical social work problems and issues.

Because of philosophic and scientific reasons, support for the work of social agencies had not always been forthcoming from the "social scientist." Among the founding fathers of sociology, Herbert Spencer, the darling of the social Darwinists, projected the concept that society developed best through, "natural selection," based upon "natural law,"

"competition," and "survival of the fittest," concepts which were adapted from Malthus and Darwin. William Graham Sumner, referred to by Hofstadter as "the most vigorous and influential social Darwinist in America," saw society changing slowly through the natural growth of crecive institutions out of the folkways and mores of a people.²

These early social scientists and other members of their school shared a deep reluctance to tamper with the ills of society through planned change based upon study and research. Supported by the simultaneous development of capitalism and the Protestant Ethic, the only basis upon which they could accept social work was that it provided opportunities for the elite to act nobly.³

Though the "remaining remnants" of this view of man and society still haunt us today, the theory became unpopular among the growing groups of sociolo-

* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Los Angeles, May 31, 1964.

¹ Gisela Konopka, *Social Group Work*, Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1963 " . . . The social Group Work process has the aspects of an art based on science." (p. 153) Note title of papers by Esther Clemence and Grace K. Nicholls, "Science and Art in the Use of Relationship in Case Work Education and in Case Work Practice," at the *Smith College School for Social Work*, Chicago Alumnae Chapter, Chicago, Illinois, November, 1963.

² Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, George Braziller, New York, 1954, p. 51.

³ The mutual support of social Darwinism, capitalism and the development of the "Protestant Ethic" is clearly demonstrated in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958, and R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1926, as well as in Hofstadter, *ibid*.

gists including Ward and Kropotkin who led the attack against a philosophy of inevitable "natural selection." Said Brearly, in this regard, "... In opposition to such a fatalistic view of society, Lester F. Ward proposed his conception of 'social teltis,' the possibility and efficacy of intelligent collective planning and superiority of the human mind over the blind forces of nature . . ." ⁴

As an opposition force, but working separately they demonstrated that cooperation was equally a product of nature; that man differed from other forms of life because he had the capacity to alter his natural environment as well as his life situation; and that social reconstruction was possible through the social sciences.

The surveys by Howard, Le Play, Booth, and Webb in Europe, and Klein, Harrison and Eaton—and a host of others in America, made great contributions to social change and social work, although as Young points out, the findings were taken more seriously in England than in the United States. ⁵ However, there have been very few planned and sustained cooperative efforts between social agencies and social scientists in pursuit of answers to the persistent and socially dysfunctional aspects of our society with which social agencies deal.

There are still some among us who see each bit of knowledge gained through research as essentially dangerous, to be

⁴ Quoted by H. C. Brearly, "The Nature of Social Control," Joseph S. Roucek, ed., *Social Control*, D. Van Nostrand and Co., Inc., Princeton, 1956 (Second Edition), p. 12. Lester F. Ward, *Dynamic Sociology* (2 vols.) D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1883. pp. 74-75. Peter A. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1917.

⁵ Pauline V. Young and C. F. Schmid, *Scientific Social Surveys and Research*, Prentice-Hall, New York, 1939.

used to manipulate individual clients, groups or societies. In a sense, they hold that we may be creating the social equivalent to the atom bomb, which could easily get out of control.

Closely akin to this group are those who claim that research cannot resolve any basic practice problems, because social workers deal with value choices, which are not "researchable." Decisions in the research area, they say, cannot be made on the basis of research findings. A notable example of the uselessness of research findings for making value decisions can be observed in a recent award-winning conference paper in which research data illustrating the decline in Jewish observance and loyalty to Jewish values, led the authors to the conclusion that Jewish cultural life needs to be enhanced and strengthened. ⁶ One doubts very much that any recommendation would have been made to eliminate Jewish educational programs, or close down Jewish centers or to discourage synagogue affiliation if the data had revealed a vibrant Jewish community pattern of a "healthy" Jewish living. One suspects that the authors would have concluded that there were still some areas of Jewish life that needed strengthening and that new techniques were needed to improve the situation or at the least, the current level of Jewish life should be maintained by continued attention of adequately financed Jewish institutions. In short, research findings by themselves do not give direction to our agencies. They may just as often raise new questions and new problems. ⁷

⁶ Bertram H. Gold and Arnulf Pins, "Effective Preparation for Jewish Community Center Work," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* Vol. 39, No. 2, (December, 1962).

