- although the level of practice frequently leaves much to be desired and there are problems and strains which we have outlined.
- 2. Social work and the Jewish center field have distinctive, overlapping and shared aims and objectives. The shared and overlapping ones are more significant and the distinctive ones can be lived with and may even make things more interesting.
- 3. Those who maintain that the differences are irreconcilable and urge that there be only one ideological orientation and one pat-

- tern for all Jewish centers are wrong and give us bad advice.
- 4. Our professional function requires a distinctive, independent professional role. Basic to this role is the necessity that we involve ourselves, our members and our agencies in major community and social issues. Nothing could be more truly consonant with the best objectives of social work and of Jewish life.

Finally, we must not let our case go by default. We must speak up and let our point of view be heard. It will not be easy, but as John Gardner has said, with respect to the pursuit of excellence, "Whoever expected it would be?"

COMMENT *

by Bertram H. Gold

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The Breadth of the Questions

rel in the basic premises laid down by Ginsberg and Miller, or with the conclusions they have drawn. I, too, happen to be one of those who believe that "the Jewish community center is, to a significant extent, a social welfare institution." I, too, believe that while the Jewish community center may "have more than one professional approach and service orientation," social work as a profession, and group work as a method of social work, have a great deal to offer the Jewish community center and vice versa.

Merely to say this, however, is not enough, for it ignores the fact that serious question is being raised today in many circles about whether the center is truly a social welfare institution and whether social work training is really required to secure the basic skills necessary to perform the professional "helping" role in the center. Indeed, the question has been raised as to whether the traditional helping role is itself called for today. Some ask instead for a primary teaching role; others demand that a higher priority be placed on a role of control.

It is significant that these questions are being raised by administrators and practitioners alike. The administrator complains that the worker he engages just out of a school of social work is not properly prepared to do his job. The worker retorts that the agency gives him no opportunity to practice social work or make use of the basic skills of group work which he has acquired. And between these two poles, the membership and board very often have conflicting views about the functions which the center should fulfill and about the roles they would ascribe to those whom they engage to carry out those functions.

Admittedly, I have drawn this problem with broad, and perhaps exaggerated, strokes. Nonetheless, the problem does exist. It is not confined to just one part of the country and it is shared by both small and large centers. Further, it is faced not just by the Jewish community center. Our companion group-serving agencies of the traditional kind, the YWCA, the settlements, and the national youth-serving agencies, are asking the same kind of questions.

Why are these questions being raised? What are the factors that have prompted them? How real are they? Ginsberg and Miller suggest three reasons for these conflicts. They suggest it arises out of our sectarian base, out of the dif-

^{*} Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Boston, May 29, 1961.

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ferences between policy and practice, and out of the drive for uniformity. Let us look at each of these for just a moment.

Ginsberg's and Mitchell's Diagnosis of Conflict in the Center

The problems posed by our sectarian base are many. However, I do not think they are really germane to the question of social work practice. If you accept Ginsberg and Miller's definition of group work, it becomes possible, as they state. "to see group work operating in a variety of settings and under a variety of auspice." Certainly, the caseworker dealing only with Jewish clients in a Jewish-sponsored agency does not question whether she is doing casework. I believe that the concern expressed about whether the concentration on our own institutions has inhibited the growth of publicly supported services needs to be looked at but I do not think it bears too much relation to the problem at hand. To the contrary, I believe a good case can be made that the development of our own sectarian private agencies has had a great spurring effect on the growth of publicly supported, non-sectarian programs.

The difference between our stated policies and principles and actual practice is, of course, a real one. Ginsberg and Miller admonish us that there has always been a gap and that this is the "nature of the beast." No one can gainsay this. Yet, if the gap is not just one of distance but is one of changing concepts that have not yet been verbalized, then this may represent a much more dangerous symptom than has been ascribed to it. If our policies and principles are actually changing while we still continue to subscribe out loud to the old ones, then the practice can never catch up and the gap will only widen.

