

SELECTED TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK—IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH CENTER PRACTICE *

by FLORENCE RAY

National Association of Social Workers, New York, N. Y.

Introduction

THIS paper will set forth some observations concerning developments in the profession of social work, and the author's ideas as to what these developments might mean to Jewish Center workers. Generalizations about Jewish Center practice or about professional social work activity are not derived here from research, although some ideas for study are included. The attempt has been made to show that differences in functions of workers or of agencies can be usefully made without imputing differential values of better or worse. The search for a typology of problems to which an agency and a profession are addressed is in the same *genre* as specifying the knowledge and methodology transmittable through professional education and for which agency and profession can be held accountable. The test is in the *appropriateness* of the service in relation to the *nature* of the social need. The rights and privileges of a profession result from the degree to which its members exercise responsibility in tasks with consistent disciplined judgment. The knowledge, skills, and goals have to be explicit. Whether one holds

that our profession is an art or a science, or an admixture, is not the subject for debate here. *How* the current knowledge and skills of social work are being used to bring forth the effectiveness of the Jewish Community Centers should be the subject for constant study.

Rationale

Social work is an employed profession, primarily. Agencies are administrative channels through which the community provides for the services it needs and wants.

Social work practice has tentatively been defined as being a constellation of: *Value, Purpose, Sanction, Knowledge and Method*. "No part alone is characteristic of social work. . . . It is the particular content and configuration . . . which makes it social work practice and distinguishes it from the practice of other professions."¹ All the elements are present in professional practice to varying degrees depending on a number of variables.

It is proposed that two important study tasks in specific relation to Jewish Community Centers as well as any social work setting are required before social

¹ Harriett Bartlett, "Toward Clarification and Improvement of Social Work Practice," *Social Work*, Journal of the National Association of Social Workers, April 1958.

work practice can be defined for the individual worker.

First, study of the values and purposes of the particular agency or setting to determine the degree to which they are compatible with the working definition, and furthermore a classification of specific services provided by the agency in relation to the three sub-sections under "purpose."

The practice of social work has as its purposes:

1. To assist individuals and groups to identify, resolve, or minimize problems arising out of disequilibrium between themselves and their environment.
2. To identify potential areas of disequilibrium between individuals or groups and the environment in order to prevent the occurrence of disequilibrium.
3. In addition to these curative and preventive aims, to seek out, identify, and strengthen the maximum potential in individuals, groups and communities."²

Such study could then be followed by an analysis of the administrative structure through which the services are provided, the role of each worker in the total agency in decision-making regarding the functioning of the agency, the role of clientele and board in affecting the process. How the agency as an aggregate of persons, membership, staff, board responds to the social need of individuals, families, groups and communities by providing services designed to meet needs could be understood more explicitly. Staffing patterns could be developed according to the various levels of responsibility, the specific purposes of services, building into the staff position statements of the knowledge and skill required for each position.

Secondly, study of the knowledge needed and major method required of the workers at any point in the agency structure, deriving such a rationale from such factors as (a) assigned role of the

² *Ibid.*

worker; (b) specific purposes of services; (c) purpose of the agency in providing the services.

By such an inquiry as mentioned in the first proposal we will have more complete information from which we can determine the uniqueness and similarities of agencies or organizations, not as a whole, but through comparing specific functions. We can see where the similarities and differences exist, what elements are determined by professional goals, what by agency goals, and where the two are the same or in conflict. The same results will be possible in the second study proposal for learning how social work practice really differs from other professions, how casework, group work and community work as methods are alike and different, and also how other methods such as administration, research, supervision and consultation fall into place as major or supplementary methods related to specific assigned tasks in the agency.