⁷ Schwartz cites a parallel case when he wonders what group workers would do if the studies on "democratic, authoritarian, and laissez faire" demonstrated groups and individuals functioned best in every way under autocratic leadership. William Schwartz,

Yet the pressure for scientific knowledge persists. There is a great need for scientific knowledge in the area of evaluation, where both professional and lay leaders express concern over the way large expenditures of funds are made. Agencies are beginning to talk about and develop research projects which are being supported by local foundations and government agencies. Bibliographies and reviews of related research are being regularly published;⁸ the Conference itself takes on more of a research aura; papers without appropriate social science footnotes⁹ are becoming extinct; and professionals are tired of empty cliches, though none of us has learned to avoid them; but, the demand is clear, "give us the facts; give us the theory."

But the "facts" are still difficult to apply to our work because we have failed to build the bridge between social

"Small Group Science and Group Work Practice," *Social Work*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (October, 1963), p. 42.

⁸ *Related Research Reporter*, published by the NAJCW Research Committee in cooperation with The Research Institute for Group Work and Jewish Agencies under the editorship of Irving Canter and summaries of Jewish research studies have been published annually in *Jewish Education* since 1958, prepared at first by Joshua Fishman and more recently by Victor Sanua.

⁹ Although documentation of professional articles cannot be considered equivalent to the proper use of social science data in support of a specific thesis, it is instructive to compare the present *Journal* and the older issues of the *Jewish Center Worker* since 1946, when "footnotes" made an early, persistent and growing appearance in our professional literature. The current avalanche of references, however, may only be one more sign of the aspirations of an "upwardly mobile" professional group. In 1899, Thorstein Veblen pointed out that the "usage of citing sources and authorities has not been observed," because he expected his references "should be readily traceable to their sources by fairly well read persons." *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1917 edition, p. vi.

scientist and practitioner. This was most dramatically demonstrated recently at a Chicago NASW Institute when a noted social scientist who has been a leading researcher in the area of group dynamics for over a decade indicated that he had yet to meet with one of the nation's most articulate social group work professors, who shared the same campus in Michigan for several years.¹⁰

In short, while research in small groups went on apace and the number of studies has multiplied dramatically, one finds great difficulty in applying small group research findings to practice. While one could agree that not all theory is relevant, and that what is relevant takes time to "trickle down," it is my own conviction that greater utility of research still awaits a union of practitioners and researchers, in the form of the joint planning of "action research."¹¹

To recognize difficulties in utilizing social science theory and research findings is not an admission that there is nothing available which can "contribute to the development of a dependable body of knowledge to serve the goals and means of social work . . ." ¹² It may, however, account for the apparent "strain" in demonstrating the relationship between social science and social group work practice.

It is my intent to focus briefly on four levels of social science research and theory to point up some of the implica-

¹⁰ Sixth Annual Institute, Group Work Section, Chicago Area Chapter, National Association of Social Workers, February 1, 1964.

¹¹ Irving Canter, "Pittsburgh's Adventure in Research," *The Jewish Center Worker*, May, 1948.

¹² Mary E. Macdonald, "Social Work Research: A Perspective," Norman A. Polansky, ed., *Social Work Research*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960, p. 1.

tions for the practice of social group work in Jewish settings:

1. Grand theory or general theory
2. Theories of the "middle range"
3. Social science concepts
4. Findings of isolated studies

Our major concern will be: how does this theory, concept or findings contribute to agency function and professional practice in Jewish group service agencies?

Grand Theory

In comparing the predominantly European "global theorists" with their "ingenious speculations and impressionistic conclusions" to the American scientists who were busy amassing all kinds of data in the field of mass communications, Merton characterized the position of the former as being: "We don't know that what we say is true, but it is at least significant." The American credo, on the other hand, seems to be: "We don't know that what we say is particularly significant, but at least it's true."¹³

From the "grand theorists" I would like to examine briefly two closely related formulations for depicting society in our time: Tonnies' concept of *Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft*¹⁴ and Becker's discussion of "the sacred and the secular."¹⁵ These are not unrelated to Redfield's folk-urban continuum and to theories of mass societies and the urban

dilemma.¹⁶ All of us are familiar with the basic data upon which these theories rest, because they are so descriptive of the world in which we live.

