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Effects of friendship club activities on six emotionally disturbed children /

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CHAPTER I

Organization of Study

Introduction:

The social group worker is bringing his training and his skill into new settings. The effects of a changing society and the recent findings in psychiatry, social psychology and the social sciences have directed social workers into new areas. Traditional agencies such as Settlement Houses, the YMCA's, Jewish Community Centers, Boys Clubs, have laid claim to the social group worker. Today we find them working with street corner gangs, with patients in psychiatric hospitals, with the physically handicapped and with children in Child Guidance Centers.

The group worker, in many settings, works as part of a team composed of many disciplines. The demand on the group worker is to re-examine his methods, programs, and goals in the light of new experiences and to develop a clear role in these new settings. This task requires professional discipline and a constant sense of identity. As Gisela Konopka stated:
"Psychiatry has become such a bandwagon in the past years that we find a maze of confusion in services outside the specific medical ones in a mental hospital or in clinics. Shall we further confuse the picture by introducing social group work or worse - do we introduce the competition of another service where another one can do the same job? We are justified in looking at ourselves only when it improves the service to the client."¹

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is best stated in the following:

"We feel that the study of the effects of program upon behavior change can be quite rewarding to the serious practitioner. We look forward to the day when workers will know more specifically just exactly what it is that they are offering children when they offer a particular program. We certainly will be better equipped to help clients when we have more accurate information and expectations regarding the impulses a given activity is likely to provoke and gratify, the defenses or control measures it will likely call forth and the interaction it will stimulate."²

Some of the questions to be answered are:

1. What was the influence of friendship club activities on behavior patterns of emotionally disturbed children?

2. Which club activities did they enjoy?

3. Was the club experience a positive influence in bringing about behavior change?

This is a study of six emotionally disturbed children receiving residential treatment at the Emma Pendleton Bradley Hospital in Riverside, Rhode Island. Three of these children belong to a club comprising mostly acting out children; the other three boys are passive type children who also belong to a club comprised completely of youngsters with this behavior disability. The writer and the club advisor is the same person.

The writer lives in at the hospital three days a week. He observes these children in most of their activities. In addition the writer attends professional conferences where the boys are discussed in terms of treatment goals. The writer exchanges information with the child care staff and on occasion he has met some of the parents of the children.

As a student at the Bradley Hospital I was assigned to be the advisor to two club groups. There are five boys in each club. One group comprises boys nine and ten years old, the other club has eleven and twelve year old boys. Both these groups were formed as friendship clubs.

The choosing of members for the club was done by the student in consultation with his supervisor. The club was to be voluntary for the boys selected, and they were given the option of meeting with their club or staying with their units. From each group the writer chose three boys, three acting out and three passive type children. In the acting out club one
boy was excluded from the study because he left early in the club season. The other boy was from a different unit and he did not have the same behavior patterns as the others. In the passive group one boy was excluded from the study because he was schizophrenic and the other boy was scheduled to leave before the club period ended.

The categories of "acting out" and "passive type" were chosen because both the writer and the agency are interested in these areas.

Methods and Techniques:

The data for this study were collected in the following ways:

1. Analysis of the individual records of the six boys.

2. Analysis of eighteen records of club meetings of these six boys.

The following is an example of how the writer observed an activity and its effect on the child's relationship with the group leader.

Barry was hostile and uncooperative towards the group leader when he first met him. For the first few meetings he avoided any contact with the leader. Each meeting was punctuated by incidents in which Barry wanted to test the leader's authority. During the activity of making a wooden plaque in arts and crafts Barry's relationship with the leader improved. He would seek out the leader for assistance and advice in making his project. Barry was not hostile during the period and in its place was an acceptance and a sense of trust in the leader.

Value of Study:

This study would like to discover programs which can
help other practitioners working with emotionally disturbed children. This study may demonstrate that group work has a role to play in the residential treatment home. Because of the newness of the setting and the sparsity of information, other disciplines, as well as some group workers, are unaware of the group worker's role and contribution in psychiatric hospitals. The more research that is done, the more verification of already existing studies, the better we can insure that those, "With the greatest needs,"3 will receive the best of all available knowledge for their return to mental health.

Limitations:

One of the major limitations of this study is that it deals with only six children. Whatever conclusions are drawn will relate only to these individuals. Another limitation is the nature of the records from which the data were obtained. These records were written for supervisory conferences between the student and his supervisor and not for research purposes. The writer is the first group work student at Bradley Hospital and in order to make the study he had to use his own records. In analyzing the movement of each child, the writer evaluated his role as a group worker. It is human to assume that in some instances objectivity gave way to subjectivity.

A third limitation is that there are many influences within the Bradley Hospital setting affecting the individual's adjustment in the group. The writer attempted to evaluate

movement in terms of the club experience for the individuals involved.

A fourth limitation is the lack of a sufficient amount of time because of the writer's other obligations as a second year student.

Finally, this study lacks an independent observer to evaluate the behavior change of the children.

