

ATTITUDES, OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PRACTITIONER

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LAYMEN often ask a community organization professional what it is that he does on his day-to-day job. It may, of course, be assumed that the average professional can state the answer without difficulty, yet very often within the intimacy of professional conferences the impression is sometimes created that either we do not know the answer, or that the whole matter is too elementary to be worthy of discussion. And the literature of the field is peculiarly barren of revelation on the subject.

The question deserves an answer, or shall we say answers, even if for no other reason than that they may be tested against the experiences of many. It may be that we consider the subject so elementary that it does not merit articulation, in which case we do not permit the possibility for re-evaluating it in the light of what we readily admit is a rapidly changing scene.

Attitudes

It is impossible to meaningfully state what the community organization professional does on the job, without relating it to a set of attitudes which he must necessarily bring with him in his work. The attitudes which are a part of the community organization configuration are already incorporated in the literature of the field. But in order to obtain

a complete perspective on the subject, it is necessary to relate the job responsibilities to the attitudes which go with them. For without a set of specific attitudes which are fundamental in the performance of the job, the various activities simply become disjointed and unconnected efforts without relationship to each other and without claim to a professional performance.

The essential attitudes which the community organization practitioner in the local central community agency brings to the job can be stated as follows:

1. The acceptance of the voluntary nature of the Jewish community and the complete realization that the association with a Jewish community by individuals or groups cannot be imposed but must result from an awareness of certain interests in common.
2. A conviction of the essential validity of Jewish community organization for fulfilling common needs. The community organization practitioner must be convinced of the validity of maintaining certain community services by Jews for Jews.
3. A confirmed sense of identity with the Jewish group. This does not necessarily mean that

the community organization practitioner must have an indoctrinated orientation in one or another viewpoint about Jewish life. It does mean that he feels a deep sense of belonging and that he considers his personal destiny interwoven with that of Jews everywhere.

4. A belief in the democratic process and an acceptance of the place of all groups in Jewish life, regardless of his individual orientation.

Objectives

Having come to the job with a crystallized set of attitudes, approximating the aforementioned ones, the community organization practitioner can then set for himself a group of objectives, which in a real sense become the objectives of the community which he serves, and which determine the specifics of this day-to-day performance. Here again the daily tasks possess no particular interrelationship or pertinence except as they have a bearing on the objectives which the practitioner and the community are trying to achieve. These objectives can be stated generally as follows:

1. To preserve at a maximum level those services in the community which meet community needs.
2. To direct and catalyze action for changing, eliminating or adding whatever services and programs which enhance the well-being of the Jewish community.
3. To conserve and utilize community resources (manpower and finances) so as to make most effective use of them for the achievement of objectives 1 and 2.
4. To maintain the democratic process so as to be able at all times

to judge the will and temper of the community and to assess the practicality or timeliness for achieving certain ends.

5. To mould opinion and guide action toward those ends which seem worthwhile even though the community may not yet seem ready for them.

Methods

We then come to the performance on the job. "What do we do? How do we do it?" At first glance the answers seem to lie in intangibles. But understanding the attitudes which he brings to bear on his performances and seeing the objectives for which he, together with the community which he serves, is striving, the community organization practitioner can readily specify his activities in a pattern of interrelatedness. His total performance then becomes a unified service to his community based on a universal discipline which can be applied to varying situations and which he can share with others occupied in the same area of service. In other words, he is then functioning in a field of work which can be designated as a profession.

A Reservoir of Information

For one thing, the community organization practitioner must be a medium through which information about Jewish community life must flow. He must have readily available all information about trends and events that are taking place in all areas of Jewish life. In this connection the information which the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds makes available to him is indispensable. But in addition to the objective information that he obtains, he must have the subjective information from the various agencies and programs

that impinge on the life of his community. He must be fully aware of the attitudes and viewpoints of the national agencies, their current propaganda devices, what they are attempting to accomplish and by what means. And in addition to his absorption of information, it is also well for him to be acquainted with current Jewish periodicals and the literature by Jews and about Jews so that he can maintain a perspective on the temper of the times.

