

CONSTRUCTION OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR MEASURING MINORITY GROUP IDENTIFICATION AMONG JEWISH ADOLESCENTS: AN EXPLORATORY ATTEMPT

by JACK ROTHMAN

New York City Youth Board, New York, N. Y.

I. Introduction

THIS paper is written as a progress report, rather than as the presentation of a completed work. It describes some preliminary efforts directed at measuring the attribute of Jewish identification, and its main value at this time may be its approach to the problem, which some workers may find useful, or at least, interesting. Above and beyond the instrument itself, the paper may serve two additional purposes: (1) to encourage thought along the lines of more clearly defining what we mean by group identification among minorities, including clarification of its effects on both the ingroup and the outgroup, and (2) to stimulate other modest research studies (on this or other subjects) which do not involve a large outlay of finances or complicated administrative procedures.

II. Background

It is generally accepted that an individual growing up in a particular society adopts the customs and attitudes which prevail. The work of Bogadus¹ shows that there is a rigid, stable hierarchy of acceptance of ethnic, religious and nationality groups within American society. His studies show that all groups, including minority groups, adopt this rating

pattern, with the exception that minority group members raise the relative standing of their own particular group somewhat.

Kurt Lewin² has indicated that while the minority group member may raise his own standing to some degree, he may also acquire considerable negative feelings toward his group, adopt unfavorable stereotypes, and consequently develop what Lewin terms self-hatred. Sarnoff³ and Radke-Yarrow,⁴ in two independent studies, have shown that there is a marked relationship between acceptance of prevailing negative attitudes toward one's group and the incidence of personality maladjustment. This has been expressed by Sargent as follows: The Jewish child perceives "that he belongs to a group considered different, if not inferior. If the prejudice and discrimination present in the child's community are great, or if the child is very sensitive, he is likely to develop some degree of conflict and to show one or another compensatory defense mechanism." Therefore, "clinicians often report that a major or minor factor in a Jewish person's maladjustment is his reaction to his unfavorable ethnic status"⁵ (p. 124).

Educational and group work agencies which are concerned with the well-being and mental health of minority groups

have devoted a great deal of effort toward heightening group identification on the part of young people with whom they work. A variety of approaches have been employed aimed at attaining this goal. These approaches, both explicit and implicit, include among others, the following:

- Our glorious past
- Our contributions to civilization
- Our tragic past
- Some of our members who have been great
- The chosen people concept
- We are equal to others-anthropological-biological approach
- We are equal to others-democratic-philosophical approach
- Solidarity for safety-reaction to anti-Semitism, Ku Klux Klan, etc.

Other approaches may undoubtedly be added to these. In any case, however, no systematic study has been made as yet concerning the relative effectiveness of these approaches. In addition, little attention has been devoted to questions such as the following: Does intensifying minority group identification result in ethnocentrism, leading to decreased interest in broader issues and in other groups? To put it another way, can some approaches, while theoretically psychologically sound from the standpoint of the individual, be harmful to good intergroup relations? Do certain approaches cause distrust or fear, leading to outgroup hostility on one hand and to greater insecurity on the other? A related question deals with the problem of whether minority group identification must be primary and precede other forms of identification or relationship. A report by the National Association of Jewish Center Workers expresses the commonly held viewpoint in their field in these words, "By developing a feeling of belonging to his Jewish group, the individual can get the security and support which release and stimulate energies for creative activity and prepare him

for participation in other group life. For the Jew who can accept his own Jewish origin can be freed to grow up and live in the American scene and make his own contribution to American life"⁶ (p. 257).

The underlying substantiation for this approach stems largely from the work of Kurt Lewin, and specifically from his statement that, "The group to which an individual belongs is the ground on which he stands, which gives him security and help"⁷ (p. 174). While Lewin's outlook enjoys wide acceptance in the Jewish Center field, other voices have been raised questioning some of his assumptions. Bettelheim, for example, maintains that heavy stress on Jewish group belongingness "represents an unwarranted simplification, perhaps misreading of his (Kurt Lewin's) writings on the subject"⁸ (p. 5). Bettelheim feels that the individual must develop a sense of security within himself, not by seeking "a false security in an arbitrary over-evaluation of his own group," but rather by obtaining an early and consistent feeling of belonging "to the most important group he ever depends on—his family . . ."⁸ (pp. 16 and 17).