Succinctly stated, Tonnies claimed that relationships among people had changed from the informal, spontaneous, family-oriented society to one in which relationships are built on formal, rational, and individual arrangements. Becker also noted these changes, but focussed on the disappearance of permanent sacred values—these values for which men martyred themselves—and the increased orientation to a world of changing values which condoned the rationalization of value compromises and put a higher price on the capacity to evade punishment of value violation than it placed on loyalty to sacred values. In this impersonal world, where one's status has to be continuously established, one finds alienation, exploitation and isolation.

Many agencies have recognized this changing social scene more clearly through a variety of Golden Age programs, because the possibilities of loneliness and despair were so apparent and so pervasive for the group which previously carried the status of the "elders" in the extended family unit. Hand in hand with this development, however, came the development of bigger and more extravagant centers. By their very size, they demand the development of bureaucratic structures which must necessarily become less responsive to individual needs. Thus, in an era of bigness in a highly mobile society where individuals are constantly trying to develop roots for themselves, our centers grow larger and take on many of the characteristics of the overwhelming impersonal "world outside."

¹³ Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., (Revised Edition) 1957, pp. 439-40.

¹⁴ Ferdinand Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, published in German 1887, translated by Charles P. Loomis as *Community and Society*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, Mich., 1957.

¹⁵ Howard Becker, "The Sacred and the Secular," Howard Becker and Alvin Boskoff, eds., *Modern Sociological Theory*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1957.

¹⁶ Robert Redfield discusses the similarity in the preface to his *The Folklore of Yucatan*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1941, p. x.

The implications for practice seem clear. If we are accurate in our appraisal that secondary relationships predominate in the world around us, then we must make greater efforts to build the small group structures which are so important to fruitful living; we need to try to "defeat" the blight of bigness which dominates the Jewish center and other institutions in our Jewish communities.

Theories of the Middle Range

In his protest against global or grand theory which he called "all embracing and grandiose" Merton indicates the need for "theories of the middle range. Merton defines sociological theory as "logically interconnected concepts which are limited and modest in scope and applicable to a limited range of data . . . which might be called theories of the middle range: theories intermediate to the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-by-day routines of research and—all inclusive speculation."¹⁷

Merton's own concept of latent and manifest function seems to be particularly instructive to the Jewish community centers. By manifest functions, Merton refers to "those objective consequences for a specified unit (person, sub-group, social or cultural system) which contribute to its adjustment or adaptation and were so intended; (latent functions) referring to unintended and unrecognized consequences of the same order."¹⁸

This view suggests that researchers can learn more about the function of an institution by discovering the "unintended or unavowed consequences which centers and center activities have for communities and for individuals, by seeking out the hidden functions of the

agency, rather than through the exploration of the avowed aims, or the officially stated goals,—the manifest functions. The need for clearly recognizing the total function or social consequences of an agency has been highlighted by the NAJCW National Commission on Center Purposes, which focussed only upon the manifest functions of the Jewish center as found in "the recorded institutional purposes of Jewish community centers throughout the United States."¹⁹

The Commission also studied the degree to which specific goals are implemented in each center, or "the degree of effort, energy and resources extended by staff in attempting to achieve each aim on the list of the sixty-six goals²⁰ extracted from numerous sources dealing with center purposes. The final statement also is essentially a statement of manifest functions and hence must be augmented by other empirical studies.

An analysis of the center's "latent" function would add a new dimension to the study of the consequences of an institutional program. It is most appropriate for example, for understanding why an institution is maintained despite the fact that few of its manifest goals are carried out by the agency. It would seem that the next function of such a committee would be to develop a list of latent functions of the center.

