

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF TECHNIQUES IN COMBATting ANTI-SEMITISM

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INTERDEPENDENCE between scientist and executive is increasingly being recognized and considerable progress is being made in achieving more effective collaboration in the field of Jewish community relations. The modern social scientist is under heavy obligation to provide the administrator with a "research eye" as a guide to social action. Increasingly as he works in this area of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination, he recognizes that he is working on a problem that is at once generic and specific. He sees that anti-Semitism is a specific manifestation of a generic problem involving the relationship between status and group adjustment. It is necessary, therefore, and highly desirable in his view, to emphasize comparative research covering different minorities and their psychological equivalents, as for example, physically disabled war veterans. The social scientist too now tends to insist upon a teamwork approach, a coordinated research effort cutting across traditionally separate disciplines, recognizing a fundamental interdependence between psychology, psychiatry, sociology, cultural anthropology, political science and economics. One further compelling concern of the modern social scientist is to go beyond

description, diagnosis and evaluation. It is not enough to concentrate on what is now going on. It is imperative to undertake deliberate departures on a rigorously experimental basis.

These concerns or points of emphasis on the part of the scientist and the administrator can be condensed for our present purposes into the following affirmations:

1. Anti-Semitism is a product not primarily of ignorance or misunderstanding but of complex political, social and economic forces.
2. Although anti-Semitism is in many respects a unique form of racial intolerance, it is nevertheless inseparably bound up with the problem of rights and status of all minority groups.
3. The fight against anti-Semitism cannot be separated from the general struggle for a better America and a better world.
4. The fight against anti-Semitism must be waged with the most effective tools which the social and political and legal sciences have developed.

In reviewing the current research programs of the major national Jewish agencies aimed at combatting anti-Semitism,

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three areas or approaches to the problem can be identified: (1) exploration; (2) evaluation; and (3) experimentation.

I. *Exploration* involves getting the 'lay of the land,' diagnosing the situation to determine the nature, extent and strength of the problem. Four patterns should be mentioned.

1. *Sampling opinion and attitudes*
Projects in this category range from the conventional public opinion poll with "yes," "no," "I don't know" types of answers to adaptations of Likert's deeper level attitude sampling surveys.

2. *Social perception studies*
Here, systematic attempts are being made to get a view of the social world as seen by the Jew himself as well as to get at the character structure of the anti-Semite leader.

3. *Attitude measurement*
Allport's "Some Roots of Prejudice" growing out of the use of a composite questionnaire and the use of clinical techniques in other studies with a similar purpose, illustrates this pattern.

4. *Participant observation*
Considerable attention has been focused upon autonomous groups—unaffiliated street corner gangs—because of certain hoodlum patterns associated with many anti-Semitic incidents. Getting on the inside of some of these unconventional groups is providing valuable insight into the dynamics of conflict.

II. *Evaluation* is concerned with a critical appraisal of assumptions, methods and techniques employed in fighting anti-Semitism.

Projects in this category include Watson and Goldstein's "Action for Unity" planning survey report now in pamphlet form, soon to be published as a full

length book by Harpers; studies of the effect of the use of specialized informational media—posters, cartoons, comic strips, pamphlets, books, movies and radio; intensive measurement of group discussions, forums, workshops and other leadership training projects, including specialized techniques used such as the sociodrama and the use of community informants; and before and after studies of a variety of intergroup activities—center work, inter-community programs, canoe trips and the like—in which the central aim is an improvement in group relations.

III. *Experimentation* implies departures from the traditional or accustomed ways of doing things, a deliberate testing of different approaches, a retooling both of theories and techniques.

Several significant discussions relating to theory, criteria and research methodology have appeared in print recently. The *Journal of Social Issues* for August 1945 was devoted entirely to "Problems of Reeducation." The concluding chapter written by the editors, Dr. Kurt Lewin and Dr. Paul Grabbe, provides a most useful formulation of basic principles. An article by Dr. Lewin on "Research in Minority Problems" in the *Technology Review* for January 1946 furnishes a further helpful redefinition. Dr. Gordon Allport's authoritative issue of the *Annals* for March 1946 on "Controlling Group Prejudices" and particularly Dr. Lippitt and Dr. Radke's contribution on "New Trends in the Investigation of Prejudice" advance us considerably in our insight and understanding.

More intensive work is needed in determining criteria as a basis for testing constructive intergroup relations. Ideological influences complicate the problem. Underlying assumptions and value systems are not always made explicit.

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Real progress is being made in devising new techniques and in designing experimental projects. One which is going forward at M.I.T. is in the nature of a laboratory experiment. It is concerned with the influence of group role or identification in situations where "semi-political" discussion and voting is involved. Another project is centering upon the control of verbal anti-Semitism in face to face group settings. This form of "polite" prejudice stands in sharp contrast to political manifestations as in the case of Gerald L. K. Smith. The initial phase of this study, in which professional actors have been used to reenact actual incidents has been completed. The next stage calls for an experimental movie which will be used

by university research collaborators in different parts of the country. Other equally promising variations in experimental design are under development.

Collaboration is growing. This joint session arranged by the N.C.R.A.C. is but a symptom of this expanding interchange. During the past year the research staff of the American Jewish Committee and the Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress have held monthly research seminars. We have found these sessions mutually helpful and they will be continued. The job to be done is big enough, complex enough and difficult enough to command all that all of us can possibly throw into the battle.

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRAINING FOR JEWISH SOCIAL WORK

By **KURT PEISER**

*Chairman of the Committee
on Training for Jewish
Social Work*

THIS is my second as well as my final report to the National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare on the work of the Committee on Training for Jewish Social Work which was organized in the spring of 1941 and of which I have acted as Chairman. Some of you here today have heard the report I gave last year. Others are members of the Committee, and have been since its inception. Therefore, what I have to say will not be new to you. I doubt if there are any here who do not know something of the work of this Committee in exploring ways and means which would lead toward establishing facilities for training for Jewish communal work. In my attempt to bring you up-to-date I shall review briefly the origin and the work of the Committee.

The Graduate School for Jewish Social Work closed in 1939. However, I know of no one who felt that, with the closing, the need for training no longer existed. In fact, even before its closing, efforts were being made to continue the School or constitute another one. These efforts went on until 1941 but, unfortunately, they brought no results.

The late Dr. Solomon Lowenstein was one of those who was deeply concerned at this failure and wanted to do some-

thing about it. On May 14, 1941, he wrote to a group of Federation executives, and I am quoting from his letter: ". . . It would seem to many that a great mistake was made in abandoning the School. In order to consider the matter fairly from all points of view, I am asking whether you will attend a meeting of Federation Executives to be held in Atlantic City during the period of the Conference at breakfast at 8:30 o'clock on the morning of Friday, June 6, at the Breakers Hotel. Will you please let me know whether we may expect you?"

This meeting, held on June 6, 1941, resulted in the formation of the Committee on Training for Jewish Social Work, for which I am now reporting. Those invited to become members were as follows:

Kurt Peiser, Chairman—Philadelphia
Albert Abrahamson—New York
Israel S. Chipkin—New York
Eli Cohen—New York
Samuel A. Goldsmith—Chicago
Harry Greenstein—Baltimore
Frances N. Harrison—Philadelphia
Maurice B. Hexter—New York
Philip Houtz—New York
Joseph C. Hyman—New York
Maurice J. Karpf—Los Angeles
Louis Kraft—New York