The significance is that the professional worker is hired by the agency to carry out the agency's purposes through facilitating its defined services. This may mean that his primary responsibility is: (1) working with groups as a worker; (2) recruiting members or accepting referrals and helping members form groups that will meet their needs and be satisfying; (3) organizing units of program that satisfy needs and reflect the agency's purpose in providing the service; (4) collaborating with other staff in developing the program and the focus for it—taking into account agency purpose, assessed need of members, groups and the community, and the best resource or method for giving the decided program or leadership service; (5) collaborating with workers in other agencies in seeing that the best and most appropriate services are provided.

"To enable the American Jew to achieve the finest personal adjustment as

* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Pittsburgh, Pa., June 1, 1959.

both American and Jew . . .³ is the goal stated in one formulation.

To develop in people young and old the realization of the full meaning of this statement requires, as I believe it, evidence of understanding of each person and how he looks at himself, and skill in making this understanding felt. From this point, based upon the assumption that values are transmitted very effectively through real social experiences, the individual in his family, peer, or interest group, is helped to develop. Correspondingly, as more and more of the young learn the sense of social responsibility, and are encouraged to have a healthy development in social groups, and as adults and older people are given varied opportunities for participation, the community as a whole will gradually reflect the presence of persons who base their relationships with others on a democratic ideal with a strong belief in the rights of others, and an independent security as a person. Secure as individuals, comfortable in relationships with the others, and committed to religious and democratic values is what we try to accomplish.

I believe that:

1. Social work values and purposes are compatible with the values and purposes of the Jewish Center movement.
2. That workers need to have personal, religious and democratic convictions that guide them in their dealings with people in order that the quality of focus as well as the content of their relationships will reveal these convictions.
3. That knowledge and skill in the social work methods, primarily group work, plus some working knowledge and skill in community organization, administration and supervision are useful attributes for a successful worker in the Jewish Center.
4. That the several functions require multiple types of services for implementation. The decision regarding the qualifications for the personnel to provide the specific serv-

³ Sanford Solender, "The Unique Function of the Jewish Community Center," 1955, JWB.

ice should be made continuously on the basis of an understanding of the needs of the members and groups plus the purpose focus of the agency; and that this decision-making is enhanced by social work knowledge. Further, the implementation may be enhanced by social workers, recreation workers, adult education workers, religious education workers and others within the purpose for which the agency provides the service and utilizing the best methods.

In this section of the paper I have made explicit my own philosophy about the system of logic that might be employed in understanding the Jewish Center practice. I think the term group worker has, in the past, covered a wide variety of persons and positions as we commonly use it. To improve our practice we run into snags if we take either too specific or general a view and we must realize how the agency does alter our practice, and vice versa. Both the agency and profession affect the specifics of practice, as well as the particular competence of the individual worker. This is the true meaning of the word professional and we are a long, long way from understanding all we should in order to be truly effective; therefore I prefer to analyze and study before even attempting at this point to spell out answers to the question "Is it group work or social work?"

Trends in Social Work

The National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education are centrally focussed on practice and education and are therefore the vehicles of the profession for improving its effectiveness.

The Formation of the National Association of Social Workers

It appears as though all groups were unanimous in looking to the professional organization for the determination of personnel standards, salaries, and work-

ing conditions, ethics, protection of employment rights, recruitment, public interpretation, legislative policy and social action. The two matters in which the differences among the segments of the profession show up most obviously are how the professional organization should (1) go about improving and strengthening social work practice, and (2) exercise its concern for education. We seem to be a unified profession in regard to values and purposes but not in regard to their application in practice, that is, in such matters as in the meaning of sanction, knowledge, method and skill. Education and practice are interrelated concerns and the differences in perception as to what makes social work seem to pertain to both.

Is practice such an individual matter that efforts to describe it, to set limits, to define its essence are impossible, impractical and unnecessary? Is practice so interrelated with the carrying out of agency purposes that it is inappropriate for the professional association, made up solely of individual member social workers, to assume any authority or attempt to formulate any statement of agreement about it?

Or one could ask instead, is not the formation of a single organization an opportunity to respond to the long-felt need of workers, agencies, and society for a more specific understanding of what is "professional"?