For example, despite its protestations, the center may not be seen by other Jewish institutions as serving the cause of "Jewish Unity" a center purpose which is listed among the "high number of mentions" by professional workers in

¹⁹ Carl Urbont, "Report on the Existing Purposes of the Jewish Community Center, February 6, 1964," p. 9, for the *NAJCW Commission on Center Purposes*, Dr. Charles S. Levy, chairman.

²⁰ The study was conducted among agency executives by the NAJCW Commission in cooperation with the Research Institute for Group Work in Jewish Agencies.

¹⁷ Robert K. Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

the field; but rather as a competitive one. In such situations it is important to remember that despite the public manifestations of friendship among synagogues and centers, in some geographic areas, a "cold war" often exists for control of a child's time and values. The attack by *Conservative Judaism*²¹ should serve as a constant reminder to us, though the "hatchet" has been temporarily buried. And likewise, the Jewish center may not be seen as an institution linking Jew and Gentile but as a ghettoizing instrument, tending to divide the community despite the fact that Urbont's report lists both "intergroup relations" and "intercultural relations" among the "high mention purposes."²² By attempting to trace the real consequences of its program or its very existence, clarity of function could emerge, and once known, could possibly be subject to scrutiny and planned change.

Concepts

We are using the term "concept" here to refer to what Merton called "the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-to-day routines of research." The idea may not have fully attained acceptance as a theory, but it has been proved useful in a variety of studies.

Two concepts will be discussed here briefly in relation to practice in social group work settings: role conflict and confusion and "symbolic interaction."

²¹ *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 2-3 (1962), included a series of papers which bitterly attacked the Jewish Community Center as a competitive institution for community dollars as well as the time of the community's youngsters. "The Report of the Committee on Critiques of Jewish Community Centers" by Mr. Bernard Resnikoff, to the National Commission on Center Purposes, February 6, 1964 is also instructive in this connection.

²² Carl Urbont, op. cit.

Role Conflict and Confusion

In its simplest definition, role has been designated as the specific rights and obligations of individuals in different statuses; it includes "a set of expectations which group members share concerning the behavior of a person who occupies a given position in a group."²³ Role and role status have received a great deal of attention in recent social work literature.

In Jewish centers as in all bureaucratic structures, opportunities for role confusion occur on both a board level as well as in the club group. On a board level, one finds role confusion centering around many of the decisions which board members are called upon to make, without any special training in the area of decision. The confusion is compounded by the fact that by common consent and delusion, the decision is not left with the staff. Instead, the executive, on the basis of his expertise, is responsible for feeding information and alternatives to the board members, who occupy the seat of power. This common delusion does not go unrecognized: it is what Gouldner has called "organization secrets"²⁴ and as Goffman might say . . . "it is common knowledge to those who prepare for the performance in the 'back region' or 'back stage.'"²⁵

On another level, role confusion enters our direct leadership relationship with groups. Thus, in Wilson and Ryland, the principle is asserted that worker intervention is related to the social and

²³ A. Paul Hare, *Handbook of Small Group Research*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Ill., 1962, p. 101.

²⁴ Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Secrets of Organizations," Rachel Marks, ed., *The Social Welfare Forum*, 1963, Columbia University Press, New York, 1963, pp. 161-77.

²⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, 1959, p. 112.

psychological health of the group;²⁶ in Konopka's work with groups in different settings, she highlights the situations which create conflict with the group's autonomy and the therapeutic purposes of a group.²⁷ Thus she recommends that where a therapy group wishes to reject a potential member, the worker must take action which will get the group to change its mind. More typically, in our centers, we profess a belief in self-determination for groups, but come Purim Carnival time, we resort to subtle cajoling and psychological blackmail. This lack of clarity—even inconsistency of worker intervention—must necessarily create some confusion about the worker's role in the group as far as the member or "communication recipient" is concerned, even though the worker may believe that he is operating logically with a defined frame of reference.²⁸ The same problem is often

²⁶ Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, *Social Group Work Practice*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Cambridge, 1949, see esp. chart on "Degree of Activity of Worker as Indicated by Social Health of Members," p. 68.

²⁷ Gisela Konopka, *Group Work in the Institution*, Whiteside, Inc. and William Morrow and Co., New York, 1954, esp. pp. 36-49; e.g. the Social Worker "develops an attitude of flexibility in the use of principles and tools . . .," p. 43; and compare the staff decision about games because a child would "not be able to take any failure in games," (p. 49) and the group work objective, "a basic development of the capacity to participate. Participation is one of our basic democratic concepts." (p. 45).

