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The role of religion in selected group work agencies in Greater Boston.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN
SELECTED GROUP WORK AGENCIES IN
GREATER BOSTON

A Thesis

Submitted by

Emily Christine Rentsch

(A.B., William and Mary College, 1948)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
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PREFACE

Little has been studied or written on the universal nature of religion and the part it might play in group work agencies. "A healthy equilibrium of power"¹ of different interpretations of religion has never been democratically achieved nor have scientific means been adequately applied to interrelate a universal religion and group work positively. Yet, the presence of a sometimes unseen need urges that the problem be faced. Some of the difficulties involved can perhaps be shown in this beginning study.

In addition to materials from various national and local agencies I am indebted to many individual friends, professors, and agency directors for their kind cooperation and interest. The inspiration and encouragement received, plus the genuine sincerity found in the answers to questions, was and is gratefully appreciated.

¹ Walter Meulder's course in "Ethical Aspects of Social Reconstruction."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Why do some people shrug their shoulders with a sense of indifference at the mention of religion, and others bristle with tenseness pro and con? It seems that everyone has a creed, be it "intelligent or foolish, good or bad, outmoded or up-to-date, orderly or confused, consistent or contradictory, or a crazy compound of all these ingredients".¹ It is from these fundamental assumptions that a man's attitudes and behavior patterns are built. Churches recognize this and attempt to mold a man with a special dogma or interpretation. Group work agencies attempt to broaden the interests and modes of expression for the development of individuals of different beliefs and doctrines. Sometimes the strength of people of one religious group seems to overpower that of another, causing much fear and worry in the camp of the minority. Yet this need not be. When properly organized to meet a broad scope of interests, goals of personality development can be furthered. In spite of the self-centered and evil ends men sometimes follow, group endeavors can be directed towards positive social, intellectual, spiritual, and physical ends. "No one human being develops faith in isolation from others. Faith is a result of a reciprocal process."²

¹ Henry Hitt Crane, "Common Divisor of All Creeds," Motive, February, 1950, p. 13.

² Gertrude Wilson, "Conference Quotes," The Survey, 85:79 July, 1949

A group of businessmen, scholars, religious leaders, and research men, after discussing in a conference, felt that in order to achieve a cooperative order, the worth of each individual must be realized with each having the

opportunity of the fullest self-expression of which he is capable; ...each giving himself for socially valuable ends, while...all work would be seen in terms of its spiritual significance, thus making possible fullness of life for all men;...in which there hovered overall a sense of the reality of...God, so that worship inspired service, and service expressed brotherhood.³

Many group work agencies were developed as a direct expression of this sense of the reality of God and a true wish for the brotherhood of man. Although unavoidable differences of interpretations were found and recognized, these group work agencies have provided a democratic meeting place for those of all faiths to work toward the common goals of personality and group development.

This opportunity, in accordance with the needs and capacities for personality and group growth, change, and development, is provided for through many experiences and media. Developing a sense of the reality of God and the meaning He can have in life may be one of the many ways, along with others, of achieving an integrated personality and group.

Purpose:

In this study an attempt will be made to determine the extent to which directors, leaders, and constituents in a few group work agencies, most of which serve people of all faiths, in Boston, recognize the part

³ G. Bromley Oxnam, "Goals for Social Work in a Contemporary Society," National Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1948, pp. 89, 90.

religion can play in the dynamics of their programs.

General Questions:

1. What is the purpose and general thinking of agencies in connection with the part religion plays in their activities?
2. What is the actual practice of agencies in fostering understanding of religious concepts?
3. With a knowledge of and a conviction about some of these concepts what methods are used to promote understanding among those of different faiths?

Scope and Method of Procedure:

Ten group work agencies were selected from approximately fifty existing in Boston proper. The most commonly known group work agencies were chosen, especially if they served people of several different creeds. Thus it was that the main branches or headquarters of the YWCA, YMCA, YMHA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls were chosen. The four settlements were selected on the basis of former neighborhood situations such as Jewish or Protestant-Irish Catholic conflicts that would serve to point up religious issues or the lack of them to be dealt with in a general sense or not, as the settlement saw fit. The secretary of the United Settlements in helping the writer to choose probably chose settlements having headworkers who would be willing to discuss this subject fairly. The Y's are not as truly interreligious or non-sectarian as the others because of their Christian or Hebrew emphasis, but have been considered to provide a contrast in this area of religious understanding.

Sources of data included information from the agency national and main Boston offices and notes from Professor Saul B. Bernstein's group

work courses. On a prepared, revised, and pre-tested schedule information was gained in direct interviews with executives and head workers. Most of the interviews were conducted on an informal question and answer basis. In some of the settlements, the YWCA, and the Girl Scouts, some groups were observed or conversations held with their leaders which gave some insight into the thoughts and practices present in the area of religion. After these primary and secondary source materials were combined and interpreted, conclusions were drawn.

Definitions:

Since some of the key words used by the writer mean different things to different people, the writer here presents the meaning she attached to these words throughout the thesis.

Religion is the reaching out and relation of one's whole life--mind, body, spirit, emotions, intuitions, and affections, to the awareness or conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being and supreme values which are ultimate in the Universe through reverence, love, understanding, and commitment.

...Group work is a process and method through which individuals in groups in social agency settings are helped by a worker to relate themselves to other people and to experience growth opportunities in accordance with their needs and capacities...

The group itself is utilized by the individual with the help of the worker, as a primary means of personality growth, change, and development. The worker is interested in helping to bring about individual growth and social development. The worker is interested in helping to bring about individual growth and social development for the group as a whole as a result of group interaction.⁴

The word group is used to refer both to a club or class meeting in an agency and to a religious denomination. The sense in which it is used is made clear in each instance..