Where social work was practiced in non-social work administered settings such as schools, hospitals, clinics and other institutions, it was necessary for workers to distinguish the practice of social work from that of other professions working with the same families or individuals. These workers turned to their professional organization as the channel for preparing statements regarding practice standards and educational programs. The professional association accredited the specialized educational

sequences that then became requirements for membership. The School Social Work, Medical Social Work and Psychiatric Social Work Sections brought this concept of relating practice to profession through standards for practice and education. They expect it of the organization and they themselves organize their activities around this idea. (Casework has usually been the major method in the fields mentioned. Group work and community organization are now seen as elements in these fields.)

In the case of child welfare, family service, and public assistance, the practice of social work includes the administration of the social work services. Thus the term "Casework Agencies" as well as a descriptive name has been used since the services of these agencies are primarily casework services. There has developed a separation of professional organization purposes and national agency organization purposes in regard to practice standards. The AASW was expected to provide channels for working on personnel standards, social action, ethics, but the national and federal agency structure provided the resources—rich in quality—whereby the practice of casework was deepened, developed, written about, thrashed out as the method for carrying out the services of the agency. Such organizations as the Children's Bureau, Family Service Association of America, Bureau of Public Assistance, Child Welfare League and the American Public Welfare Association, to name a few, provide in-service educational opportunities, publications, and standards of practice statements where the profession and the agency are assumed as synonymous purposes.

The research workers organized together to discuss social work research problems and their role as researchers. The section is made up of those NASW members who see themselves as "doing" research. The program of this group is

definitely focussed on practice—methodology, content plus ethics and philosophy as well.

The American Association of Group Workers included persons some of whom saw group work as a field and some as a method in social work. Group work and group worker to some connoted professional terms that separated group work as a profession from agency employment as a profession. Others saw group work as a method and social work as a profession. Still others saw social work as though it were divided into group workers and caseworkers predominantly, with group work then perceived as the total practice of the group worker in his agency. The AAGW prepared educational statements but did not accredit sequences in schools. Accreditation was done by the Council on Social Work Education.

For the purpose of this paper, the problems of the professional association in developing a pattern of functioning to meet all the different expectations of its membership are not to be considered. The relevant factors are: (1) Professional social work education encompasses special emphasis for persons interested in group work as their major method, (2) it provides opportunity to gain fundamental knowledge about behavior of individuals, groups and communities that make up the basic education for the profession of social work, (3) beginning practice varies with different agencies and settings, (4) the adaptation of the knowledge and skill of the worker to his specific assigned responsibilities is up to the worker and the agency administration to determine in relation to the purposes and services of the agency. An objective, systematic, evaluative approach to the social problems presented whatever they be is the crux of professional behavior.

The Group Work Section (like other sections) should be composed of persons

interested in a specific *practice* area—in our case, group work. We as group workers should express our interest in other social work matters along with other NASW social work members, not as group workers. Social workers interested in group work because they lead groups, supervise group leaders, administer agencies that provide group work services are all eligible. But the topic is group work. It is not a section of the membership who work in a particular field or who are called group workers, but is a section of members interested in developing social work with groups of people. The range is broad and the implications are difficult to encompass. The trend toward use of group work in treatment agencies is not a travesty nor even a transplant of group work in group services agencies. Practice in an agency requires knowledge of social work and skill in applying social work methods, including group work, to the purpose of that agency.

Activities in regard to practice and education hold the possibility immediately of being extremely meaningful to us all in our work, and give forth the potential possibility of being able to determine what is "professional" in factual terms. We can continue to "defend" the profession and to assume competence because of our educational degree knowing that this does indicate competence for beginning practice.

The worker brings his knowledge, skills and attitudes and his capacity to apply himself in an objective, scientific way toward his tasks so that improved social functioning results in some way. This is always in interaction with a complexity of agency purposes and multiple social problems. The result is that the worker has to assess needs arising out of the situation and select the appropriate behavior for himself according to his capacity to be of influence. He always has choices to make, and situations

to understand that reflect complex social and organizational problems. This applies in instances where the worker is working directly with an individual, a group, a community (particular or geographic), or whether he is performing his role as a supervisor or administrator.