²⁸ An attempt to define different models of intervention in terms of "ideal types" which had a more recognizable pattern of worker behaviors was attempted by W. Paul Simon in "Some Comments on: Issues in Social Group Work," *NASW News*, Vol. 6, No. 2, February, 1961. The concept was expanded in a joint paper by Prof. Simon and Irving Canter, "A Three Model Approach to Group Work Analysis," Sixth Annual Institute, Group Work Section, Chicago Area Chapter NASW, February, 1964.

found in situations involving volunteers where we find "role collisions" with youth presidents, chairmen, and other indigenous leaders whose roles group leaders often usurp to keep the group alive and active.²⁹

The Concept of Symbolic Interaction

Although we have achieved the reputation of being a profession of jargon users, we have only begun to pay attention to the deeper meaning of our ability to communicate with our members, group leaders, board members and community. The concept of "symbolic interaction" is particularly helpful in exploring the issue—which is much more involved than simple semantics or dictionary definitions.

As Shibutani points out, "speech is the most important medium through which cooperation is achieved; it is the easiest way in which diverse activity is coordinated for the attainment of common ends."³⁰ Communication is however possible only through shared symbols, which develop out of shared experiences, out of a shared culture. This factor often makes inter-class or inter-group communication impossible and is undoubtedly a significant consideration in the pointed finding that the people who really need the service most have rarely seen the inside of a traditional casework setting.

²⁹ Irving Canter, "Puppets, Powers and Professionals: The Application of Social Science Concepts to Work with Lay Leaders," paper at Midwest Chapter, National Association of Jewish Center Workers, Milwaukee, January 8, 1964; also Irving Canter, "The Problems of Club Leadership—an Interim Report of a Research Project," Research Institute for Group Work in Jewish Agencies, Washington, D. C., 1958, mimeographed.

³⁰ Tometsu Shibutani, *Society and Personality, An Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1961, pp. 148-49.

Social group workers share the common culture of the profession which developed out of common learning experiences which included more than the learning of a new vocabulary. Volunteer leaders and board members (and youth leaders, too) do not share that background although they have a fantastic capacity to pick up our vocabulary through association with us. However, attempts to learn an esoteric language means more than an attempt to learn a new vocabulary. It demands the expenditure of years of experience in contact with the situations to which the symbols are attached.

This structured communication block demands a conscious attempt to examine the situations in which we must communicate with board members and volunteers. The high turnover and the poor quality of most of our volunteer leaders and their inability to perceive the group situations as professionals see them, suggests that we have not established contact in this area.

The reverses we suffer in carrying out board policy decisions in situations which board members have mimicked our proposals in our own language, also testifies to the fact that our symbols were really not shared and that the interaction with board or volunteers had not resulted in mutual understanding and mutuality of values and objectives.

Since our self-image is tied to our capacity to manipulate our special symbols,³¹ the task of communication is doubly difficult. The concept of symbolic interaction, focusses on the deeper dilemma of communication which goes far beyond the simple misuse of our professional language.

³¹ This is the essential argument in Goffman, op. cit., but generalized to all individuals in our society.

Discrete Studies

It has already been noted that the total number of discrete studies of human behavior in groups has multiplied beyond the capacity of individuals to absorb them. Hare's *Handbook of Small Group Research*³² which surveyed all of the relevant research from 1900-1959 is already an "old-timer." Now Berelson and Steiner have collected *An Inventory of Scientific Findings* in which they offer "1,045 conclusions about human conduct."³³ At the same time, studies related to ethnic groups in general and the Jewish group in particular are multiplying. However, the *Related Research Reporter*,³⁴ a grab-bag of studies "related" to our field, reveals in each issue that several specific studies can only be dimly related to practice, and relevance is difficult to substantiate.