The community organization practitioner must be sufficiently familiar with research and fact-finding methods so that whenever necessary, he can, either himself or by setting up the necessary machinery, obtain whatever data or information is necessary to bring to bear on a given situation. Whether it be the organization for a community census, determining what the budget is for the Community Center, or what the current case load of the family agency is, he must know how to go about getting the facts that the community needs in order to deal intelligently with any given issue.

Concomitant with his function as a repository of information is that of a dispenser. He must use his relationships with people and groups, the Anglo-Jewish press, the publication of his own organization, and every other medium of expression which is available to bring to his community that information which has a bearing on whatever issues are pertinent at any given time. It is, of course, obvious that the dissemination of information must be selective in the sense that it has a current bearing on the concerns of the community, but not selective in order to bear out whatever prejudgments the practitioner may personally have. He must have confidence in facts leading to correct conclusions.

Use of Personal Contacts

An important and time consuming part of the practitioner's job lies in his relationship directly with individuals. He must know and be conversant with a substantial number of individuals in his community—not only with "community leaders" but with the "man of the street." His personal relationships must cut across all organizational and divisional lines. The reasons for and purposes of his relationships are

- a. to be continually aware of the attitudes and viewpoints of his constituency, not only of those who are officially a part of the organized structure, but also of people generally and of organized groups,
- b. to disseminate information about issues and trends in Jewish life,
- c. to mould opinions and attitudes which will redound to the best interests of the community,
- d. to make it possible for him to assess possibilities for new leadership so that there can be a continual influx of new blood into the organized community structure to supplement the already existing leadership.

Naturally, many of the practitioners' contacts are on a formalized conference basis, especially those with community officers, or committee chairmen where certain meetings are to be planned, or a given project is to be assessed, or a current issue to be evaluated. But anyone in the field knows that his formal contacts are but a small part of his personal relationships affected by his position, and that a good deal of his social life is permeated with the essence of the responsibilities which he must shoulder in his community capacity. So much so, that

hardly a community organization practitioner is alive who does not yearn for associations where he can discuss baseball or the weather rather than the problems of Israel, or the latest drive being planned by the Jewish Home for the Aged. As for those lunch hours that are not being taken up with meetings—it is a rare luxury to be able to get off into an isolated spot with someone who will not mention the word "Jewish" or "community" or "implementation."

Use of Committee Structure

The committee structure is, of course, one of the basic media through which community organization process takes place. It is a most useful tool for carrying out a responsibility authorized by the formal organization. Once a committee is appointed and designated a given task, it becomes the responsibility of the community organization practitioner to meet with the chairman of the committee to review the purposes for which the committee has been appointed and to agree on the kind of factual information which must be available in order for the committee to fulfill its responsibility. It is also well for the professional and the chairman to agree on a procedure for the committee to follow, even though it may be tenuous and flexible.

The committee meetings themselves should be devoted to a review of a statement of the problem, procedure for meeting it, and garnishing and analysis of whatever facts are available which have a bearing on the issue. Having arrived at its objective, the committee then has the task of formulating a written report to be submitted to the parent body. Here, too, the professional practitioner has his definite responsibility to see that the report is formulated within the spirit and actual intent of the committee.

But over and above the attainment of the purposes for which the committee was created, should be the additional value to the members of the committee in having undergone a learning process which has widened community horizons, and has contributed to an understanding of achieving constructive values through common effort.

The Board or Council

The formal body of the organized central structure should have the primary responsibility for formulating basic policy. It is obvious that policies for operating a central community agency must stem from substantial agreement. Here the professional has the responsibility for making certain that the divergent elements in a community are a part in the central body, and in helping to guide the inevitable struggle through differences to whatever agreement is possible, then to initiate action to achieve the goal inherent in the agreement. When agreement is not possible, the professional must have the patience to bide his time, using his relationships with people, his reservoir of information, and his other community organization skills to develop whatever understanding is possible to achieve eventually the agreement for which he hopes.