Limitations

With every measurement of attitudes it must be realized that the degree of verbal behavior may not correspond to the actual behavior. Particularly in the field of religion where people are governed by strong mores, the answers received are apt to be conventional, stating an oughtness and not the actual thought or action. Also the speech responses of the executives may be made to the total situation of promoting religion in an agency and not necessarily to the limited situations such as the training of leaders asked about.

Another difficulty was found in trying to have the executives express specifically or measure the degree of tension or the nature of a religious element in an agency program. They may have unconsciously omitted or repressed unpleasant situations. Sometimes, too, in attempting to recall situations, distortions may have crept in due to the tendency to dramatize a desired imaginative role. In addition the interviewer's own preconceptions may have been projected adding a different coloring to the data. Thus the writer recognizes that "no measurement of any phenomenon necessarily describes it completely".⁵

Values:

However, for certain opinions, measured in a "more or less" degree, the writer has hoped through this study to make more objective and accurate

⁵ George A. Lundberg, Social Research, p. 249.

everyday observations concerning the part religion plays in the programs of group work agencies. One should observe the processes by which attitudes are built up or torn down as a matter of social control. From this can be seen what needs and capacities are being fulfilled and developed or left isolated. Is there a fostering of religious development in group work agencies as there is a fostering of art or music? Thus, a study of attitudes and actions concerning this may be important to the present and future meaning and enrichment of the lives of agency members.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF AGENCIES

Settlement History

After the establishment of the London's Working Men's College in 1854, a Cambridge group under the leadership of Frederick Denison Maurice began the settlement movement. Charles Kingsley brought churchmen, collegians, and workingmen into a united effort for the betterment of social conditions. Thus it was that the University extension was formed in 1867, closely followed in 1884 by the establishment of Toynbee Hall, the first Settlement in London.¹

A direct outgrowth of the English Movement began in America with the establishment of University Settlement in New York City in 1887 by Dr. Coit on the lower East Side. Hull House was founded in Chicago by Jane Addams and in 1891 Robert A. Woods began his work at South End House in Boston. Other houses were founded, joining together in 1911 into the National Federation of Settlements.

Both in England and America the movement began with a first-hand resident study of neighborhood conditions and a general dissemination of the findings.² The association of laborers and students began to lead to the closing of sweat shops and the opening of ways to achieve higher standards of living and civic life.

¹ Major Lionel R. Ellis, Toynbee Hall and the University Settlements.

² United Settlements of Greater Boston, Sixty Years Settlements, 1887-1947.

Miss Addams wrote:

It is quite impossible for me to say in what proportion or degree the subjective necessity which led to the founding of Hull House combined three trends: (1) the desire to interpret the democracy in social terms; (2) the impulse beating at the very source of our lives urging us to aid in race problems; (3) the Christian movement towards humanitarianism.³

Settlement Philosophy

Settlements are cells of fellowship or brotherhood, "seed-beds of social change", as Paul Kellogg calls them. Being "concerned with conditions that affect the lives of the people...unemployment, inadequate housing, low wages, racial and religious conflict",⁴ settlements have provided a common meeting ground for those of different races, creeds and parties. The aim is to develop the character of individuals to become mature and effective members of families, neighborhoods, communities, and countries of the world. The fact that many settlements were begun by clergymen or men and women acting upon religious motivation gave the movement a theistic base with subsequent emphasis on humanism. Thus it is that settlements are called cells of fellowship or brotherhood.

Young Men's Christian Association History

Under the leadership of George Williams a group of men wishing to extend their missionary fellowship, formed the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844 in London, England. Other associations were formed, their combined religious and social service emphasis attracting the notice of

³ Arthur C. Holden, The Settlement Idea, p. 18.

⁴ "The Church-Sponsored Settlement Work," Round Table National Federation of Settlements, 13: no. 4-5, April-May, 1949.

American visitors. In 1851, YMCA's were opened in Montreal and Boston. Associations sprang up here and in Europe until now they extend to thirty-one different countries to meet the spiritual, social, intellectual and physical needs of young men. Programs were developed to meet the needs of industrial workers, Negroes, and students. Camps and conferences were organized on a regional, national, and international level.

Young Men's Christian Association Philosophy

Although starting originally as an evangelistic movement, the objective now is to help young men recognize and ally themselves with those forces that build Christian character through interesting activities and wholesome companions.⁵

Young Women's Christian Association History

When women were beginning to work in factories and as nurses in the Crimean War, two groups met in 1855 to pray and to study individual and social problems, forming the Young Women's Christian Association. Similar groups of fellowship and service to young women existed in Europe, but the name was introduced to America by a Boston group in 1856. Working girls were provided boarding homes and vocational training. Then, they themselves became active nationally and internationally in educating for legislation beneficial to wages, hours, and employment conditions for women. Programs were expanded to meet the spiritual, social, cultural, intellectual, and physical needs of not only the working and professional girl, but the teen-ager and younger ones also.⁶

⁵ Elizabeth R. Pendry and Hugh Hartshorne, Organization for Youth, pp. 278-285, 298-299.

⁶ National Board, YWCA, To All Who Believe in Youth.

Young Women's Christian Association Philosophy

A non-sectarian, international fellowship, the YWCA promotes growth in Christian character by affirming and encouraging in its program the practical application of the teachings of Jesus in the solution of individual or group problems.

Young Men's Hebrew Association

The Young Men's Hebrew Association was founded in 1913 by Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff and others. In 1921, it joined the Jewish Welfare Board to meet the wartime, community, welfare, and morale needs of Jewish personnel in the armed forces, community, and world.