Finally, we are told the drive to same-

ness in the Jewish community center is producing this tension and dysfunction. A great deal is made of this in the paper, but I must confess that most of the discussion devoted to it passes me by and leaves me bewildered. I am responsible for six centers in Los Angeles. I find that each one of them has a distinctively different personality and makes its own unique contribution. I find that I cannot package any programs for these six centers and I doubt any one outside, perhaps, of the Concert and Lecture Bureau of the JWB, gives serious consideration to packaging programs throughout the country.

I cannot help but suspect that there is a hidden element in this emphasis on the drive for sameness. Methinks that this is a case where New York City is different and unless I am very much mistaken, most of us are not involved in the struggle for control that evidently is being waged in New York.

I began my comments by stating that I believed we are faced with a crucial problem. Obviously, I do not think that the three factors dealt with by Ginsberg and Miller do enough to explain this conflict. I would like to attempt, therefore, to list briefly some of the factors which I think must be considered in some of the questions that have been asked in recent years about social work practice within the Jewish community center.

Additional Pivotal Questions

1. The natural conflict between the organization and the profession. Much of recent literature on organizational theory has focused on this problem. The concern on the part of industry to maintain organizational loyalty among its members is its answer to this strain which so often occurs.

Every organization, whether it wants to or not, needs to maintain some kind

of inner equilibrium. It needs to adapt to both the internal and the external forces that impinge upon it. The Jewish community center in the post-war decade has been in a constant state of adaptation to a changing community which it is attempting to serve and to a changing professional group which it employs to carry out these services. I will have more to say later about the changing nature of the community and the professional group, but for the moment, the point I am trying to make is that the maintenance of some kind of dynamic equilibrium often produces value conflicts. The growing demands made by a sophisticated community upon the center compels it to seek expertise. But that very expertise carries with it professional commitment that can at times be more important and overriding than mere organizational loyalty. Gouldner 1 refers to this as the conflict between the cosmopolite and the local. Let me give you an example of what I mean. The center builds a new building and, in so doing, doubles its budget. In order to maintain its organizational equilibrium, it finds it necessary to seek out as much self-sustaining activities as possible. So we find a much greater rise in fee classes than in small clubs. The group worker, on the other hand, questions the importance of these activities in his professional value system.

Without suggesting any answers at the moment, we do need to list for ourselves all those elements within the organization—within the institution called the center—that are tending to produce this strain and then to see which of them are real and what can be done about them.

2. The growth of bureaucracy within

the centers. Our centers have grown by leaps and bounds in the post-war years. We have built up formidable organizations with a relatively high degree of centralization and with all the attributes, both good and bad, of a bureaucracy. While a bureaucracy may, as Max Weber has noted, be the most efficient way we have of performing certain functions, nonetheless, a bureaucracy is rigid, conservative and puts greater stress upon the authority of office than the professional worker would want to accept. In our large centers, we continuously strive to achieve some direct form of communication. Decisionmaking and problem-solving with full staff participation have become difficult. Decisions made at the top do not always percolate down to the rank and file workers. In my own agency, the group work practitioner may have five levels of supervision between himself and myself as the over-all administrator. With such a gap between the rank and file and its top leadership, the maintenance of professional esprit de corps becomes just that much harder. There are other problems elicited by a bureaucracy, e.g., the development of the bureaucratic personality.2 It is a personality that tends to create agency dysfunction for it negates the very kind of professional and helping personality our profession requires. What we need here are some good empirical studies on the center such as Stanton and Schwartz have made on the mental hospital,3 which will give us some insights into the relation of our agency structure and size to our professional service.

¹ Alvin W. Gouldner, "Organizational Analysis," in Social Science Theory and Social Work Research, National Association of Social Workers, New York, 1960.

² Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality" in Robert K. Merton et al., ed., Reader in Bureaucracy, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1952.

³ Alfred A. Stanton and Morris S. Schwartz, The Mental Hospital, Basic Books, New York, 1954.

3. The multiple purposes of our centers. I do not want to spend too much time on this point particularly since Ginsberg and Miller have already made reference to it. But I do think that we must take cognizance of the fact that our centers have developed many different kinds of services and have employed experts from many different disciplines. A number of things flow from this. In some instances, the group worker seems to have lost status. In a center that develops a fine, cultural arts program and has on its staff top adult educators, art, drama and music personnel, the group worker may begin to feel threatened. Soon he begins to justify his own status almost like the social worker who provides ancillary service in a hospital. From this, it does not take much to begin questioning one's own validity and worthwhileness within the center.