It has already been said that research findings are in need of further "codifications." What is also required is an attempt to relate findings to practice. What follows is a modest attempt to accomplish this "feat" with three related studies:

1. Democratic participation and self-esteem
2. Studies in conformity
3. Religious dissonance and self-esteem

Self-Esteem and Democratic Participation

Once in a while, in contrast with most other studies, we find a piece of empiri-

³² Hare, op. cit., follows somewhat in the tradition of *Small Groups: Studies in Social Interaction* by Hare, Borgatta and Bales, published in 1955. "From all sources together have come more than one thousand books and articles relevant to the *Study of Social Interaction in Small Groups*. (Hare, 1962, p. vi.)

³³ Bernard Berelson. Berelson and Gary Steiner, eds., *An Inventory of Scientific Findings in Human Behavior*, Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1964.

³⁴ *Related Research Reporter*, op. cit.

cal research which has direct bearing on our professional values, goals and methods. The current attacks on "do nothing" groups and the increased focus on dysfunction in our field, emphasize the significance of Rosenberg's study which clearly indicates that there is a positive relationship between group participation and self-esteem.³⁵

In his study of 1500 juniors and seniors in 10 randomly selected high school groups in New York State, Rosenberg found that the self-esteem of students was positively related to their concern for national and international affairs, as well as the quantity of their participation in group discussions.

In analyzing this relationship, he found that:

1. Youth with fundamental feelings of worthlessness and lacking in self-respect are inordinately concerned with the impression they make on others and hence are more likely to be threatened by the possibility of being laughed at or making people angry with what they say.
2. Those with lower self-esteem feel less confident that they can contribute something of interest or of value to the group.

"In conclusion, Rosenberg accepts the thesis that an individual needs a certain

³⁵ Morris Rosenberg, "Self-Esteem and Concern with Public Affairs," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (Summer, 1962) pp. 201-11. The study was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health. The "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale" was carefully validated and proved to be a reliable measure of depressive affect and psychosomatic symptoms. The social group worker can accept "self-esteem" as a substitute for more global statements about emotional development, mental health, and similar goals, and the instrument can readily be used for measurement of agency effectiveness.

level of self-esteem to be able to participate as an active citizen and that conditions leading to poor mental health will eventually lead to an ignorant, uninterested and uninfluential electorate."³⁶

Because these findings are so basic to our concerns, confirmation of their validity seems to be highly significant to professional practice. This led a group of us to test Rosenberg's findings in a camp setting.³⁷ Since Rosenberg had gathered all of his data through questionnaires, without observing the respondents in "live" group discussions, we attempted to see if his findings would hold up in an agency group situation. With Mr. Milton Heller taking a major responsibility for the project, and Dr. Richard Lodge serving as a consultant, we administered the Rosenberg material, including the self-esteem scale, which Rosenberg had used. Professional staff members who served as group discussion leaders and advisors rated the participants for quantity and quality of participation for each of 10 days of participation in two-hour discussions in groups with 12-14 members in each.

On the basis of past observations of individuals with low self-esteem who often seemed to be resorting to over-participation as a cover for their sense of inadequacy, we felt the Rosenberg hypothesis was incomplete. This impelled us to formulate a second hypothesis—to wit: that low self-esteem would

³⁶ Irving Canter, a review of Morris Rosenberg, *ibid.*, *Related Research Reporter*, op. cit. Fall, 1962, p. 8.

³⁷ Milton L. Heller and Irving Canter, "Community Change and Dislocation as Related to Self-Esteem and Group Participation: Report of a study of a Dimension of Social Group Work Practice," Paper at the *National Conference on Social Welfare*, May 27, 1964; Milton L. Heller, "Self-Esteem as a Factor in Group Participation," *Unpublished Master's Thesis*, Boston University School of Social Work, Boston, 1964.

be related to either low participation as Rosenberg had found, or a constellation of high participation and low quality of participation.

Our findings tended to confirm the Rosenberg hypothesis; a definite relationship was found between feelings of self-esteem and participation. However, our counter-hypothesis was completely demolished. None of the ten individuals in the high quantity-low quality participation constellation were in the low self-esteem group. Indeed, nine of the ten were in the high self-esteem group and one was in the middle of the self-esteem scale.