Young Men's Hebrew Association Philosophy

Its philosophy is to develop and enrich human personality and group association through the use of informal and leisure-time programs that contain fundamental Jewish content.⁷

Boy Scouts

A young British Army officer, Robert Baden-Powell, while stationed in South Africa, sought to train his men in the skills of tracking, trailing, and wilderness living through the use of games and activities. The men so enjoyed these games and the skills they acquired that the idea went back to England where at the return of General Powell it developed into a great game for all boys. As a result of a scout's good turn for an American publisher, Mr. Boyce, the idea became established here in 1910. Congress recognized the services rendered in disasters and civic gatherings by granting the Boy Scouts a federal charter in 1916. Since then, the

⁷ National Jewish Welfare Board, Your JWB, What It Is, What It Does".

movement has grown worldwide with sea, air, and exploring divisions for the older boys, plus service patrols to aid the communities during and after the war.⁸

Philosophy of the Boy Scouts

The scout in his promise to do his best for his God and Country becomes acquainted with the best in many phases of life about him and uses his capabilities and skills to serve others and his community in concrete situations.⁹

Girl Scouts

Girls, seeing their brothers scouting, clamored for a club of their own and actually joined the ranks in a rally before the Girl Guide movement was begun in 1909 by Sir Robert's sister, Miss Agnes Baden-Powell. Their friend, Juliette Gordon Low, became interested in the movement and with tireless energy spread it to her homeland, America, in 1912. Here, it grew from a wartime to a peacetime organization with its members in twenty-nine nations.¹⁰

Philosophy of the Girl Scouts

The recognition of God and one's responsibility to Him as expressed in the scout promise is basic to the development of good character and sound citizenship which scouts prepare themselves for in serving their neighbors and community.

Camp Fire Girls

The Camp Fire movement arose when a demand was given constructive

⁸ Boy Scouts of America, Handbook for Boys, pp. 6-9, 446-668.

⁹ Pendry and Hartshorne, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁰ Girl Scout Handbook, pp. 13-16

attention by Mr. W. C. Langdon of the Russell Sage Foundation in 1912. It is now established in schools, churches, and independently in twenty-one different countries.

Philosophy of the Camp Fire Girls

Camp Fire recognizes the primary importance of spiritual values in encouraging an appreciation for God's world, in emphasizing the dignity of individual human worth and character, and in recognizing that service to the community is one of the essentials of religious living.

It is a philosophy of living, helping to develop initiative, resourcefulness, and self-reliance, to aid a happy adjustment in life through activities centered around the natural interests of girls. As its name symbolically suggests, its members attempt to carry warmth of the home hearth to all mankind.¹¹

¹¹ Pendry and Hartshorne, op. cit., pp. 35-40.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND OF BOSTON AGENCIES

A brief background is presented to give the reader a better understanding of present local conditions. Insofar as possible, the writer will state the location of the Boston agencies, their beginnings, and present distribution of people of various religions.

Dorchester House, 1353 Dorchester Avenue, was founded in 1887, first as a boys' institution and then as 'it grew larger and included all ages and both sexes, its purpose became that of meeting the needs of the neighborhood by fostering industrial, educational, and charitable works through its activities, libraries, and social meetings. Its neighborhood and membership is predominantly Catholic with Protestants ranking next and a few Jews who live in the northern section of the area.

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House, 276 Armory Street, traces its origin to boys' and girls' clubs organized by a group of young women volunteers. As the lone agency in a wide city district, it has stood for improved recreational facilities, recently organizing extension programs in the Roosevelt School. Although the neighborhood is predominantly Catholic, two Congregational churches on either side of the house have active groups.

Roxbury Neighborhood House, 858 Albany Street, was established in 1878 as a day nursery and kindergarten. Its program expanded to include many older group activities of a recreational and educational nature. Activities change as the need arises. At present, summer camping, opportunities for discussion, and work on community problems supplement the home, church, and school. Most in the neighborhood and house are Catholic

although there are some Protestants and a few Jews.

Robert Gould Shaw House, 11 Windsor Street, grew from a Home Missionary and Library established by South End House, The agency encourages equal opportunities for all, irrespective of race, creed or other arbitrary distinctions by being a "Center of friendly helpfulness... toward high citizenship."¹ Protestants are here in the majority, although the number of Catholics is increasing.

Young Men's Christian Association, 316 Huntington Avenue, has active physical education, young adult leadership training, extension school, and decentralized programs. There is a slightly higher percentage of Catholic members than Protestants with a fair sprinkling from other religions.

Young Women's Christian Association, 140 Clarendon Street, has active teen-age, business and industrial girls, dramatic, physical education, and student programs. Its religious makeup is similar to that of the YMCA.

The Young Men's Hebrew Association, 108 Seaver Street, was started in 1882, by a small group of young men in South End for "moral, Physical, intellectual, and social improvement".² A religious school and Friday night services were conducted till 1918 when they were ceded to the Jewish Board of Education and synagogues. It strives to awaken Jewish ideals and the sense of responsibility for constructive participation in a democratic order.

The Boy Scouts of America, 45 Beacon Street, has a wide, decentralized program where boys learn by doing. There are a few more Catholic

¹ United Settlements of Greater Boston, Sixty Years Settlements, 1887-1947.