Professor Dodson also has criticized premises arising from Lewin's formulation. He fears that with undue emphasis "the ground upon which to stand becomes a self-inflicted ghetto"⁹ (p. 67). Dodson is concerned about a tendency of various groups to become concentrated together and isolated from other groups in different sections of modern cities. He decries this trend on the basis of its leading to poor relationships between the various groups. He states, "While I believe in it as a theory, I have yet to see convincing proof that voluntary segregation provides security with which to integrate"⁹ (p. 67).

No attempt will be made here to resolve these issues. It is enough for the

purposes of this presentation to indicate that differences of opinion and approach exist among qualified observers. Rinder has expressed these differences as follows:

"... the subject of Jewish identification is one about which there exist firm convictions though little knowledge. It is a substantive area of significant import for behavior, and like many such phenomena, that which is held to be significant is also accompanied with considerable and intensive affect. Because of the minimal feed-back which has hitherto obtained in this area, this affect has had no check of reality imposed upon it, but has continued to feed upon and nourish itself in the vacuum of anxiety created by lack of knowledge. It seems a reasonable fear then, that any work submitting techniques, data and interpretations into this area of antipathies and cross-purposes runs the risk of arousing considerable hostility"¹⁰ (p. 167).

The present paper will probably evoke a minimum of hostility, since, while it submits a technique, it offers little interpretation. The paper, in essence, makes a beginning at developing a usable tool for measuring Jewish identification so as to contribute to clarifying unresolved issues through basic research, and to filling the gaps in knowledge to which Rinder alludes.

III. Description and Discussion of the Instrument

A. The Problem:

To devise a paper and pencil test which will measure degree of Jewish identification among Jewish teen-agers and will be sensitive to changes in this attribute. For the writer's purposes, he wished this instrument to be short, simple to fill in, suitable for group testing, and possibly in such form as to be used in mixed Jewish-Gentile groups.

B. The Instrument:

1. *Approach.* The objective in the present case was to design a measuring instrument which would elicit unguarded

answers. In order to provide for meaningful responses, it was intended that the instrument would not reveal to the person being tested the attribute being measured. This was done by presenting the questionnaire as an instrument for determining cultural interests.

2. *Previous Efforts.* Several previous attempts have been made to construct tests of Jewish identification. One of the first of these was developed by Chein and Hurwitz for the Jewish Welfare Board.¹¹ The questionnaire they used was geared to draw from Jewish adolescents feelings around several aspects of their being Jewish. The questionnaire, an open-ended device, while giving much valuable information, was qualitative rather than quantitative in its approach, and offered technical difficulties in coding, scoring, etc.

Sarnoff³ developed an instrument which he used to determine the opposite attribute, Jewish self-hatred, and which was intended for college students.

Radke-Yarrow⁴ employed an instrument based on projective test techniques, making it suitable only for individual testing.

Rinder¹⁰ worked with an instrument which had five sub-categories and which seemed to measure effectively with college students and adult groups. His sub-categories included identification along religious, racial, cultural, nationality and and generalized lines.

Geismer¹² developed a scale for use with adolescents employing eight sub-categories of identification including: religion, quasi-secular culture, cultural Zionism, socio-political Zionism, personal social identification, bio-social identification, and identification via reactions to anti-Semitism. His instrument was rather long and limited in its application, since his validating subjects were drawn from a narrow sample of boys attending a Zionist summer camp. In

addition, it was set up to measure only the extremes of high and low in identification within this group.