Relationship to Functional Programs

Whether a central communal agency has an official relationship to the functional programs in the community or not does not alter the responsibility that the practitioner has for being fully informed about them. The professional, without a thorough knowledge of the structure of these agencies, their mode of operation, and the extent of their services, is indeed handicapped in carrying out his professional responsibilities on a

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maximum level. He must develop his position in the community in such a fashion that, even in those instances where his agency is not officially related to a functional program, if he is called in on meetings, he will be able to obtain specific information when needed. In those instances where inter-agency relationships are involved, his counsel will be sought. Without such entree the central communal agency cannot function as an overall planning body, and community services then become segments of independent operation, rather than the interrelated services of a total community.

Relationship to the Wider Community

The Jewish community is not and should not be isolated from the main stream of general community life. Jews as individuals and as organized groups participate in civic affairs, in the Community Chest and in all other matters that affect the civic well-being of the community.

The community organization practitioner is accordingly, as a community leader and as a professional social worker, often called upon to serve on committees, to participate in survey and research projects, and to lend his skills and experience in many phases of community responsibility. The relationships that he develops in this area are as important to his effectiveness on the job as are his relationships within the Jewish community.

Effective Administration

A smoothly run and efficient office is, of course, an indispensable day-to-day responsibility of the community organiza-

tion professional. Without exhausting the subject, it is worth summarizing the two main facets of effective administration. One is the maintenance of easily accessible records, whether financial or informational, so that whatever is required can be easily obtained at any given time. In this connection it may be to the advantage of practitioners to confer more often, not only to benefit from each other's experience but to work out some uniformity with reference to statistical forms and other office tools.

The other facet of administration is the necessity for designating responsibilities within the office set-up in a manner to assure the most efficient kind of office management. This implies the ability of the professional to work with people, both paid office assistants and volunteers, in carrying out all of the manifold details that are a part of the total office routine.

Community Organization Record-Keeping

Finally, a word should be said about the necessity for the development of a systematic form of record-keeping of community organization experience. This is necessary in order to be able to truly evaluate a process in perspective, and also to permit an exchange of experience between professionals, which is not based solely on memory and on generalizations. Only on the basis of such a development will it be possible for ideas such as are contained in this paper to be tested and appraised pragmatically, and only then will we be in a position to develop and refine our methods on the basis of cumulative experience.

CASE WORK ASPECTS OF HOME-MAKER SERVICE*

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THE Jewish Family and Community Service is the family case work agency in Chicago serving the Jewish community. Included these past few years in our community is an immigrant population, displaced persons, for whom the agency has assumed responsibility. The agency program is designed to include meeting the needs of these newcomers, as well as those of other members of the community.

I am to discuss one aspect of our case work program—Homemaker Service—and I mention the immigrant families because their particular needs for this service must be understood and met.

As social workers we know something of what the loss of mother, temporarily or permanently, means to young children; how anxiety-provoking a sudden or chronic illness may be to a family; and that illness may create or aggravate problems in intra-familial relations. We know also the economics of illness—heavy medical expense, burdensome debts, loss of income, even loss of job.

It is such problems which bring families to the agency for help in planning through Homemaker Service, for care of children, management of the household, together with home care of the convalescent or chronically ill, the emotionally disturbed, whether child, adult, or the aged.

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I may assume, I believe, that all of us here know what Homemaker Service is, the basis of its development in social agencies, and its function. What I should like to discuss is the case work administration of Homemaker Service as an integral part of a case work plan and the administration of a Homemaker Department.

The question most commonly asked by the community is: What is the difference between Homemaker Service provided by a social agency and domestic service through an employment agency? It is for us in the field to so clearly define and administer our service that its professional values are understood and effectively utilized by the community. Interpretation to private physicians and psychiatrists is particularly important as they are often referral sources. Unlike an employment agency or a nurses' registry, a social agency approaches plans for Homemaker Service with the family in the same way as it does for any other service it is equipped to provide, adapting skills and methods to the particular situation. Let me cite examples of recent requests for Homemaker Service: Mr. L asks for a resident housekeeper because his wife is to be hospitalized over a long period. He is a small tradesman with marginal income and is tied up at his place of business twelve hours a day, seven days a week. He has two minor children. There are relatives but