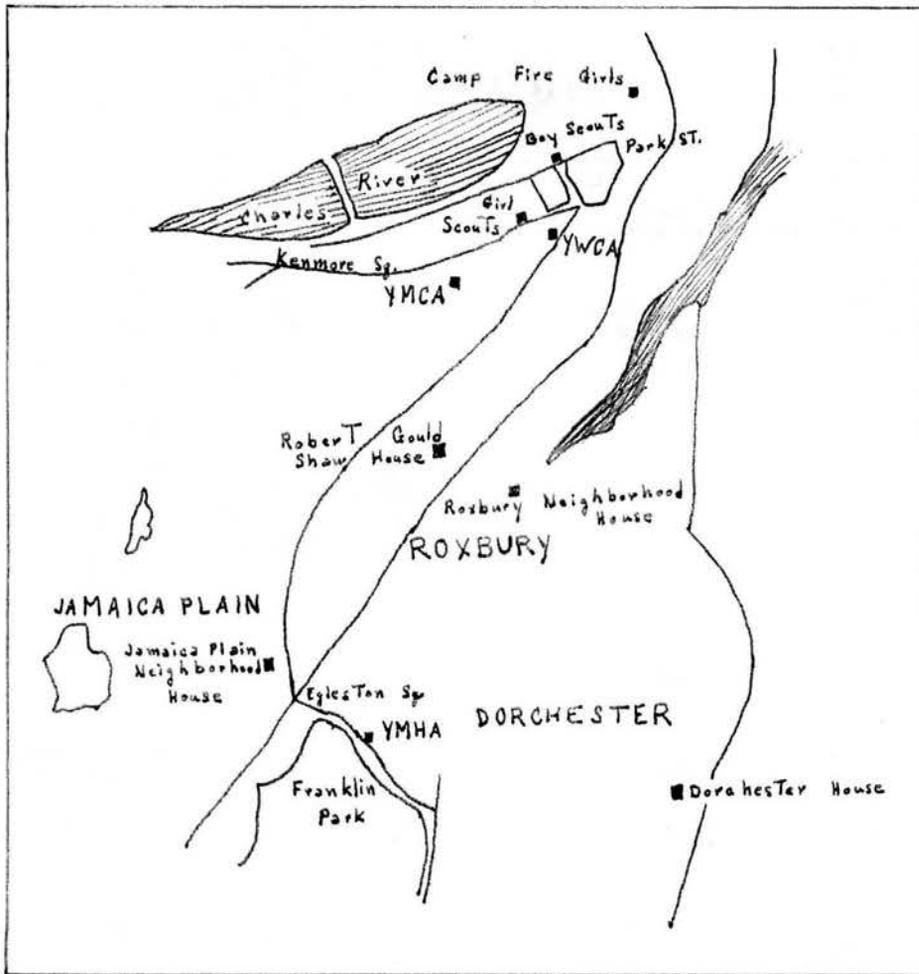
² Nathan A. Heller, The Boston YMHA, Sixty-Five Years Young.

members than Protestant ones and a fair number of Jewish boys.

The Girl Scouts of America, 661 Boylston Street, conducts many leadership and workshop courses to better prepare their leaders to develop leadership among the girls. The major religious faith present in Boston is major here, that is, Catholic, with Protestant and Jewish following.

The Camp Fire girls, 14 Somerset on the 8th floor of the United Community Services' Building, has a girl-centered creative program. As in the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls are mostly Catholic with the Protestant and Jewish faiths following closely.

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF TEN AGENCIES
IN GREATER BOSTON



CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A common factor in all the agencies studied is that they all in their philosophies adhere to Trecker's definition of group work in presenting opportunities for members and groups to grow, change, and develop. A major factor mentioned in this growth and development is the presence of a supreme being with supreme values and religious men aiming toward these to better aid the development of persons, groups, and communities. Is this thinking actually promoted in agency activities? Do agency programs foster an understanding of religious concepts and promote an understanding among those of different faiths? These questions the writer hopes to answer after a close analysis of the data to be here presented, gleaned from the replies of directors of agencies serving people of all faiths in Boston. For this reason, we shall explore the religious distribution in agencies, the type of relations among the various religious groups, the extent to which religion figures in the philosophy of the agencies, and the use of conscious and planned techniques to aid the understanding of religious concepts.

The General Religious Make-up of the Agencies

The persons interviewed gave estimates, not exact figures, of the number of people in the different religions in their areas. No attempt, except in one case, was made to show the boundaries of the areas served. Since sometimes records on religious affiliations were not kept, a comparison between the make-up of the neighborhood and that of the membership could not be made. However, it was felt that the religious groups in the neighborhood were represented in their agencies in approximately the same

proportion as they were in the community. (See Table 1.)

Figures from Roxbury Neighborhood house and the Young Women's Christian Association are the most accurate in that actual numbers were given. The others were estimates made by the executive directors. Sometimes the writer had to estimate what "a few" meant. In the case of Dorchester House, perhaps the percentage of Jews present should be higher due to their presence on the fringes of the neighborhood. At Robert Gould Shaw House the percentages of "others" might be higher due to the presence of many Pentacostal and "store-front" churches. The Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls could give no estimates but felt that they were composed of all faiths in the same proportion as they were represented in the city.

TABLE 1.

(PERCENTAGES ESTIMATED)
 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS IN AREA OF GREATER BOSTON

Agencies	P E R C E N T A G E O F			
	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	Others
Boy Scouts	45	38	16	1
Camp Fire Girls				
Dorchester House	75	24	1	
Girl Scouts				
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House	82	17	1	
Robert Gould Shaw House	20	78		2
Roxbury Neighborhood House	83	16	0.7	0.3
Young Men's Christian Association	42	38	12	8
Young Men's Hebrew Association			100	
Young Women's Christian Association	43	33 (Unknown 15)	8	1

TABLE 2.
RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS
IN AREA OF GREATER BOSTON

	<u>Number of Agencies</u>
No tensions	10
Mild tensions	5
Manner of Handling Discussions	9
Neutral	3
Referred	3 + 1

From the data available it can be seen that though one agency being homogeneous has no religious tension, neither have the other agencies, although they serve people of many religions. Yet, when the subject is pursued five (or half) of these agencies showed that tensions do exist perhaps to a mild degree. This is particularly true in the Boy Scouts where staff representatives of each religious faith have written policies to guide their thinking and actions. The Christian Scientists have not written their policies yet and were objecting to the vaccination requirement for the National Jamboree. Other expressions of tensions were felt by Protestants in a predominantly Catholic city or felt by the Catholics in their wish for survival among Protestants. This showed itself in keeping the youth as active as possible in denominational groupings instead of neighborhood groupings of friends of all faiths. It was felt that in a varied group youth would tend to lose their religious orientation. One house felt this reaction of wide indifference concerning religion as a part in life pervading throughout the whole neighborhood. The lack of knowledge and a religious background in

the people and leaders was leading to a continuous piling up of confusion.