3. *Criteria for Group Identification.* For the writer, group identification, in essence, implies awareness of belonging to one's group, acceptance of this belonging, knowledge of, participation in, and interest in the life and customs of the group. Its psychological form is a feeling of comfort, security, and well-being, and a lack of conflict in belonging to the group. More specifically, some criteria for Jewish identification may be elaborated as follows:

Likes Jewish "things" and customs
Knows about Jewish "things" and customs
Is interested in Jewish "things" and customs

Likes to be with Jewish people
Knows how to act when with Jewish people
(at weddings, services, Bar Mitzvahs, etc.)
Is interested in being with Jewish people

Likes Jewish history and life
Knows about Jewish history and life
Is interested in Jewish history and life

Likes to participate in Jewish affairs
Knows how to participate in Jewish affairs
Is interested in participating in Jewish affairs

"Likes" and "is interested in" are closely related but represent different affect or feeling states.

It was decided that the third attribute in each set, that dealing with *interest* in various aspects of Judaism, would be selected for use in constructing the instrument. Many studies have shown a high correlation between interest and attitude, and interest tests have been employed to measure various aspects of personality. See, for example, the recent volume "Opinions and Personality" by Brewster, Bruner and White.¹³

4. *The Items.* In order to confine the test to one dimension, it was decided to have all items related to cultural activities. Were a boy given a choice between attending a lecture on Jewish history or

playing baseball, the odds are in favor of his choosing the more entertaining activity or the one perceived as more acceptable to his age group. The questionnaire asked the subject to indicate which kinds of cultural activities he would be interested in for his club group. While all the items were of a cultural nature, some had a religio-cultural aspect and some a Zionist-cultural.

One may take issue with confining Jewish identification to a cultural component. In the writer's opinion, however, this is the broadest aspect of Jewish identification, the one which draws in the largest number of people, and excludes the least number. In the studies mentioned above, Geismer found that of his eight sub-categories, the cultural scale most effectively measured differences among his criteria groups. His results indicated that religious, Zionist and anti-Semitism categories were measured least successfully. He states that opposition to anti-Semitism is too widespread and Zionism too widely accepted to be diagnostic in evaluating Jewish identification. Religion evoked affirmative and undecided rather than negative responses from his non-identified adolescents. This lack of disagreement or opposition, which may be interpreted as tolerance, left religious propositions unsuited as an index of Jewish identification. It is significant that Rinder, in his work with adults, achieved similar results. His most effective scales were the cultural and generalized ones; the generalized scale being a catch-all containing, in part, items related to sentiments of warmth, familiarity and acceptance felt toward the familial cultural atmosphere. All of which is not meant to imply that the many-faceted phenomenon of Jewish identification can be reduced to a cultural dimension, but rather, that *for testing purposes*, the cultural or "peoplehood" component

would appear to offer the most fruitful opportunities.

For each item in the questionnaire there would be choices among three levels: Jewish, National, and International. Thus, for example, if a film were the program medium, choices would include (1) a film on visiting Israel, (2) a film on the American West and (3) a film on visiting Europe. This was done to further camouflage the true intent of the instrument. A listing of the media and choices under each are noted later.

It should be understood that in the final form of the questionnaire the nature and ordering of the items would not be observable since they would be scattered randomly throughout the instrument. The questionnaire, as used with the subjects, is also given later.

That the objective of concealing the intent of the instrument was successful can be verified by the fact that no individual in the groups tested verbally indicated recognition of its intent, and also by the fact that the president of one group asked to keep the questionnaire so that he might learn the cultural interests of his group and plan activities accordingly.

5. *Scoring.* The test is a standard Likert-type instrument. The subjects were asked to answer each item along a scale extending from Very Interested to Very Uninterested. Each item was given a score ranging from 0-4 with the high numbers indicating stronger interest or identification. There were fifteen items containing a Jewish component; thus, the score for any one individual might vary from 0-60, with 30 indicating a neutral position.