It is time we re-confirmed the importance of what we group workers have to offer to people. It is time we recognized that what we have to offer is different, though not necessarily better, than what other disciplines have to offer. And finally, it is time we improved our ability to develop a team approach within the center.

4. The nature of the American Jew. Of all the attributes of the American Jew today, the two most significant are, of course, that he is native-born and that he has risen more quickly than any other ethnic group to be part of our expanding middle class society. These two factors in themselves have immensely changed the needs he seeks to meet in a center. Because he is native-born, and despite the growth of the synagogue, he seeks to find some sense of Jewish belonging in a secular fashion. Because he is largely well-to-do, the program wants which he expresses have become much more sophisticated, and often.

more vacuous. Yet, we as social workers, have failed to recognize the real needs with which he comes to us. We are still talking about meeting the needs of the thirties in a traditional manner rather than meeting the needs of the sixties in new, creative ways. This is largely due to a fifth factor which affects our whole problem. This is a factor which I call:

5. Our concern with purpose rather than need. We have, in the Jewish community center field, become overly concerned with buildings and institutions at the expense of people. This means that we spend more time speaking and talking about organizational purpose than we do in thinking or talking about individual needs. Gisela Konopka 4 has very correctly pointed out that "A profession cannot choose its own function; it is designated by those who use it." The purpose and function that the professional center worker will play is going to be determined by the people who use our agencies and, I think, we would do well to stop fussing so much about our agency purposes. However, the manner in which we fulfill these functions is something which we, as a profession, determine. The kind of leadership we give to providing competent, constructive answers to the needs of people is our responsibility and I don't think we have been properly fulfilling this responsibility.

Group work has always been concerned with meeting social problems. That is why we are part of the social work profession. But we have failed to recognize that the native-born, middle class Jew, with a larger family than he has ever had before, with a higher level of general education and a low-level Jewish education, represents a whole new set

of problems and needs that cry out for professional social work skill practiced in the kind of group-serving agency represented by the Jewish community center.

6. The center's search for an image. All of the factors I have talked about thus far have made it difficult for us to present a clear image even to ourselves, let alone to the public. We are Jewish but we are not a synagogue. We teach but we are not a school. We serve the middle class so we are not a welfare institution. All of this has produced confusion among ourselves about the nature of social work practice in the center. I am beginning to believe, although I confess I am not at all sure how we should best do it, that we need to establish, or re-establish if you will, the identity of the center as a social welfare institution concerned with the current problems of the Jewish people. We need to do this aggressively by our contacts with the fabric of the social work community, by involvement of lay people in the total matrix of the social work scene, and by any other means that you can suggest.

7. The growth of the glamour settings. While we have been facing some of these problems of professional self-identification within the Jewish community center setting, we have, at the same time, witnessed the rapid growth of the use of group workers in non-traditional settings. I refer, of course, to the psychiatric settings, the youth authorities, the housing developments, and the like. There is no question that this has affected our ability to recruit people to the center field and has caused much bitter soul-searching among many of our center workers about whether they would not be more true to their profession in one of these other settings. I can only say that I believe a profession commits suicide when it begins to set priorities as to

where its practitioners shall practice. Who really is to say whether working with a patient in a hospital setting is more important than helping a child in a center gain a new set of values? Who is to determine whether working with an acting-out child in a gang group is more or less important than working with a group in the Jewish community center, helping them to appreciate the importance of democratic functioning? Indeed, if we have conviction about what it is that group work has to offer to people, then it would seem to me we would be truly derelict in our professional responsibility if we said that the people who come to the centers do not deserve this skill and should be deprived of it. I hope I am not beating a dead horse here, but I do think this point has constantly to be emphasized.