The method most used in agencies to face this indifference and tension was that of discussion. Six of the agencies would do this by discussing specific situations or broad concepts, relating as much as possible that which might be most appropriately used in their lives and that of their community. Three agencies tried to do this in as objective and neutral a manner possible. Three agencies in discussions would refer their people to their particular churches for specific interpretations. For one agency referral was its main method.

Religion in Agency Purpose and Orientation

Three of the settlement houses stated that the general settlement purpose which they followed had no specific religious element. This purpose is stated as: to provide a friendly and understanding atmosphere guiding individuals to further their own development and to become mature and constructive members of their families, neighborhoods, communities, and countries of the world. (Horizontal, man-to-man emphasis). Thus, although present emphases are humanitarian, many settlements were begun by clergymen or men and women acting upon religious motivation. Some of this feeling is still felt today when one director declared that religion, in motivating actions, pervaded the aims and procedures of the whole agency program which is significant in the light of this study. Another director also expressed some general concern in encouraging each to support his own church and to respect that of others. The remaining seven group work agencies stated that there was a religious element in their purposes.

TABLE 3.

RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN AGENCY PURPOSE AND ORIENTATION
IN AREA OF GREATER BOSTON

	Purpose	Orientation
	<u>No. of Agencies</u>	
No religious element	3	1
General concern	1	7
Specific religious emphasis	7	2

The Boy Scouts' purpose places "emphasis upon the Scout Oath and Law for character development, citizenship training, and physical fitness."

Their Declaration of Religious Principle maintains that:

no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God. In the first part of the Boy Scout's Oath or promise the boy declares, 'On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law.' The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe, and the grateful acknowledgement of His blessings, are necessary to the best type of citizenship, and are wholesome things in the education of the growing boy. No matter what the boy may be--Catholic or Protestant or Jew--this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before him. The Boy Scouts of America therefore recognize the religious element in the training of the boy---¹

Though specific attention to a boy's religious life shall be that of his particular church, he is urged to be faithful to it and to respect the religion of others. Scout Law number twelve states:

A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties, and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.²

¹ Application for Adult Registration, Boy Scouts of America, National Council, quoting from the Constitution.

² Ibid.

The purpose of the Camp Fire Girls, as stated in its Constitution, is "to perpetuate the spiritual ideals of the home" and "to stimulate and aid the formation of habits making for health and character." It encourages an appreciation for God's world, emphasizes the dignity of individual human worth and character, and recognizes that service to the community is one of the essentials of religious living. Thus to them "the spiritual atmosphere or climate...pervades the whole of life." In becoming a member a girl desires "to serve God and country". Her laws ask her to "Worship God, Seek Beauty, Give Service, Pursue Knowledge, Be Trustworthy....". This, she may learn in a community group which includes many denominations. Here she is urged to participate in the activities of her own church. In a church-sponsored group the activities of the Camp Fire Girls are more closely integrated with the local church program.²

The basic aim of the Girl Scout organization is the development of girls along physical, mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual lines to the end that there may result not only enriched individuals, but also intelligently participating citizens in a democratic social order. The organization recognizes the fundamental need for spiritual development in character building--a need that each Girl Scout reaffirms when she promises 'On my honor, I will try: To do my duty to God...' ³

Through its program and activities, Girl Scouting encourages and helps girls become better members of their own religious groups, but it recognizes that religious instruction is the responsibility of parents and religious authorities.⁴

It, like the Camp Fire Girls, has church-sponsored and community groups where it encourages understanding and appreciation of the religious

² Camp Fire Girls under Jewish Auspices and Camp Fire Girls and the Protestant Church, pp. 2, 3.

³ Girl Scouting and the Protestant Churches, Mutual Aims and Benefits, p. 5.

⁴ National Policies of the Girl Scout Organization and their Interpretation, Girl Scout Religious Policies, p. 6, 7.

convictions and practices of others.

The Young Men's Christian Association purpose is:

To promote health and physical fitness; to assist young people in finding and organizing clean and refreshing social life and recreation; to encourage study of all religions, and the application of Christian ideals to the rebuilding of a better society; to promote racial and religious tolerance and world peace; to advance education and the welfare of family and community.⁵

Understanding and cooperation among persons and groups of different religious backgrounds are encouraged and developed.⁶ Religious barriers are broken and some of the unchurched are reached. Efforts are made not only in specific communities but also in the developing of interfaith activity nationally and ecumenically.⁷

The Jewish Community Center (also called the Y.M. and Y.W.H.A.) seeks to integrate, develop, and enrich human personality and group association through service "as a common meeting ground for all Jews,"⁸ inter-relating Jewish religion and tradition with the ideal of American democracy. It seeks to meet "the cultural, spiritual, physical, mental, and communal needs of the individual Jew; it prepares him at the same time for effective participation in American life. Underlying its entire program is the purpose of developing an understanding of, belief in, and loyalty to Judaism and democracy.⁹

⁵ The Boston Young Men's Christian Association, Thirty Thousand Builders, forepage.

⁶ The Boston Young Men's Christian Association, A Statement of Policy Regarding Religious Emphasis and Church Relationships, Objectives.

⁷ Paul M. Limbert, The Christian Emphasis in YMCA Program, p. 12, 13.

⁸ National Jewish Welfare Board, Your JWB, What It Is, What It Does, p. 12.

⁹ National Jewish Welfare Board, Jewish Center Work as Your Profession, p. 1.

The Purpose of the Young Women's Christian Association

For Community Associations

To build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in our common life those ideals of personal and social living to which we are committed by our faiths as Christians. In this endeavor we seek to understand Jesus, to share his love for all people, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

For Student Associations

We unite in the desire to realize full and creative life through a growing knowledge of God.
We determine to have a part in making this life possible for all people.
In this task we seek to understand Jesus and follow him.

The Immediate Purpose

To unite in one body the YWCA of the United States, to establish, develop, and unify such associations; to participate in the work of the World's YWCA, to advance the physical, social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual interests of young women.