C. *Method of Validation:*

1. *The Approach.* In order to validate the instrument, the test was given to two sets of groups who were assumed to be different on the variable to be measured. If the instrument were valid, it would

presumably indicate this difference in numerical terms. Testing for reliability has been held in abeyance temporarily, pending the results of the preliminary work on validity. Strongly Jewish identified groups were selected from Jewish movement organizations, whose sole or overriding purpose is the furtherance of some Jewish goal. The programs in these groups reflect this aim in that much of the activity relates to Jewish themes. In this category, three of the groups were from Young Judea, which is supported by the Zionist Organization of America, and one group was a Choir Committee of the Young Synagogue League, which is supported by one of the major Jewish religious sects. All these groups were co-ed—four groups in all. These groups will be referred to as "Jewish Movement Groups."

Less strongly Jewish identified groups were selected from a national Jewish youth-serving organization with a broad program. The primary motivation by youth for joining these groups often is a social or athletic one. In some cases the appeal is similar to one which attracts young people to a purely social high school fraternity or sorority. There is often resistance on the part of the youngsters to programs having Jewish themes, which is reflected in many of the groups by a limited number of such programs during the year. In addition, the objectives of the organization, tied in with general social group work goals, are broader than the furtherance of a specific ideology within Judaism or even the development of Jewish identification generally. These groups will be referred to, for convenience sake, as "Social Club Groups."

Four social club groups were included in the study—two boys' groups and two girls' groups. (These groups are structured on a single sex basis.)

2. *The Subjects.* All groups were

selected from the Long Island area of New York and from neighborhoods which are socio-economically of a middle-class character. The Jewish movement groups are from Forest Hills, Port Washington and Hillcrest (two groups); the social club groups are from Forest Hills, Astoria and Far Rockaway (two groups). When all questionnaires which were incomplete or otherwise unusable were removed, there were 44 subjects in each set of groups.

There were somewhat more boys than girls in the social club groups and somewhat more girls than boys in the Jewish movement groups.

In relation to age, most of the subjects were in their middle teens. Mainly they ranged from 14-17, although there was one 18 year old and one 19 year old. More than half the subjects were in the 15-16 year old category for both sets of groups; otherwise, the social club groups tended to be somewhat older than the Jewish movement groups.

3. *Statistical Treatment.* Scores were taken for each subject in each of the two sets of groups. These were averaged for the Jewish movement groups and the social club groups and a comparison made. The results indicated that the Jewish movement groups averaged 44.0 and the social club groups averaged 39.0. Thus, there was a tendency for the movement groups to score higher, the difference comprising five points. It should be noted that both scores were on the Jewish identification side of the scale, as might be expected of groups affiliated with Jewish organizations.

An attempt was made to ascertain whether the difference between the two sets of groups was significant. A score of 2.29 was obtained indicating significance at the .02 level of probability. Thus, the instrument appears to discriminate rather adequately as between the two sets of groups.

The objection may be leveled that the test, as it stands, is measuring a difference in generalized interest in cultural activities rather than the unique attribute of Jewish identification. In other words, it may be possible that individuals with a high cultural interest level will uniformly score high on all three phases of the instrument (Jewish, national and international), and those with a corresponding low cultural interest will correspondingly score low on all aspects of the instrument.

In order to test this proposition, the international scale was scored for the two sets of groups. The assumption was that perhaps the Jewish movement groups might score higher than the social club groups, but that if the difference in the scores was not significant, the test would be measuring a differential reaction by the subjects to Jewish and international items. The results showed that not only was there a small and insignificant difference between the two sets of groups on the international aspect of the instrument, but the social club groups scored somewhat higher than the Jewish movement groups on this attribute. The scores were as follows: Jewish movement groups—34.89, social club groups—35.64. It should be noted that both sets of groups scored lower on international interest, but that the difference between Jewish and international was not as large in the social club groups. At the time of this writing a similar treatment had not as yet been made of the national scale.