The Agency:

The Emma Pendleton Bradley Hospital, a children's psychiatric hospital, was founded in 1931 under an endowment left by Mr. and Mrs. George Lothrop Bradley as a memorial to their only child. Bradley Hospital accepts both boys and girls from four to twelve years of age, of every race, creed or color. They are admitted if their intelligence is apparently normal, if they require special treatment, and if they and their families will presumably benefit from it. The hospital accepts for study and treatment children who have disturbances coming primarily from the groups of behavior disorders, including neuroses and psychoses. All children must come to Bradley on referral by a practicing physician who has examined or treated them. The treatment program at Bradley consists of group therapy, group living, individual psychotherapy, and drug therapy when indicated. The role of residence in the child's total treatment is considered a most important one. It is seen as "group therapy" or the interaction of a child with other children and with adults in a twenty-four hour residential
situation. For further information on the Bradley Hospital, the reader is referred to the authors of the above mentioned information.

The writer chose six areas in which to study the effects of activities on children. They include the following:

1. Recreation and Fun: Children in institutions need a variety of activities to balance the daily routines. One aim of the study is to determine if their attitude of viewing the club as another routine changed to that of accepting the club as a pleasurable experience. In all these programs a group worker should ask the question, "Did the children have fun?"

In providing healthy and normal activities:

..."We want to imply that the degree of fun acceptance and strategy is one of the most basic characteristics of a treatment home and that the children's perception of the treatment home as a fun acceptant institution is one of the primary conditions for developing an atmosphere in which they trust the assurances of adults that they are wanted, accepted and liked."5

2. Socialization with Group Leader: Some of the children at Bradley Hospital have had traumatic experiences with adults. They may conceive of them as punishing, rejecting and ungenerous. This category contains answers to such questions as: Did the child interact with the adult? Did the child gain a sense of trust in the adult advisor? Was he able to express hostility openly to the adult? Did the child accept the limits set down by the adult with a minimum of conflict and hostility?

5. Redl, Fritz, Wineman, David, Controls From Within, p. 56.
3. **Socialization with Peers:** While institutionalized children are forced to "socialize" by the very nature of the setting, socialization in a club setting has a different purpose:

   "By this we mean the attempt to use activities which are fun for children as a device to pull them out of individual isolation, bring them in contact with other people, help them accept personal frustrations in favor of adjustment to larger groups or bigger goals."  

4. **Attention Span:** One purpose of studying programming is to discover how long a club advisor can run a certain activity before the children lose interest. An overdose of programming or "too little and too late" can end in a dissatisfying experience for children with a low frustration level. Another purpose is to evaluate the influence activities have in extending the attention span of children with low frustration tolerance.

5. **New Skills and Interests:** One of the more tangible benefits a child can gain from a club experience is the strengthening and gaining of skills and interests. These children will return to the community some day where they will be able to share their skills with others. Learning new skills and interests a child can derive much pleasure and fun.

6. **"We" feeling:** In the group the child can gain a sense of security, of belongingness and status. The club has to have meaning for him in order that he achieve these goals. A child can indicate his loyalty to a group by attendance,

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Redl, Fritz, Wineman, David, *Controls From Within*, p. 81.
verbalization or by his behavior.

Friendship Club Activities:

The club program consisted of all the activities included in a club meeting. A club meeting lasts approximately an hour and a half. The program is one of the skilled tools the group worker has to influence personal growth for the individual member and the social goals for the group. The separate programs presented here have been categorized under five areas, woods, cooking, arts and crafts, games and miscellaneous activities.  

A social group worker usually has his favorite activities or those in which he is skilled and comfortable. The activities the writer chose were most familiar to him.

Group #1, the acting out children had the following programs:

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<th>Cooking</th>
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<td>1. Toasting marshmallows.</td>
<td>1. Roasting popcorn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Making Jack O'Lanterns from pumpkins; roasting pumpkin seeds.</td>
<td>2. Campfire cookout.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Arts and Crafts</th>
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Miscellaneous:

Stories, fingerpainting, listening to records, model making, and roller skating.

Some programs overlapped, cooking and woods were combined during one meeting.

Group #2, the passive, withdrawn children, had the following programs:

Woods:
1. Making a fireplace, lashing.
2. Toasting marshmallows.
3. Pumpkin making.

Arts and Crafts:
1. Leather work.
2. Gimp work.
3. Puppets.

Miscellaneous:
1. Songs.
2. Trips.
3. Cowboy games.
5. Bowling.

Cooking:
1. Cookout.

Games:
3. Hide the Penny.
CHAPTER II

THE ACTING OUT CLUB

In this chapter we analyze the effects of activities on the behavior of the three emotionally disturbed children, here called "acting out". Observed and recorded activities and their effects are grouped into six categories: Recreation and Fun; Socialization with Group Leader; Socialization with Peers; Attention Span; New Skills and Interests; and "We" feeling.

The writer and the club advisor is the same person.

These three acting out boys were part of a group of five boys formed into a club in October of 1957. All these boys have similar characteristics. They have difficulty relating to adults and to peers and they usually acted out their hostility by physical or verbal abuse. The boys could not easily accept limits. There were few activities that could hold their interest for any length of time. Motor control was poor in the arts and crafts projects. When the club was organized there was no feeling that this was different from the other routines at Bradley. There was little group feeling in the beginning. Another difficulty was attempting to introduce unfamiliar programs to the group. The boys usually wanted the same program every week and were dissatisfied with any other programs.

The Acting Out Child:

We present below a brief psychobiographical sketch of
of each child, followed by analyses of his behavior in the
six categories under discussion.

**Ray**

Ten years old, admitted to Bradley Hospital on November
17, 1953. He has been at Bradley four and a half years. Ray
is a round faced little boy with a fair complexion and wiry
build. He can best be described by the role he played in the
children's play at Christmas time. Ray was Huckleberry Finn.