The Ultimate Purpose

Seek to bring young women to such a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord as shall mean for the individual young woman fullness of life and development of character, and shall make the organization as a whole an effective agency in the bringing in of the kingdom of God among young women.

Though encouraging members to attend the church of their choice, the Y tries to relate its religious ideals and principles to all the interests and concerns of life in the individual communities and in the world.

10 National Board YWCA, (Leadership Services Department, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.,) Going Our Way?, p. 4

11 Elizabeth R. Pendry and Hugh Hartshorne, Organizations for Youth, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1935) p. 208.

12 Woman's Press, (600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.,) "Is The YWCA Meeting Religious Needs?", Program Packet, Spring, 1950, "We Have Only One Life".

ORIENTATION

These written purposes with their particular emphases guide executives and staff members in decisions. Only as they review and reinterpret these various aims and relate them to present areas of concern will the full meaning of the purposes be realized in their individual and collective units of work. To insure a greater unity of thinking and actions agencies do review and reinterpret their purposes so that old and new workers alike can be creative together. Ways of doing this vary from occasional individual and staff discussions (seven agencies) to the periodic orientations gained in staff meetings and planned conferences (two agencies). To aid in these proceedings of a religious nature only half of the organizations felt that their national organizations helped them stimulate thinking through printed matter and program aids.

USE OF CONSCIOUS AND PLANNED TECHNIQUES

With this foundation programs are guided, made, and carried out. The concern of the writer in the following paragraphs will be that of determining the number of agencies which use conscious or planned techniques (to a positive, medium or negative degree) in first promoting understanding among those of different faiths and, second, to promoting understanding of various religious concepts and observances.

TABLE 4.

USE OF CONSCIOUS TECHNIQUES IN TEN AGENCIES IN AREA OF GREATER BOSTON

	Number of Agencies		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>No</u>
Interfaith Understanding	3	3	4
Religious Understanding and Observance	3	3	4

Interfaith Understanding

Four agencies, the Scouts and two settlements, Dorchester and Robert Gould Shaw Houses, stated that they did not use planned techniques to guide understanding among those of different religions. This may have been due to a lack of awareness and/or the fear of sectarian and emotional factors that would arise in free discussions. Qualifying statements revealed that the Scouts have national and local committees of representatives of the three major faiths which aid the organizations in written and verbal sectarian interpretations. Through their efforts consideration is given to menus, arrangements for religious services at camp, holiday ceremonies or free days, dedication services for church-sponsored groups, and yearly programs of Scout Sunday when members attend church in their uniforms. In addition, an interpretation of the Oath and Laws helps youth to see and understand the universal nature of the various viewpoints. The two settlements on a much more informal basis discuss religious relationships, especially during Brotherhood Week and special religious holidays. Only slight efforts were made in these four agencies to extend interfaith understanding into the community, although Robert Gould Shaw House occasionally works closely with the neighborhood Interdenominational Alliance. Most efforts are those of mediating tensions between those of different faiths. An example of this known to the writer was that at one time the Girl Scouts could have obtained free symphony tickets on Saturday. Consideration for the Jewish group caused them to pay \$300 for Sunday tickets. Thus, though stating no use of planned techniques in interfaith understanding, some informal attempts were made by these two settlements and more organized at-

tempts were made in the Scouts.

Three agencies, the Camp Fire Girls, a settlement (Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House) and the Young Women's Christian Association, believed in the use of some planned techniques to guide understanding among those of different religions. Through the use of discussions, conferences, lectures, films, and posters various interpretations came to be understood. The Camp Fire Girls has representatives of the three major faiths on its national and local boards who help plan ways of understanding. Though their badge "On Religion" is geared mostly to the helping of individual churches, there is some mention of interreligious understanding which is further carried out in camp interreligious services (except for the Catholics). In the settlement, informal interpretation by the director helped the staff realize the denominational pulls in the neighborhood. Their job would be that of encouraging a democratic appreciation of the various religious interpretations. Once a priest was asked by the director to explain about the Catholic Youth Organization to the board. One club had a speaker from Phillips Brooks House tell them about the Lutherans. The YWCA with the support of an interfaith staff showed in their programs that people of all religions in the world could come together and discuss the basic philosophy and meaning of religion to their lives. The extending of this shared thinking to actions for cooperation in the community and world was done individually by the Camp Fire Girls and their leaders. Though the settlement would remain on the discussion level the YWCA would extend its efforts into the community and world on issues of religious action on which it could agree. Thus, it can be seen that the three agencies stating some use of planned techniques in interfaith understanding did use them in varying degrees, the

settlement most informally, the Camp Fire Girls, and the YWCA in a more comprehensive manner.

Three agencies, a settlement, Roxbury Neighborhood House, and the Young Men's Hebrew and Christian Associations, said they definitely used planned techniques to promote understanding among those of different religions. The settlement with an interfaith board found that informal discussions brought out prejudices and clarified the religious teachings of the person's church. The YMHA and the YMCA would each in their programs discuss the various religions to help their members toward greater understanding. A YMCA young adult group had a Catholic-Protestant discussion with Father Murray and Unitarian Duncan Howlitt. The YMCA through the work of its board interreligious committee was able to cooperate in the community and world on religious issues. Therefore, the agencies stating definite use of techniques for interfaith understanding did so informally in the case of the settlement and broadly in the case of the "Y's".