We were concerned by the possibility that our sample might be skewed because:

1. All respondents were members of the same national Jewish youth group and
2. All had been designated as "leaders."

We therefore examined our data for relationships to other findings reported by Rosenberg. The similarities were startling enough to assure us that our sample was not skewed in either direction.

Taken together, these findings serve to support the view held by many professional workers in group service agencies that our concern for the personal development of our membership has implications for their future contributions to the community. The study also seems to affirm the folklore of group work which asserts that warm intragroup relationships are the key to individual self-enhancement and hence better individual functioning in groups.⁸⁸ It also

⁸⁸ This idea does not seem to be too far removed from the discussion of "deficiency needs" in relation to individual "self-actualization" as expounded by Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, D. Nostrand and Co., New York, 1962, esp. ch. 3, pp. 19-41. The theme is also dramatically por-

suggests the possibility that a group's capacity to utilize democratic procedures may be limited until the individuals in the group develop a sense of personal worth and dignity.

The fact that most of the low quality talkers were in the high self-esteem group suggests a greater potential for this group to accept help in finding ways of involving others in the group. What may appear to be an emotional problem may in reality be a cognitive problem of role inadequacy, in which the individual needs to learn how to fulfill a group leadership role.

Perhaps studies of this kind even confirm the view that some of us still hold—that even when a group just meets, without too much "visible programming" taking place, something valuable is happening to individual members and for society after all!!!

Studies in Conformity

The Rosenberg-centered studies are not unrelated to the studies in group control pioneered by Sherif and Asch. Sherif demonstrated that respondents tended to conform in group situations where they were asked to make a judgment about how far a really stationary dot-of-light had moved while being observed by them. In a series of studies Asch demonstrated that 37 percent of his respondents made an incorrect estimate of the length of a line when they were aware of the response of the coached group of conspirators who were in the group.⁸⁹ He found that "yielders" distorted their perception, distorted

trayed in the commercial motion picture, *The Chalk Garden*, which is based on the play by the same name by Enid Bagnold, Random House, New York, 1956. Irving Canter, "Leadership is Mirrorship," *B'nai B'rith Women's World*, Washington, D.C., (December, 1961) deals with the same theme and is related to Cooley's popular notion of the "Looking Glass Self."

⁸⁹ Quoted by Hare, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

their judgment or distrusted their action in order not to be different. In a follow-up study, he showed that the tendency to conform was related to the size of the opposition: when contradicted by a single individual, he continued to maintain his position almost all the time, but, when the opposition increased to two, the subjects accepted wrong answers 13.6 percent of the time; and when the opposition was three, the subjects' errors jumped up to 31.8 percent. No significant change took place when the opposition was increased from 4 to 15.⁴⁰

Other experiments cited by Hare confirm the hypothesis that the support of even one person increased the number of times the subject maintained his position against a majority of the group. He indicates that this support is especially effective if it comes from a leader or high prestige person. Reference is also made to studies which indicate that as the group size increases there is an increase in the opportunities to form subgroup coalitions representing minority positions,⁴¹ thereby providing greater opportunities for individual support. He also finds that an individual who has "demonstrated his skill in the past" will also have more influence on others.⁴²

Hare concludes in part: "the informal pressure to conform is illustrated by the experiments of Sherif and Asch which demonstrate that knowledge of the majority opinion on some issue is enough to lead some individuals to conform publicly to a judgment which differs from the one they privately held."⁴³

As we have already indicated, the implications of any study for practice are never completely clear. Yet the findings that individuals do distort their perception and responses in the face of

opposition from members of the group, seem to emphasize the need for workers to help the group provide the support which will encourage all individuals to express their feelings and opinions. In this light, learning to use the democratic process goes one step beyond the expression of opinion and the voting procedure. It involves helping individuals to gain the self-esteem they need to function with greater independence or "inner direction."

The leap to the Rosenberg study does not seem to be too great; self-confidence, self-esteem, inner-directedness and a sense of values can contribute to democratic participation and decision-making.

Religious Dissonance and Self-Esteem

Another phase of the Rosenberg study,⁴⁴ has significance for Jewish center work, especially in the light of our current examination of agency values and functions. Among his many findings were those which indicated that whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, those individuals living in a neighborhood where they were in the minority tended to have lower self-esteem than those who lived in a "non-dissonant" religious context," where they could develop a feeling of belonging and security among peers who share more or less common value systems.