Ray was the illegitimate son of an illegitimate mother.
He was born away from home with a great deal of controversy
as to where he would be placed. Before he was fourteen months
of age he had had three home placements. Ray did not have a
stable mother figure to attach himself to. His mother was
psychotic. She was depressed and preoccupied with religion,
and she had a great deal of guilt and fear of impending doom.
He was returned to her when he was fourteen months old. The
question of diagnosis was a very difficult one when Ray first
came here. With everything considered the classification was
made, passive aggressive. Ray was described as a boy function-
ing on a very primitive level of ego development. There was a
notable lack of inner and outer control. He was a severely
emotionally deprived child who had never maintained a stable
positive relationship. With so little ego strength, a psy-
chosis could rather easily be precipitated. This was the
description and diagnosis of Ray in 1953.

The following is the last progress note on Ray before
entering the club:

February 20, 1957. Ray has been here close to four years and he has improved a great deal. Almost all of the chief complaints are gone. He now shows a great deal of ability to handle effective material and seems to be more realistic in his evaluation of the world. He has no difficulty in getting along with his group. He is better prepared to live outside this institution.

1. Recreation and Fun: There were few programs that Ray did not enjoy, since Ray would influence the boys to choose activities he liked. Except for the woods program, Ray did not enjoy the same activity twice. In the beginning he had preferred the outdoors. However at the time of the study the program and not the setting seemed more important.

2. Socialization with Group Leader: Ray did not easily relate to the advisor at first, saying little but doing much observing. In the woods area Ray became quite cooperative and friendly towards the adult. He looked for the advisor's approval by running errands, and using his position as the leader of the group to help the advisor set limits with the group. The lowest point in the relationship came when Ray became upset at the treasure hunt. Here he became verbally hostile towards the leader when he broke up a fight between Ray and another boy. Generally he was friendly with the advisor. Despite this outward show it was difficult for Ray to form a close relationship that could stand the test of his
moods. Ray would become hostile and defiant when he did not enjoy a program. At times he would leave a club meeting. This occurred during the Indian project and playing with toys. The overall impression is that Ray showed movement in socialization with the leader.

3. **Skills and Interests:** Ray learned new skills in the woods area such as preparing a cookout supper, and building a log cabin fire. In arts and crafts he completed making a wooden tomahawk although he did not want to make a club plaque. He enjoyed making a puppet, learning new games and participating in paper bag dramas. All these skills and interests were new experiences for Ray.

4. **Attention Span:** Ray's attention span vacillated from complete interest to restlessness and then flight. This was more evident in the beginning of the club season. However Ray has shown movement in this area. Ray's attention span was good in the woods area. It was short in activities involving skill. Ray would either refuse to make a plaque or an Indian band or he would rush through to finish a tomahawk or puppet and then become restless for the remainder of the period. When the advisor included several activities in every meeting, Ray's attention span increased.

5. **Socialization with Peers:** It appeared that this was one area in which the club experience could serve to strengthen and support Ray's already good relationships. The club gave added opportunity for Ray to exercise his leadership
qualities. Ray usually organized short discussions on programs, he acted as peacemaker during some disputes. Ray was usually a captain if sides were involved in a game. His experience in this area appeared satisfying to him.

"We" Feeling: In the beginning he was watchful of just what satisfactions the club held for him. Even after he had tentatively accepted the club there were meetings when Ray threatened to quit the group. Ray suggested a club name and secret handshake. When the puppets were finished Ray stated: "Wait until the other club sees what we made." Ray usually talked in terms of "the club". "Club members should not fight. They should stick together." It seemed that Ray's strong identification in the club resulted from his high status, the programs, and the advisor's interest in him.

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**Barry**

Ten, admitted to Bradley Hospital on February 28, 1957. He has been at Bradley a little more than a year. Barry is a blondish, wiry child with a body build less than a ten year old's should be, with sharp angular facial features. He is a boy in continual and perpetual motion. He can disarm and engage adults with his deep set and peering eyes. Barry smiles infrequently but when he does he is radiant.

Barry feels the world is quite hostile and that he has to be on his guard constantly to protect himself. He is there-
fore quite aggressive and hostile in his attitude towards the world. This hostility seems to be especially pronounced towards women. He seems to feel that women are constantly attacking him and openly reject him. It is obvious that he has failed to get the support and affection he might normally expect from his mother. His father has failed to be anything more than a passive figure. Barry's difficulties appear to stem from the poor relationship he had with his mother. She described Barry as having a temper the fourth day after birth. The mother had many problems accepting a male figure and openly showed her hostility towards Barry by beating him. These usually came as a result of Barry "getting into things" in the trailer that served as a house. The small size seemed to accentuate his movements. The following chief complaints best describe this child when he first came to Bradley: Extreme destructiveness; hyperactivity; extreme aggressiveness toward adults and peers; disobedience; no showing of feeling and no affect from punishments; stealing and lying since age two. Barry was diagnosed as a passive aggressive type personality. There was some evidence to show that there may be some brain damage.

The following is the last progress note on Barry before he entered the club:

August 12, 1957. Barry has been able to make fine progress in relating to his peers and he has found an accepted position in his group. Confiding in adults has remained
limited to his immediate difficulties. He still has not advanced to seeking help or support for his personal problems. He is not as hyperactive as he was on admission to Bradley.