4. *Item Analysis.* In order to investigate the merits of the various items on the test, the method of internal consistency as devised by Likert was put to use. A comparison was made between the ten per cent who scored highest and the ten per cent who scored lowest, taking into account their responses to each item. In this way, a determination was made

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of those items which discriminate most sharply between individuals who scored high and low on the test. The results show that the following five items are the most effective:

- A forum on Jewish affairs
- A tour of Yeshiva University
- A celebration of Chanukah
- A great books discussion on Jewish literary gems
- A discussion of Jewish religious and cultural observances

In this original form, the instrument contains a number of items which are localized in the New York City area. In further work an attempt will be made to include only items which are more general and can be employed in a variety of different communities.

D. Use of the Instrument:

The instrument as presently designed is most suitable for a range not including extremes of Jewish identification. For example, a group of students from Israel might score very low in Jewish identification on this test since they would be interested in seeing non-Jewish things while they are here on a visit. Similarly, students in a Jewish all-day school might not respond with enthusiasm to an item such as a talk by a Rabbi, since this is activity in which they are saturated in their own daily routine. In giving the test it is important to know the group in order to derive full meaning from the results.

It may be claimed that a group worker "in process" will learn more about the Jewish identification of members of his group than any test is able to tell. To a large extent this is true. The advantage of the test is that it gives a quick general view of the situation, which may be valuable to the worker, particularly at the beginning of his association with the group. Further, it provides an objective outside tool by which movement in Jew-

ish identification for the group as a whole may be estimated. The test in no way can take the place of the judgment of the group worker in analyzing the specifics for each individual in terms of how identification does or does not work, why it is lacking or present, and, hopefully, how to meet the situation.

Another caution is in order. We find that a person who is constantly relating himself to Jewish content may either be doing so out of genuine identification, or may be doing so as a defense against the fact that he is not really internally comfortable and related to his own group, and is erecting a defense against this insecurity by "going overboard" in the other direction. The test will not distinguish between the really positively-oriented individual, and the pseudo-oriented individual; nor does it intend to. It gives us information about the group as a whole, rather than about each individual, and in the long run will average out the various types of Jewishly oriented individuals, presenting a composite picture of a total group.

IV. Conclusion

This instrument, in its early stages of development, shows encouraging signs of being a useful tool for measuring Jewish identification. Additional work is necessary in order to substantiate its validity for the purpose intended. The present sample was rather small and limited in scope. The writer intends to undertake additional work to meet these weaknesses in the near future, including extending the experimental group to include Jewish subjects with no Jewish affiliations, as well as Gentile subjects. It is hoped that the instrument, when completed, will provide a basis for exploring many of the unresolved issues relating to problems of minority group identification on the part of Jewish as well as other ethnic groups in American life.

PROGRAMS WITH NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, AND JEWISH CONTENT

1. A FILM	on the American West on visiting Europe on visiting Israel
2. A FORUM	on national politics on world affairs on Jewish affairs
3. A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION	of Washington's Birthday of UN Day of Chanukah
4. A MUSICAL PROGRAM	of Early American folk songs of songs of many lands of songs of the Jewish people
5. A VISIT	to churches of various American religious sects to churches of various world religions to synagogues and temples of the main Jewish sects
6. A TALK	by a Protestant minister by a Hindu religious leader by a Rabbi
7. A VISIT	to the museum of the City of New York to the Spanish Museum to the Jewish Museum
8. A COLLEGE TOUR	of Manhattan College of The College of International Studies of Yeshiva University
9. A NEWSPAPER BUILDING TOUR	of the Brooklyn Eagle of the New India Weekly of the Jewish Daily Forward building
10. A DANCE PROGRAM	of Western Square Dances of Japanese Dances of Israeli Folk Dances
11. A LECTURE	on Early American History on Chinese History on Jewish History
12. A PROGRAM OF RECORDED STORIES	of Colonial life in America of Australian heroes of Jewish life in Europe
13. A DISCUSSION	of Habits of American Indians of African tribal observances of Jewish religious and cultural observances
14. A GREAT BOOKS DISCUSSION	on American novels on Russian literary masters on Jewish literary gems
15. A DEBATE	on American farm policy on the role of UNESCO on the role of Israel in the Near East

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PROGRAM PREFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn what kinds of cultural programs are of most interest to teen-agers. In this way it will be possible to prepare program guides and other materials which will be of greatest use for teen groups.