Religious Understanding and Observance

Four agencies, the Scouts and two settlements, Dorchester and Robert Gould Shaw House, stated that they did not use planned techniques to foster an understanding of religion in a universal sense. Reasons for this were lack of awareness, leaving it to the churches, and fear of sectarian and emotional factors that might prevent free discussions. However, in the scouts, discussions involving Oath-Law interpretations, religious holidays, and Scout Sunday showed that some attempt is being made to incorporate religious understanding into the daily lives of youth. The Boy Scouts secure further attention to religious ideas and service by giving religious awards - "Ad Altare Dei" - Catholic, "God and Country" - Protestant, "Pro Deo et

Patria" - Lutheran, and "Ner Tamid" - Jewish. The two settlements on a much more informal basis might discuss religion, put on plays, cantatas, and services in individual and assembled groups during Brotherhood Week and special religious holidays. The extension of these efforts into the community and world was slight though some understanding was given to initiate acceptance of responsibility by individual persons. Thus, although stating no use of planned techniques to foster religious understanding, some informal attempts were made by the two settlements and more organized efforts were made in the Scouts.

Three agencies, the Camp Fire Girls, a settlement (Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House) and the Young Women's Christian Association, believed in the use of some planned techniques to show what religion really is. The discussions, conferences, speakers, films, and posters used by all aided a growing understanding of religious concepts. The Camp Fire Girls learned by working on a "Religion" badge and the settlement children by discussing. In the YWCA women and girls discussed the need for a sound religious faith in their lives. The staff, in addition to the regular opening prayer or thought, devoted two or three staff meetings to showing how religion could be integrated by each member into all activities and phases of the YWCA. In this it was hoped that all their groups and individuals would grow toward a greater belief in God (thus using the chapel more) and a desire to achieve His goals in their community and world. This shows the "Y's" willingness to cooperate broadly, not only in a World Fellowship Fund, but also on the religious issues it would agree with. The Camp Fire Girls and their leaders would act individually in this matter while the settlement would neutrally discuss the issues of concern. Thus, although all three stated

some use of planned techniques in religious understanding, the settlement was the most informal, the Camp Fire Girls medium, and the YWCA a little more encompassing and deeper.

Three agencies, a settlement (Roxbury Neighborhood House), and the Young Men's Hebrew and Christian Associations said they definitely used planned techniques to foster growth in religious understanding. The settlement found that indifference and lack of background in the people and leaders were causing a piling up of confusion as time went on, making it more and more difficult to discuss and inculcate general religious concepts. The YMHA, a meeting place for Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews, would have discussions, sectarian pageants, and holiday ceremonies according to the Orthodox pattern to help their children realize more fully the part Judaism can play in their lives. The YMCA in addition to have staff and membership discussions, conferences, and films, have occasional worship services. During a New Year's Dance, a vesper service held in the chapel was filled three times. When it comes to cooperating on community and world religious issues the settlement demonstrates by doing what it can, the YMHA disseminates information for other organizations to act upon, and the YMCA has acted through its World Fellowship Fund and World Conference of Christian Churches where such speakers as Dean Meulder and Kirtley Mather have guided their thinking. It is thus that the three agencies stating a definite use of techniques for religious understanding actually use them informally in the settlement but much more extensively in the "Y's".

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which directors, leaders and constituents in a few group work agencies in Boston recognize the part religion plays in the dynamics of their programs. An effort has been made to answer the following questions:

1. What is the purpose and general thinking of agencies in connection with the part religion plays in their activities?
2. What is the actual practice of agencies in fostering understanding of religious concepts?
3. With a knowledge of and a conviction about some of these concepts what methods are used to promote understanding among those of different faiths?

In order to determine the part religion played in all the activities of group work agencies, the writer had to determine their major emphasis. According to Trecker's definition of group work and the actual practice of it, agencies emphasize that theirs is a method of presenting opportunities to and for individuals and groups to relate themselves to others and to express themselves, change, grow, and develop, according to their needs and capacities into mature effective members in society. What part does religion have in this process? According to the writer's definition, religion is the relating of one's whole life--mind, body, spirit, emotions, intuitions, and affections to the awareness of and commitment to through reverence and love for a Supreme Being and supreme values existing in the universe. Could this not be one of the aims used as maturity often is, to provide the best opportunities for the growth and development of persons? Let us see.

Philosophy:

In the general statements of agency philosophies the settlements thought of themselves as a meeting place for those of different races, creeds, and parties, to develop into mature, effective members of society. The scouts and Camp Fire Girls aim their development toward the service of others. The Hebrew and Christian Associations relate development and service to religion by stating that enriched personalities and groups would develop through informal education containing Jewish content or that the interests and companions found would help to ally them with forces that build a Christian home and world citizens.

Purpose:

Statements of immediate purposes show that the settlements stress friendliness. The Scouts and Camp Fire Girls emphasize that the best growth for character and citizenship comes with a recognition and belief in God which is perpetuated through participation in the church, home, and community. The Hebrew and Christian Associations combining the thoughts of the above three groups state that they serve as a common meeting ground for all Jews or for all religions interrelating the total needs of the individual toward Judaism or toward a creative life through a growing knowledge of God. Thus, the purposes show us that a religious element prevails in not only the Hebrew and Christian Associations as the general philosophies would lead us to believe, but that it is present also in the Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. Only the settlements do not have a religious element but they as all the other agencies urge their members to be loyal to their own churches and to respect those of other churches. It is the Hebrew and Christian Associations, however, who extend their efforts to the understand-

ing of those of different faiths. Both they and the Scouts try to apply their beliefs daily to conditions in the home, community, and world.

In the local agencies covered, seven out of ten felt, in accordance with the national statements, that they had a religious element in their purposes. This excludes the settlements, though. Roxbury Neighborhood House would be included by the director's interpretation that religion in motivating actions pervaded the aims and procedures of their whole program. The other settlements may urge living according to individual church interpretations, but no attempt is made to promote understanding among those of different faiths or to apply religion to everyday living.

Although the constituents of nine of the agencies studied were persons affiliated with the three major faiths, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, no agency felt any conflict or tensions among them. However, when the subject was pursued, five (or half) of the agencies showed that perhaps mild tensions do exist, either because the agencies had not cleared their policies with those of various religions, or because the wish for survival among others caused competitive feelings. One agency found great indifference concerning religion resulting in little sense of direction in the lives of the people.