1. Recreation and Fun: The activities Barry enjoyed most were those involving food, cooking and parties. His experience in the woods area usually was unsatisfying for Barry. Barry also enjoyed making a club plaque and tomahawk, listening to polka records, games and model making. In these areas Barry did derive fun from the club experience. However it is difficult to determine if the fun outweighed some of the frustration he met in the club.

2. Socialization with Group Leader. Barry evidenced inconsistency and unpredictableness in this area. This pattern was visible at the beginning. For the first four meetings he alternately tested, accepted, rejected or merely ignored the advisor. He would play with the advisor before the meeting and by the meeting's end, he would call the leader, "selfish and mean." He was uncooperative and he did not respond to limits. Barry began to show more acceptance of the adult when the club program included parties, games and arts and crafts. In projects such as making a plaque or a model Barry would seek out the advisor for help. However the relationship did not seem to go beyond the superficial point of receiving gratifications. When Barry disliked a program he withdrew from the group as well as from the leader. The advisor was never quite sure of the relationship from week to week. Barry did show
some movement in this area by gaining the beginnings of a sense of trust of the group leader by being able to give more. Barry shared his milk and crackers with the adult, offered him bubblegum and a notebook another time, and he asked the advisor to hold "valuable possessions" while he played a running game.

3. **Socialization with Peers**: Barry's relationship with his peers was similar to what he had with the advisor. In the club Barry did not form any close relationships. He was friendly with the indigenous leader and one of the more passive boys. He did not seem to have a consistent association with any of his peers. Barry, for the most part, was a "lone wolf" in the group. This was especially evident in the woods activities. Barry did relate well with his peers in other areas. He enjoyed playing games with his peers when he was the "it" figure, the central figure. During model making Barry interacted well with his peers, asking for the glue, seeking their advice and exchanging comments with them. The most significant gain Barry made was his acceptance of the group decision to meet indoors when Barry preferred the outdoors. Barry also stayed with the group twice although he disagreed with the program selections.

4. **Skills and Interests**: Barry increased his skills in several areas. He was one of the boys who completed making a wooden tomahawk and a plaque. Barry enjoyed making models and completed several of them. The advisor introduced some new games, paper bag dramatics and songs. Barry responded
positively to these. He requested these games and songs at meetings. He did not seem to enjoy the woods programs.

5. **Attention Span:** Barry lost interest and became restless with woods activities and some skilled projects. His attention span was good in several areas, making a club plaque, models, listening to records and playing paper bag dramatics. At the time of the study Barry showed a higher frustration level in staying with the group although he did not enjoy the programs.

6. **"We" Feeling:** Barry's view of the club appeared to be a place where he could satisfy his own needs without giving up too much of himself. It was in this area that Barry seemed to make the least movement.

* * * * * *

**Paul**

Ten, was admitted to the Bradley Hospital on July 12, 1956. Chief complaints were: Aggressive behavior; hyperactivity; temper tantrums; low frustration tolerance; inability to postpone gratification; overeating and many fears. Paul was described as a boy who had suffered many traumatic experiences within his lifetime. He had an abusive father and finally mother and father separated. He then lived with his grandmother in addition to living with his mother. Paul had a great deal of anxiety about being separated from his mother and at the time was unable to attend public school. His mother has a terminal illness and the boy may have a great deal
of anxiety about the fact that she may die. This appears to be a boy of at least average intelligence still restricted by anxiety and insecurity, using both denial and aggressiveness as mechanisms of defense. There seems to be a core of fairly good ego strength which still lacks organization. He is still very vulnerable to stress.

On August 1, 1957, after Paul had been a year at Bradley, the following information was available:

Paul has made considerable progress since his admission to Bradley. Although he still has a relatively low frustration level, his aggressiveness is better controlled and he seems to be making a sincere effort to control his outbursts. Paul has shown a tremendous need for affection and recognition by an adult figure. This boy has come a long way since he arrived here. Paul was further described as a boy who feels hostile to his environment, feels inferior and inadequate, has strong dependency needs and guilt feelings. His behavior was described as negativistic and resistant. Two months later Paul entered the group.

1. Recreation and Fun: The programs in which Paul had the most fun seemed to be those using the woods and activities involving food. He enjoyed playing fantasy games with toys whenever he had the opportunity. Paul derived great satisfaction in being with his peers. Paul, from the beginning, was actively involved in the program, enjoying most activities. He maintained this level of satisfaction throughout his ex-
perience in the group.

Paul did not enjoy programs which involved skill or when there was an element of possible failure.

2. Socialization with Group Leader: Paul's attitude at the first meeting towards the advisor was negativistic, resistant and uncommunicative. The boys chose a club room. Paul preferred another room where there was a model of a ship. When the advisor told him he could not stay in this room, Paul walked out, stating that he was quitting the club. After the first meeting Paul's relationship with the advisor showed positive movement. The program areas where Paul related most to the adult and responded to limits were the woods and food. In the arts and crafts activities Paul's strong dependency needs became evident. Here the advisor used his relationship with Paul to encourage him. Paul did enjoy the company of the adult for the most part. Although at times he was somewhat dependent on the adult, he was not clinging or demanding of the adult.