I would be interested in the following programs for my club:

	Check the appropriate space				
	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Uninterested	Very Uninterested
1. A program of songs of the American South
2. A celebration of UN Day
3. A forum on world affairs
4. A visit to the Jewish Museum
5. A film on the American West
6. A talk by a rabbi
7. Visits to churches of various world religions
8. A program of songs of many lands
9. A forum on Jewish affairs
10. A tour of Yeshiva University
11. A lecture on Early American History
12. A discussion of habits of American Indians
13. A visit to the Museum of the City of New York
14. Visits to synagogues and temples of the main Jewish sects
15. A celebration of Washington's Birthday
16. A film on visiting Israel
17. A tour of the College of International Studies
18. A tour of the Brooklyn Eagle Newsbuilding
19. A program of Japanese Dances
20. A visit to the Spanish Museum
21. A celebration of Chanukah
22. A debate on the role of UNESCO
23. A Great Books discussion on Russian literary masters
24. A program of recorded stories of Jewish life in Europe
25. A program of Israeli folk dances
26. A tour of Manhattan College
27. A talk by a Protestant minister

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	Check the appropriate space				
	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Uninterested	Very Uninterested
28. A film on visiting Europe
29. A debate on American farm policy
30. A lecture on Jewish history
31. A program of recorded stories of Australian heroes
32. A discussion of African tribal observances
33. A program of Early American folk songs
34. A tour of the Jewish Daily Forward Newsbuilding
35. A Great Books discussion on American novels
36. A debate on the role of Israel in the Near East
37. A lecture on Chinese history
38. A program of songs of the Jewish people
39. A talk by a Hindu religious leader
40. A tour of the New India Weekly Newsbuilding
41. A discussion of Jewish religious and cultural observances
42. A program of recorded stories of colonial life in America
43. A Great Books discussion on Jewish literary gems
44. A forum on national politics
45. Visits to churches of various American sects

List other programs that would interest you.

Your Age _____ Male _____
 Female _____

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COMMENT

by ROBERT SLAWSON

Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York, N. Y.

MR. ROTHMAN has presented an important paper. Whether or not it is a significant paper depends more on those of us in the Jewish communal field than it does on Mr. Rothman. He has pointed to a direction which group workers and other Jewish communal workers must, in my thinking, undertake if we are to make any pretense of doing a specialized job which justifies Jewish group work agencies as distinguished from non-sectarian agencies.

There are several areas which ought to concern us in considering the implications of Mr. Rothman's presentation: the research implications, group work implications, the community organization implications, and a great number of implications and questions regarding the rationale for group work and recreation programs under Jewish auspices, and finally, some very salient questions that are raised about what we believe we are doing with Jewish children and why we believe we should be doing it.

Some of the ways in which a pursuit might be identified as a profession or a discipline are that the individuals engaged in the pursuit have common goals, relatively agreed-upon experimental methods of achieving those goals, common tools for implementing the achievement of the goals, and, lastly and

very importantly, methods of testing the effectiveness of those tools.

This last item—methods of testing the effectiveness of those tools—has been seriously lacking in group work and community organization, and is only beginning to emerge in casework.

As Jewish group workers we contend that while we share a common methodology with group workers in any setting, the justification for our existence in sectarian agencies is that we are helping children and young adults to achieve a more productive, stable, and healthful identification with Judaism, which center workers usually define in cultural, historical, recreational, and mental health terms. I wonder if we could prove this contention if we were fundamentally challenged to do so by Jewish and non-Jewish communities alike. From my own experience in the field I would seriously question that we could demonstrate in generally acceptable, objective terms that we are actually fulfilling our function as we would like to do.

I have personal conviction that there is no question about the necessity for individuals to have effective primary identification with their families and effective primary and secondary identification with their ethnic or religious groups. I agree, however, just as heartily