8. The lag in the training of group workers. Just as we have not been aware of the changing nature of our community's needs, the schools of social work have not been aware of the changing nature of our practice. Or perhaps they have been aware but have not been concerned with it. Whatever the reason, the fact does remain that many of the things that are required of group workers in the Jewish community center are not being taught in the schools. And I am not referring here just to the matter of Jewish materials. The whole area of program content has been minimized in the schools as a result of their need to raise the academic standards of the schools. Workers are not coming out prepared to supervise the part-time personnel that we employ in our agencies. A number of things are called for. I am a little unhappy, for example, with what I sense to be the rejection of Herbert Bisno's approach, suggested in the curriculum study by the Council on Social Work Education, that greater attention be placed on undergraduate

⁴ Gisela Konopka, "Group Work: A Heritage and a Challenge," Social Work with Groups, 1960, National Conference of Social Welfare.

curriculum. I think a lot of the things I am talking about could be taught on the under-graduate level and not take the time from graduate work. I think that we have got to do something about supplementary training for new workers by the National Jewish Welfare Board before the graduating student takes his first job. Whatever it is that can be done, it is clear that our new buildings, the new demands made on us, and the new kinds of people with whom we are working have not been given adequate attention in the training program given in the schools of social work.

9. The weakness in our use of the group worker. We have been guilty of an undifferentiated use of the trained group worker in the Center. Much more thinking is required about which groups need to be led by a trained group worker and which will do as well, if not better, by an untrained worker. We need to take a much better look at what are those parts of the trained worker's job that can be done by an untrained person. In Los Angeles, we have been experimenting in many different directions to seek some answer. I do not think that we

have found the best one, but I do know that where, for example, we have used an administrative assistant to the trained worker, we have found that she has been freed from a lot of nonprofessional detail and has been able to do a more intensive job and carry a larger group load. Further, I do not think enough of us, and I include myself in this, place the beginning worker just out of school in a protected enough position so that he can take a year or two to develop his skills and so can see his practice of group work in its total perspective within a Jewish community center.

These, then, are at least nine factors which I think have had some effect upon the question being raised, "Do we practice social work in the Jewish Community Center?" Regardless of what answers we ultimately find, there is no question in my mind that there is a need for us today to speak out loudly and clearly, and with conviction, about the important role that group work and social work have to play, even though it may be a changed one, in our Jewish community centers.

THE USE OF A CASEWORK CONSULTANT IN A GROUP WORK AGENCY

by Sandra Kahn

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REFERRALS of clients from caseworks, have been a usual practice in the field of social work for some time. . . . However, the use of caseworkers in the setting of group work agencies . . . is a more recent development. It attempts to bring about the coordination of the services of the two fields. . . . The exact ways in which a caseworker can function most profitably in a group work agency are still in the process of exploration." ¹

Ten years after Saul Scheidlinger made the above comments, in July of 1955, an Institute, sponsored by the American Association of Group Workers, was conducted on the subject of "Group Work in the Psychiatric Setting." In a summary of one of the workshops at this Institute the following statement was made:

"Group workers can learn from the special skills of the caseworker as can the caseworker learn from the special skills of the group worker. We need to work on intra-professional communication in this area." 2

Today, in 1961, we are still grappling with the same problems as our colleagues did in 1945 and 1955, namely, intraprofessional communication and the most effective role for a caseworker in a group work agency.

What Is a Consultant?

"The consultative relationship," as described by Shapiro & Shulman, in a recent article of theirs, "is that in which personnel of the one agency makes available to the other its special skills and techniques in dealing with such problems as may arise without entering into or participating in the treatment situation." 3

Does this then mean that the case-work consultant is not to work directly with the clientele of the group work agency? Perhaps, . . . and yet, caseworkers from the Jewish Board of Guardians of New York, acting as consultants in group work agencies most assuredly do have direct contact with membership. It might be in the area of referrals, parent discussion groups, etc.

^{*}Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Boston, May 30, 1961.

¹ Saul Scheidlinger, "Patterns of Casework Services in Group Work Agencies," *The Group*, November, 1945.

² Harleigh B. Trecker, Ed. Group Work in

the Psychiatric Setting, Whiteside Inc. and William Morrow & Co., New York, 1956, p. 157.

⁸ Solomon Shapiro and Owen Shulman, "Patterns of the Interdisciplinary Relationships Between a Casework and a Vocational Agency," Journal of Jewish Communal Service. Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (1960), pp. 334-335.