3. Skills and Interests: For skills Paul did learn to make a tomahawk from wood, how to prepare a beef stew at a campfire cookout, how to make a Jack O' Lantern from a pumpkin, and how to make pumpkin seeds. Most of the skills he learned were in the woods and food areas. Paul enjoyed song fests and listening to stories read by the advisor or played on a phonograph.

He showed an unpredictableness in arts and crafts
programs. Paul did not make an Indian head dress, a club plaque or tomahawk. After some encouragement from the advisor Paul made a tomahawk on the second try.

Paul refused at first to compete in a treasure hunt and a game of paper bag dramatics, only after he had received the support of the advisor did he make an effort to join the activities.

4. **Attention Span**: Paul had the longest attention span during the woods and food programs. Activities involving skills showed Paul to have a low interest rate. When Paul enjoyed a program, he could stay with it the entire period. Otherwise Paul had to have several types of activities to keep him interested.

5. **Socialization with Peers**: Paul did not form any close enduring relationships. He was not sought out by other boys, rather he had to take the initiative in establishing a relationship. In his occasional contact with the indigenous leader Paul took the role of a follower and carried out all of the leader's demands. A few times he played with one other boy in the group. Although Paul was much bigger than the others in the club he did not use his strength to gain status. This, despite the fact that a high premium is put on physical power. He evidently was fearful of losing the limited relationships he already had. On occasion Paul would act aggressively when provoked by other club members. In the club setting Paul had an opportunity to play with some of his
peers and to form a friendly relationship with them. Paul was accepted by his peers although he did not enjoy high status with them. Paul did enjoy being with other boys and made many efforts to be close to them.

6. "We" Feeling: For Paul the club had a good deal of meaning. On several occasions Paul either demonstrated or verbalized his strong sense of a "we" feeling. It appeared that Paul was the most eager member to make friends. The club was an advantageous setting for this. The club was small and included boys of high status from his unit. At the eleventh meeting Paul stated: "I like this club because we have so much fun." Paul would become upset whenever there was friction or conflict in the club. Paul was not absent once during all the meetings.

Overview of the Acting Out Group

1. Recreation and Fun: The boys came to the first meeting expecting to make models and rejected any other program suggestions. As the meetings progressed the boys' attitude changed. They had had successful and enjoyable experiences in the woods and cooking area. The leader was able to introduce games and miscellaneous projects, making Jack O'Lanterns, paper bag dramatics, stories and listening to records. As a result the club meant a place to have fun and to do different things. This reaction was true for Ray and Paul. Barry could accept only a limited amount of programs. It would appear that woods and cooking programs helped change
the attitudes of Ray and Paul in this area of recreation and fun.

2. Socialization with Group Leader: In the beginning the advisor was another adult in their lives who had no special meaning to them. The program areas which influenced change were the woods, cooking and games. The advisor had an opportunity to teach wood skills and to provide food for the group. Satisfying the oral needs of deprived children is an important role for the group worker. Since the advisor attempted to be a giving and warm person the children did respond by showing some acceptance and trust of him. Barry did not enjoy the woods programs and he was not close to the advisor in this area. He did show more acceptance during games. One of the difficulties in evaluating this area as well as the others is deciding if the program or the advisor or a combination of these factors influenced positive change for two of the boys in socialization with the adult.

3. Skills and Interests: All three boys attend an arts and crafts session several times a week at Bradley. Most of the projects they make are structured, molds, prefabricated models. Initially there was resistance to any project other than model making. When the boys chose a club name the advisor suggested that each member make a wooden plaque as a club symbol. As a result of telling an Indian story, the boys accepted the advisor's idea of making wooden Indian tomahawks. Two of the boys made puppets. When programs began to lag, the
introduction of new games helped to revitalize their interest in the club. The boys had an opportunity to strengthen their skills and to acquire new interests.

5. **Attention Span:** The first meeting lasted five minutes. Woods and cooking programs lasted the entire ninety minutes for Paul and Ray. The boys would rush through or would lose interest after a half hour in arts and crafts. Projects had to be simple enough to be made within this time limit. At these times the advisor would introduce another activity. The projects the boys completed, a plaque and a tomahawk, were within their abilities and interest span. The advisor used games to supplement other program activities, since they could not be used for an entire period. While there was little movement made in their acceptance of frustration, the programs did manage to hold their attention for most of the club period.

5. **Socialization with Peers:** In this area Ray already had some friends in the group to whom he was close. The other two came to club with no close or friendly relationships and they showed little or no movement in this area. Some of the activities brought the members physically close, programs such as preparing a cookout supper, games, model making. However there was no continuity of these relationships from week to week. However one of the boys, Paul, is still attempting to make closer friends, but Barry prefers to play alone.
6. "We" feeling: There developed a "we" feeling for the group from Ray and Paul with Barry showing none. It is difficult to determine the source of their feeling. Possibly it was a combination of being with their peers, their relationship with the advisor, and the programs they enjoyed.

In miscellaneous programs such as model making, playing with toys, and paper bag dramatics the influence of these activities on each boy varied among them. All three showed positive effect on behavior during model making. This was in the area of socialization with peers and with the group leader, attention span and in skills. This was an activity that all the boys enjoy.

For two of the boys the club experience was a positive influence in modifying behavior patterns, limited though it was. Initial hostility and testing of the adult gave way to acceptance of him as the club advisor. Because of this, limits and controls were less frequently imposed. These two boys channelized their energy and motion into constructive programs. Both boys come to meetings and involve themselves in the program with little direction from the group leader. Barry did not respond to the influence of programs.