On what criteria does he base his suggestions for program in a group, program for groups in an agency, program for an agency in a community? The worker makes decisions on his own when working with a member, jointly with other staff in regard to a division, jointly with parents—teachers—rabbis—ministers in regard to individuals or groups, jointly with staff and board in regard to the agency as a whole. But he influences others constantly. How? What is constant, what reflects changing societal needs, and just how is the professional component best utilized? These are the important questions for agency consideration and for the profession.

To summarize the developments as they are seen in NASW then, the following implications become apparent:

1. The profession of social work includes group work and group workers.
2. The developments within the professional association speak well as to the future possibility of the profession's being able to spell out what is professional with more clarity.
3. The interaction of social workers is the channel through which to develop a better profession for all in regard to practice as well as to other matters such as personnel standards, etc. Being a part of a larger group means that some identity as group workers may seem to be lost in favor of the larger identity—the profession of social work.
4. The knowledge will be greater, corresponding to the greater number of members.

The Council on Social Work Education

Three years ago, July, 1959, was set as the time when single, rather than the several accreditations of schools of social

work would go into effect. The former separate accreditations were: medical, psychiatric, school and group work.

There have been many changes occurring over the years in social work education leading toward this decision. Drastic changes are not apt to occur overnight but thoughtfully worked out changes have been made year by year in the various schools. Just as in the past, not all schools prepare for all fields of practice or for a major in all methods all the time; probably the same situation will persist. But the fundamental professional education will pertain in all schools stimulated by the Curriculum Study guided by the Council's Curriculum Committee, and also by other study.

Several years ago the Council requested statements describing the ten main fields of practice as follows: Family Welfare, Child Welfare, Public Assistance, Corrections, Public Health, Medical, Psychiatric, School, Leisure-Time Activities, Community Planning. Taking into account all methods including casework, group work, community organization, consultation, supervision, administration and research the statements were to show what the social work content of beginning practice is in each field—what is needed by all social workers, what particular knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed by workers intending to practice in the field. The assumption is that all methods are present to some degree in all fields.

In the case of the Leisure-Time Activities field, a deliberate effort was made to look at the agencies, their characteristics, common and distinguishing elements among agencies, and an attempt was made to develop a statement of rationale for including the agencies as appropriate for the practice of social work.

If group work is a method applicable in all ten fields, then it is awkward also to call this field group work. Since the

agencies all use the group as the primary unit of service even though the focus might be on the individual and neighborhood as well, the name *Group Service Agencies* was selected.

Curriculum Study

Since the report will be released this summer, I shall only allude to it in this paper. I urge that all workers look seriously and intelligently at the study with the following ideas in mind:

1. The study is an over-all look at educational objectives and the proposals for content are made in light of these. The article in *Social Work*, "The Nature of Social Work," by Werner Boehm states the framework. The study does not attempt to spell out the curriculum for any particular school of social work.
2. The educational program for new workers holds an interest and fascination for workers already in practice. They should, however, be contributing knowledge and understanding from their own practice through agency and professional organization statements on which further changes in education can be made. Workers should not lose confidence in what they already know and have but should look for new knowledge and add to it through writing and research. The Curriculum Study does synthesize much new knowledge and should be studied in detail for an understanding of the knowledge, not a debate on the specific proposals for change in organizing the Master's degree program. That is the job of the educators, not practitioners!

Some of the factors that indicate the complexity of social work practice in the Jewish Center are mentioned here for purposes of illustration.

1. The Jewish Community Center has ideological purposes that incorporate the promotion of values and the provision of services directed to individuals, groups and communities.
2. The structure of the agency reflects the device for providing the services the community wants and needs and for organizing energies of people who seek to pre-

serve and promote certain values and traditions. Units include groups, branches, city-wide centers, and the Jewish Welfare Board itself. The worker affects and is affected by the structure.