This suggests:

1. that merely providing an opportunity to be in a situation where one is a member of the majority group is significant for the mental health of the individual; and
2. that there is a validity to the provision of "Jewish swimming pools" and "Jewish basketball courts."

⁴⁰ Hare, *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

⁴¹ Hare, *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴² Hare, *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴³ Hare, *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁴ Morris Rosenberg, "The Dissonant Religious Context and Emotional Disturbance," *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (1962), pp. 1-10.

This data further suggests that Jews are still concerned about and unsure of their social relationships with non-Jews, and that active programming in this area is urgent in individual, if not in community, terms.

Homans' Economic Principle of Interaction —As a Useful Concept⁴⁵

When we look at these studies together, several common themes significant to center workers seem to emerge.

1. Individuals with low self-esteem hesitate to express themselves.
2. Those individuals, usually with high self-esteem, who do express themselves, influence the decisions of others.
3. Although the democratic process may seem to be observed by the overt decision-making pattern of the groups, beneath the surface divergent beliefs may be "bottled up" by individuals with low self-esteem, or individuals who have been influenced or psychologically intimidated by the majority of the group.
4. Low self-esteem is also related to where one lives and living in a neighborhood where one is in the minority is related to low self-esteem.
5. Efforts by group workers at: a) helping individuals develop a higher level of self-esteem and b) education for democratic action are completely intertwined.

Referring back to our earlier discussion of concepts, I would like to suggest

⁴⁵ The analysis of interaction in terms of an economic exchange was introduced by Homans in George C. Homans, "Social Behavior or Exchange." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 63, Nov. 6 (May, 1958), pp. 597-606. Homans subsequently elaborated this concept in *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1961.

that Homans' view of human interaction as an economic transaction is an appropriate organizing principle for consolidating into a "higher level of generalization" the findings of these three discrete studies.⁴⁶ Homans maintains that there is a psychological cost as well as a psychological reward in each human transaction or interaction, and that individuals usually avoid situations where the cost appears to be greater than the reward.

In Homans' terms⁴⁷ then, one could say that low self-esteem individuals, fearing humiliation, will not risk involvement in discussions; that those lacking in confidence along with those who are intimidated by the majority opinion will tend to conform with the group; that many Jewish individuals will avoid situations which involve them in potentially risky relationships with Christians where the cost may be high in terms of discomfort which comes from deference or the need to protect one's inner feelings and to suppress one's spontaneous use of valued cultural symbols.

The Jewish community center can play a role in this economic transaction: professional social group workers and "specialists" can help individuals build

⁴⁶ Merton, op. cit., p. 238, makes reference to the process of consolidating findings and hypotheses of discrete studies into theories of the middle range. Parsons also refers to Merton's concept of codification, which Parsons considers more than putting "previously known things together; there is also an element that is new, beyond the codificatory level." "Talcott Parsons, General Theory in Sociology," Robert K. Merton, Leonard Broom and Leonard S. Cottrell, eds., *Sociology Today*, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1959, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Hare, op. cit., p. 30, also makes reference to Homans' "economic principle," but Hare restricts his observations to its relationship to conformity. As used herein, the concept is also related to approach-avoidance situations, associated with Kurt Lewin's "topological psychology."

their self-esteem through small group experiences or specialized or interest groups or classes, where the psychological cost of full participation is considerably less than the reward reaped by the individual. It can provide a haven from religious dissonance where there is little or no punishment for free expression of one's Jewishness—at any level.

In Conclusion

Research in the behavioral sciences continues apace. From the pages of grand theory, theories of the middle range, organizing concepts and discrete studies

undertaken in settings too far removed from the Jewish center, reality must be replicated and adapted in our own institutions by practitioners with whatever expert help we can get. Finally, when we begin to appreciate the fact that all of us are working in "human behavior" laboratories which can contribute to general knowledge as well as to our professional competence, we will join the social scientist in conducting studies in our own agencies, where research problems will develop out of our professional needs for helping members or clients and where the difficulty of applying scientific knowledge and theory will be minimal, if not non-existent.