All three boys seemed to gain some satisfactions from their club experience. The programs which appeared to have the most positive influence included woods, cooking and games. The most marked movement in modifying behavior patterns appeared in socialization with the leader and attention span.
CHAPTER III

THE PASSIVE CLUB

In this chapter we analyze the effects of activities on the behavior of the three emotionally disturbed children, referred to as "passive type." Observed and recorded activities and their effects are grouped into the same six categories used in Chapter II.

These three passive children were part of a group of five boys formed into a club in October of 1957. All these boys have characteristics which are similar. The passive child's participation in activities is lethargic and superficial. Motivating him to activity is difficult, requiring a determined effort from the advisor. Each boy would prefer to go his own way rather than involve himself in a group program. Peer relationships are tenuous. They look to the advisor for support. Setting limits in the group was not a problem area. The advisor had to structure many of the programs in the beginning. When the club was first organized there was no indication from the members that this activity was to be any different than the routines they were accustomed to. There was little group feeling.

The Passive Child:

We present below a brief psychobiographical sketch of each child, followed by analyses of his behavior in the six
Lenny

Lenny, twelve years old, was admitted to Bradley Hospital on September 13, 1955. Lenny is one of the biggest boys here. He is dark completed, a somber sullen looking boy who rarely shows any sign of emotion. Lenny is very conscious of his strength but uses it very sparingly outside of club. He is a boy of very few words but a great deal of sensitivity to criticism of any kind. He is fearful of people and tries to remain aloof from them. Some of his responses on the psychological tests suggested a schizophrenic element. It appears that ego integration is very tenuous and that in order to preserve stability isolation is the best policy. His inconsistent behavior of withdrawal and aggressive acting out suggests that he is still attempting to deal with his problems on a non-psychotic basis. Therapy is possible but it will require a great deal of time before a relationship can develop. Lenny was diagnosed as a personality trait disturbance-Schizoid personality. However this was open to reclassification. He was later diagnosed as passive aggressive.

Lenny lived at three different foster homes beginning when he was twenty months old. He was born as a result of his mother's first illegitimate pregnancy. Lenny's mother was described as being retarded, extremely hostile and emotionally immature. In between placements Lenny lived with his grandmother for short periods of time. However he had to be removed
from there because of his mother's brutalities and conflicting demands on him when she visited. The following is the last progress note before Lenny entered the club:

June 12, 1957. Lenny displays a wary attitude towards new activities. He refuses to go on trips that he is not familiar with. He is generally a good participant in a group game. He can be a capable and enthusiastic performer but at times he will withdraw from the group for no apparent reason. He wanders by himself and will not return until he is ready to do so. Lenny does not like to be singled out in a group. He can amuse himself for long periods of time in inactive play, with little cars or boats or very strenuous work like digging and chopping wood. On the whole it is felt that Lenny is making gains in some areas almost every day.

1. Recreation and Fun: Lenny transferred his positive feelings towards the Bradley Hospital onto the club. The first few meetings he did not participate actively in the club program, preferring to observe all that went on. After this initial testing period he joined in most activities. Since Lenny became the indigenous leader with great influence on his peers, many of the programs reflected his own interests. He enjoyed all activities. Despite his many mood swings Lenny had a perfect attendance. In the club Lenny was the leader and from this as well as from the program, he received much pleasure.

2. Socialization with the Group Leader: At first
Lenny had little trust of the leader. He was negativistic, uncooperative and refused to accept limits. This attitude slowly changed with the woods activities playing a major role. Lenny looked for the advisor's approval of his skill in cooking and making special foods, French fries. Around games and model making Lenny related to the group leader. Lenny would easily be hurt at the slightest hint of disapproval from the advisor. Recently Lenny has been able to accept limited criticism from the advisor without withdrawing or becoming sullen. Lenny used his position as the indigenous leader to give support to the advisor around limits. In this area he has shown movement.

3. Skills and Interests: For the most part Lenny did not learn new skills but he strengthened the ones he had. Some new interests he developed were cookouts, music, new games and bowling. (The feeling is that Lenny could have learned new skills if the writer were more skilled.)

4. Attention Span: Since Lenny enjoyed most activities he had a good attention span at meetings. He had a low frustration level when his program ideas conflicted with those of the group. As much as the program and possibly more Lenny seemed to enjoy his high status position in the group.

5. Socialization with Peers: When the club was formed Lenny's relationship with his peers at Bradley and in the club was poor. He made little effort to be friendly, stayed
on the periphery of the group and was quite hostile and threatening to anyone who crossed his path. At other times Lenny had played with younger boys only. Lenny began to relate more to his peers during the woods activities. However, Lenny's only method of relating to others seemed to be by using his strength. The others seem to fear more than they respected Lenny. On occasion, though, the boys have shown real concern for him. They visited him as a group when he was sick; they saved him popcorn when he came late to a meeting; and they seemed affected when Lenny talked about not having a family to return to. Lenny has moved to the point where he now enjoys the companionship of his peers and not only younger boys. However he has difficulty relating positively.

6. "We" Feeling: Lenny has exhibited a sense of group feeling. He loaned to the group his collection of guns for a game of cowboys. Lenny became upset once when he discovered another group had used our fireplace. Lenny usually reminded the others about club meetings.