3. The worker is employed to use his professional knowledge, skills and attitudes to carry out the purposes of the agency.
4. The worker is accountable to society both through his agency and also through his profession. This is shared accountability.
5. Depending on his role in the agency, he has some responsibility for decisions influencing the services, structure and purposes of the agency.
6. The basic service unit is the group. Intake, group formation, supervision of leaders and intervention of program ideas are tasks of the worker in addition to direct group work with a group of members.
7. His accountability to his profession requires that the workers' decisions reflect adherence to the values, purposes, ethics, standards and knowledge developed by his profession and within his role in the agency.
8. Knowledge and skill in group work must be supplemented by knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to facilitate the general *idealistic* and educational purposes as revealed in the structure of the organization. Belief in the purposes plus supervisory and administrative skills to carry them out become essential.

A Proposal for Study and Experimentation by Jewish Community Center Workers

The question arises as to the specific purpose for which the Jewish Center provides its services. The use of the facilities and services as a constellation through which to reach individuals and families is a major process. The agency brings people together in the Jewish Center for programs through which Jewish content can be transmitted in depth.

As a community supported agency, on what basis are decisions made as to priorities in services offered by the Center? Or to what need does the Center respond? To whom is the specific service directed? These are the fundamental questions underlying the process of staff-

ing and provision of programs and facilities.

Function

Restoration, provision and prevention are three useful and distinct terms for classifying problems and developing objectives for services, and are similar in formulation to the items listed under purpose in the Working Definition of Social Work Practice.

Werner Boehm, in his article "The Nature of Social Work,"⁴ classifies functions:

1. Restoration — To identify, control or eliminate those factors . . . that have caused a breakdown or impairment of social relationships.
2. Provision—Creation, enrichment, improvement and better coordination of social resources and the mobilizing of individual capacity for interaction in the physical, intellectual, emotional or spiritual realms.
3. Prevention—Early discovery, control, and elimination of conditions that could hamper social functioning.

The Jewish Center Services in relation to groups probably fall primarily into the category of "provision." In relation to the Jewish Community, there probably is an element of "prevention," as well as "provision." Services directed toward individuals are probably "provision."

There is agreement that the treatment of neuroses or psychoses (restoration of individuals) is not an appropriate function of the Center. The problem is: within what range of social problems should the "provision" function be assumed? "Bringing into full flower personal capacity for more effective social interaction" can cover a wide range depending on the starting point.

Some agencies are experimenting with a classification of their services along

⁴ Werner Boehm, *Social Work*, Journal of the NASW, April 1958.

these functional lines. Pin-pointing those services where the objective is generally rehabilitative, because the groups are composed of individuals whose capacity for interaction is limited, makes it possible then to determine leadership and supervision directed toward this type of service.

Where groups are composed of persons with much capacity but whose horizons need expanding or whose attitudes need changing according to the goals, would call for a different pattern of staffing.

Both types of services fall within the stated objectives but they require different programming and staffing. For example: The presence of rapid social mobility is recognized. It results frequently in anxiety attending the uncertainty of individuals as to the behavior expected of them. Recognizing the presence of this problem, the staff of a Center might plan programs related directly to it. Evaluation of success would be based on a stated premise.

The pressure for the Center to "serve" persons economically middle-class, but in the process of achieving the behavior patterns of that socio-economic group, has resulted in the question from the community: "Do they need service?" This question can only be answered if the staff are clear as to whose need they are meeting through what services and to become clear, a process of planning is required.

Assessing the need, planning services to meet it, implementation and evaluation are the steps required of a professional social work staff whether the focus be in relation to (1) an individual, (2) a group, or (3) a whole community. The stress points in this system are in *assessing need* and in *implementation*. In our practice, *to assess need* requires more than factual information about the background of individuals. It requires a combination of factual study plus actual

interaction with the individual or group at least for a few sessions. (I use group generally here to include informal or mass groups as well as organized groups.)