Thus, agencies committed and guided by their philosophies and purposes found that there were places where they might practice what they preached. National organizations through printed materials helped prepare only half of the agencies for this role. In spite of this, seven agencies occasionally discussed a religious approach with their staff. Two agencies oriented their staff periodically in meetings or conferences.

Practices:

With this preparation, however extensive or slight it might be, executives and staff tried to tackle problems of a religious nature in their agencies. The method most used was that of discussion -- using specific situations and broad concepts to help people see what might be the course of action they could pursue in their daily lives. While three agencies tried to do this in as objective and neutral a manner as possible, three others would refer their people to their particular churches for specific interpretations.

Leading from the situational to the actual programming for the furthering of a religiously based purpose, how did the agencies studied answer these two questions? Do you use conscious or planned techniques 1) to promote a greater understanding of religious concepts and observances, and 2) to promote understanding among those of different faiths? Concerning understanding of religious concepts, it was found that four agencies, the Scouts and two settlements, Dorchester and Robert Gould Shaw Houses, do not use planned techniques, three agencies, The Camp Fire Girls, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House and the Young Women's Christian Association, plan to some extent, and three agencies, Roxbury Neighborhood House, and the Young Men's Hebrew and Christian Associations, use planned techniques. Regarding the promotion of understanding between those of different faiths, these agencies found themselves in the same no planning, planning to some extent, and definitely planned groups.

Although some settlements were in all three groups of "yes", "some", "no", it was found that their procedures were the most informal. They mostly used discussion and exposure methods and in a few cases holiday

celebrations. The others varied from being as informal as the settlements to the more formal efforts of more organized discussions and study groups, using speakers, movies, and recordings, working for badges, having opening prayers at meetings, participating in special day celebrations and worship services, and carry out some service projects in the home, church, and community.

Conclusions:

In this study to determine the extent to which directors, leaders, and constituents in ten group work agencies in Boston recognize the part religion plays in the dynamics of their programs the writer concludes that:

Written philosophies stress a religious basis only in the Hebrew and Christian Associations.

Written purposes show that a religious base is stressed in the Scouts and Camp Fire Girls to insure the best character growth.

The settlements do not have a religious element in their philosophy or purposes.

Seven out of the ten agencies studied felt in accord with the national statements of having a religious basis. This included one settlement where personal interpretation led to the result.

To meet tension situations between those of different religions, methods of discussion and referral to individual churches were used.

Concerning the actual practice of agencies in fostering an understanding of religious concepts and an understanding between those of different faiths, three agencies used planned techniques, three planned to some extent, and four agencies did not plan at all.

The settlements used the most informal methods of discussion, ex-

posure, and occasional celebrations.

The Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Hebrew and Christian Associations foster understanding through the use of laws, badges, service projects, discussions, movies, study groups, opening prayers, worship services, and definite holiday celebrations.

In the light of the last-mentioned conclusion it is interesting to cite a conclusion from a study of youth's beliefs. The young people felt that they could grow more effectively through discussion and study than through formalized Bible readings. Yet, because emotionally they were not ready to understand all that discussions and study might involve, more would be needed--amounting almost to a therapy process

in which the roots of the individual's adjustment problems are exposed, examined, and dealt with by the individual with sympathetic and competent help.¹

Thus counseling, group thereapy, and study-action groups could start thinking along basic religious concepts.

Another study showed that members of a Jewish agency had a high interest in programs with Jewish content. Because of

the actual low ratio of Jewish programs to non-Jewish programs, professional staff should review its role so as to stimulate leaders and councils to have a variety of programs to approach the subject.²

Recommendations:

Thus in the light of the conclusions stated for this study and through the insight gained from the studies cited the writer would like

1 Murray G. Ross, Religious Beliefs of Youth, pp. 146, 191-206.

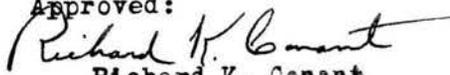
2 Summer Greenberg, A Study of Jewish Content in Youth and Young Adult Programs at the Lynn Jewish Community Center, 1949, pp. 53-55

to recommend:

That agencies should periodically review their philosophies, noticing the religious base if there is one. This could start a self-evaluation process to see if the board and staff understand the aims set forth and to see if the present program is carrying out the purpose in the best way possible. Board, staff, and volunteers could study, experiment, and learn something new with each evaluation at each training period so as to think of and promote new ways of building a sound understanding of religious concepts with daily application to the personal and social lives of all members. Then efforts toward understanding the various faith interpretation could follow so as to promote greater cooperation between people of different faiths, not only community-wide but world-wide.

With these efforts, along with others encompassing a gamut of subjects, integrated personalities and groups could develop and come to know that the reality of God can be a great living force in their lives and the lives of the institutions in their community.

Approved:


Richard K. Conant
Dean

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A P P E N D I X

SCHEDULE: TO STUDY WAYS RELIGION IS APPROACHED IN YOUR AGENCY.

1. The people of what religions are served by your agency?
2. Describe the relationship of these people of different religions in your agency and neighborhood.

How do they get along?

What tensions are present?

How do you think these are or should be handled?
3. Is there a religious element in the stated purpose of your agency?

If so, what is it and how does it relate to the social, educational, and recreational elements of your program?
4. Do you think that your agency should use "conscious and planned" techniques to promote understanding among different religious faiths? to give guidance on the basic concepts of religion, commonly agreed to by all faiths and philosophically sound? (Basic concepts might be: What is the nature of religion, God, man, and the Bible?)
5. Is there some particular staff member and/or committee responsible for a program that is focused to bring out religious understanding?
6. Does your agency have the opportunity for formal or informal orientation toward the place of religion in your agency?
7. Does the national organization stimulate your agency to plan programs of religious understanding?
8. Do you feel that some staff and members' personal problems might stem from a confusion about religion?

How does your agency handle them?
9. What is the role you feel your agency should play in the community and world on religious issues?

Describe efforts and results, if any.