** Robby **

Robby, ten year old boy, was admitted to Bradley Hospital on October 14, 1947. Robby is a heavy set, slow moving child who tends to drag one foot after the other as he ambles along. He is untidy in his dress and takes little pains to correct
Some of the chief complaints are, unable to make social adjustments, headless to danger, low frustration level, belligerent with other children, poor relationship with parents, poor academic adjustment in public school. The parental setting itself has been for the patient the chief source of his difficulties. He was subject to inconsistent handling from both parents. The father's role was negative and ineffectual, fostering hostile resentment in the boy. The mother was too preoccupied with her own needs to show much positive emotion towards her child. Robby has no concept of self worth. He has been degraded, he dresses sloppily and he doesn't care whether he hurts himself or not.

The following is the last progress note on Rob before he entered the club:

September 30, 1987. Rob is teased excessively by his peers. Robby is somewhat obese, slow moving and clumsy. He is having a difficult time in making friends in his unit. He tries to buy friendship but still he doesn't succeed. He is quite fearful of his peers, never striking back when attacked.

Rec. Recreation and Fun: Robby enjoyed most of the club programs. However his fun was interfered with because of the teasing and bullying he received from the other members in the beginning weeks. When the scapegoating diminished Rob was able to enjoy the activities. In the woods programs he liked to rake the campfire site or help to prepare the supper.

three boys enjoyed the programs. The advisor introduced campfires and cookouts at the outset and these programs seemed to catch the interest of the boys. Indoor games and cooking were pleasurable activities. The boys did seem to enjoy arts and crafts activities but this was not a major source of satisfaction. This was an enjoyable experience for Pat and Lenny with Robby beginning to enjoy the activities.
and games. Although Pat enjoyed model making outside the club, he had no interest in this at any meeting.

5. **Socialization with Peers:** In the beginning Pat preferred the companionship of the adult, limited though this was, to that of his peers. He would tease the weaker members in the club, tattle to the advisor and work apart from the other members, especially in the woods area. He was a complete isolate in the group. The other boys accepted him but he did not form any close relationships with any of them. Pat began to seek the companionship of others, especially the indigenous leader, in active games, cooking and paper bag dramatics. He imitated and attempted to identify with the indigenous leader in opposing the club advisor. Twice Pat evidenced concern for two of the members who were sick. He suggested the club buy them gifts and he wanted to contribute money for this. Pat did show some movement in making closer relationships with his peers.

6. **"We" Feeling:** From the beginning Pat lacked a group feeling. It appeared that he was concerned with satisfying his own needs and interests apart from the group. He did not verbalize any loyalty to the group. Despite this the writer feels that because of his perfect attendance and participation in most activities Pat was aware that he was part of a group that was different from the other groups at Bradley Hospital.

**Overview of the Passive Group**

1. **Recreation and Fun:** From the beginning two of the
three boys enjoyed the programs. The advisor introduced campfires and cookouts at the outset and these programs seemed to catch the interest of the boys. Indoor games and cooking were pleasurable activities. The boys did seem to enjoy arts and crafts activities but this was not a major source of satisfaction. This was an enjoyable experience for Pat and Lenny with Robby beginning to enjoy the activities.

2. Socialization with the Group Leader: Each boy came to club on a different level in this area and each boy made progress. Pat clung to the advisor and he was dependent upon him. He was helped to become more independent of the advisor's protection while still maintaining a friendly relationship with the advisor. The woods area was the best activity for reaching all three boys. Lenny moved from being negativistic and uncooperative to the point of seeking the advisor's approval. The woods, cooking and model making were good areas for socialization with Lenny. Robby, at first, passively accepted the advisor. He showed little growth in this area. On the surface he seemed friendlier. It appeared that the degree of change in this area varied for each child with Lenny making the most movement.

3. Skills and Interests: All three boys strengthened and learned new skills, and interests in the woods area, cooking and model making. Many games were unfamiliar to them so that each game taught was a new experience. However, the
boys did not want arts and crafts programs, rejecting leather and wood work and working with gimp.

4. **Attention Span:** All three boys came to club with a low frustration level. It was difficult determining what, if any, change had taken place. There was no one program in which the boys had a short attention span and then developed a longer attention span. Certain activities did indicate a high or low frustration level. The woods, cooking and games seemed to hold the most interest for the boys. Arts and crafts were little tolerated and the boys would become restless at these times. However their boredom would not reach the point of destructive acting out.

5. **Socialization with Peers:** These boys came to club with difficulty in this area. Each boy became comfortable with his peers at different rates of speed. Lenny became the indigenous leader at the third meeting, a cookout in the woods. His was the most dramatic change. Pat at first stayed aloof from his peers since it was difficult for him to form any close relationships. He identified and associated more with his peers in active games, cooking and dramatics. He was furthest away from the group during the woods program. Robby came as a low status person and did not make much progress in this. At campfires he did get close to the indigenous leader, Lenny, helping to prepare the cookout meal. Robby now appears more comfortable in the group than he did before. The boys do
not tease or bully him so much. It would seem the overall club program helped the boys work out their own approach to forming better peer relationships.

6. "We" Feeling: This was also a difficult area to examine since the boys rarely spoke about the club openly. Here, as in the first group, it was difficult to determine if the program, the advisor, their peers or a combination of all these factors were responsible for the good attendance. The boys came to club with little or no group feeling. Pat immediately accepted the program and activities but later he tapered off in his enthusiasm. Lenny approached cautiously and Hobby came because it was expected of him. Both Pat and Lenny did develop a fair sense of "we" feeling.