Implementation may be through the use of a variety of types of professional leadership—adult education, physical education, nursery school, social group work, art specialists—the decision made on the basis of the planning.

It is the author's opinion that social work knowledge and skills should be apparent in decisions regarding intake, group composition (small group or agency membership), program development and supervision. In actual group leadership, range is from need for rehabilitation service to capacity for educational or social action type service. Decisions as to which type should be conscientiously made.

If groups have difficulty in social functioning, experience has shown that they do not disintegrate as groups or withdraw from service if the worker helps the group recognize its difficulty. It is more apt to withdraw if this is not done. The words social work and professional can be interpreted acceptably to clientele membership, board and community just as positively as recreation, play, education. Character-building actually requires a disciplined responsible staff and should not be assumed as an objective lightly.

If an agency is clear about what it has to offer and generous about offering it, the program will grow and develop in both quantitative and qualitative ways

for the need is far from being met, especially in relation to the population increases.

Summary and Conclusion

Trends in the development of social work indicate changes in the fundamental educational preparation and promise a more clearly agreed upon social work framework. This will increasingly incorporate group work as a major social work method and social work practice as the whole constellation of value, purpose, sanction, knowledge and method attributable to a profession in our society. A field of practice will be a term to describe those agencies whose purposes and services have some common elements. The classification will make it possible for further clarity as to what the practice of the worker should be or is in every field of practice and specifically, in our case, the group service agencies. The specific agency influences and is influenced by the worker. Group work practice is the provision of group work services according to the stated values, etc., of social work, using the group work method and within the purposes and structure of the agency. The degree to which the social work profession is more effective in society will be determined in part by the effectiveness of each worker in the agency, but also by the degree to which all workers contribute knowledge gained from their practice to the profession. The hoped for objective is not high status as a profession. Our goal is a better functioning society as a result of our practice in group service agencies.

THE DETACHED WORKER IN A NEW SETTING

by ARTHUR EISENBERG AND DON FELDSTEIN

Jewish Community Center of Brookline-Brighton-Newton, Mass.

INCREASINGLY, there is an awareness that juvenile delinquency is not the exclusive property of the slums and of the under-privileged. The report of the Kefauver Committee and the writings and speeches of Albert Cohen are but two notable examples of this awareness. There can be no doubt that today juvenile delinquency is a problem that cuts across class boundaries.

Group work, using the detached street worker approach, is evolving an effective tool in combatting delinquency. While many have noted the classlessness of delinquency, there have been no group work attempts to deal with this except among the under-privileged. This may be because settlement houses are located primarily in certain neighborhoods. It may also be that we are less sympathetic to servicing a group more able to receive private service. However, the street worker approach was developed not just because other services were not available, but because it was able to do a job that no other service could perform. In any event, by limiting our attentions to one group, we are denying service to another needy group and denying to ourselves a broader understanding of the nature and causes of juvenile delinquency.

At the Jewish Community Center of Brookline-Brighton-Newton, we have taken a step in applying a form of the

street worker approach to the treatment of middle and upper class delinquency. This paper reports tentative impressions resulting from this experience.

How the Problem Came to Our Attention

Ours is a new Center in a neighborhood becoming the center of Boston's Jewish population. Its membership cuts across socio-economic lines from lower through upper class. It has a large active "healthy" teenage membership. We have felt that in professionalized centers certain people stay away, specifically because they sense our intent and do not wish to be reached. The less approachable teenagers in Brookline-Brighton-Newton had no concept of what we were and came to the new Center as they would to a playground—to take over. When they met our structure and our desire to reach them, they withdrew, but not before we took note of their existence. A second source of information was local juvenile court statistics which showed alarming increases in Jewish juvenile offenses in the period beginning in 1957. A third lead came from a few sophisticated parents who came to the Center for help and described the behavior of their teenage children, all of which began to fall into a pattern.

In alerting the lay leadership of the