For Pat and Lenny the club experience was a positive influence in behavior change. In all six areas both boys made some progress. As a result, motivating them into activity was more easily accomplished. The advisor had a sufficiently good relationship with them so that the boys could accept his ideas more readily and express their ideas more freely. Also these boys seemed to be more with the group than before when they were virtually isolates. The programs which seemed to have the most positive influence included woods, cooking and games.
CHAPTER IV

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to observe what influence activities had on behavior patterns of six institutionalized emotionally disturbed children; what activities they enjoyed the best and whether the overall program was a positive or negative influence in their lives.

Two groups of children were involved, three children, ages nine-ten, and referred to as the acting out children and three children, ages eleven-twelve, the passive withdrawn type. The setting was a friendship club for each group of boys at the Bradley Hospital. The writer and the advisor is the same person. He analyzed the records of the eighteen meetings and then he stated his findings. Programs were categorized under five headings: woods, cooking, arts and crafts, games and miscellaneous. Six areas of behavior patterns and attitudes were chosen as guides in which to observe the effect of activities on the six children:

1. Recreation and Fun; 2. Socialization with Group Leader;

The Acting Out Group

The group enjoyed many of the activities except those with the element of competition. The writer observed that
the woods and cooking programs seemed to hold the most fun for the boys.

The activities helped two boys form a friendly relationship with the group leader. This was more evident in the woods, cooking, and games. One of the boys established a neutral relationship with the leader being neither too friendly nor too hostile.

The boys could learn new skills at arts and crafts. The project had to be within their capacities of making skilled objects and it had to be one that the boys could finish during one club meeting. There was no carry over of interest from one week to the next if the project was not finished.

Most of the club activities held the interest of the boys for the full hour and a half. This was especially consistent for woods and cooking activities. The writer found that two and three activities were needed during one meeting for a good attention span. Thus the club leader would have to provide many of the activities.

Although various activities brought the members close physically, there were no close relationships formed as a result of the club experience. There were subgroupings from week to week but with little or no continuity of the same groups.

A sense of identity as a member of a club was evident
in two of the three boys by their verbalization of this, their steady attendance and their creation of a secret handshake and name for the club. It was difficult to determine what influence any of the activities had in developing a sense of "we" feeling in these two boys. However, the study does indicate that the boys could develop a sense of loyalty in a club situation.

On the basis of these findings the club activities were a positive influence on these three boys in the six above mentioned areas. The activities the club leader observed these boys to enjoy most were woods, cooking, and model making.

The Passive Group

The group enjoyed many of the activities with woods, cooking and indoor games being the favorite ones. Arts and crafts were the least enjoyed of the activities.

All the boys were helped to form a close relationship with the adult with the woods programs contributing most to this movement.

The boys developed an interest in learning woods and cooking skills. They shied away from making projects in arts and crafts. One of the most popular activities was making models.

Although the boys grew to accept one another as club members, no close relationships developed as a result of
their club experience. The woods and cooking activities tended to bring the boys into closer relationship with one another but this usually lasted only for the club period.

The meetings which held their attention span the longest were woods, cooking and games. When any one of the boys lost interest he usually would become withdrawn and then engage in solitary play. At these times there was no destructive acting out.

Since the club was of a voluntary nature the high attendance could indicate a sense of belonging with the club. However, a name was never projected for the group by any of the members. There was also a lack of verbalization of loyalty feeling. In this area it was difficult to determine if the activities, the leader, or their peers or a combination of these, influenced the good attendance rate. On the basis of the findings the overall influence of the activities seems to have had a positive influence on these three boys in the six areas. The activities the club leader observed these boys to enjoy most were woods, cooking and games.

Conclusions: Woods and cooking appear to have had the most positive influence in both groups. The common denominator of both these activities was food. According to Bruno Bettelheim:

"Food and eating are of great aid in restoring security in all moments of stress. They are a convenient distraction, they provide outlets for tensions, and most of all they are symbols of security. They demonstrate that satisfactions are available."\(^8\)

\[^8\]Bettelheim, Bruno, Love is not Enough, p.200.
Security and satisfactions strike the writer as the key words from this quote. These children measured the leader's sincerity and friendliness by the number of activities in which he provided food. This was quite important in the initial stages of the club meetings and less needed after the leader had established a stable relationship with the members. It is my feeling that the popularity of these two activities is related to the food they both involve and feature. It is important to have in the early meetings food to help the new leader establish a giving, warm relationship with his group. The food becomes less important to the members as they gain a sense of security in the leader.

The woods activity appeared popular because of the variety of possibilities it offered. A child could be alone gathering wood or he could work closely with another boy preparing the food, or he could do both as his needs dictated. There were more elements of free choice, self determination, inherent in this than in most other activities. While a hole is to dig, a tree is to climb and the more adventurous could exercise their imagination as well as their limbs in the woods. The woods area was also a great socializer because it brought the club members together at eating time. For both groups the woods activities were therapeutically effective in all six areas of behavior and attitudes.

The activity which the members introduced to the club
leader was model making. The leader did not capitalize on this as fully as he should have. A model was an excellent medium through which a child could gain a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. The models could easily be made and finished at one meeting. This model could be paraded before his peers in his unit. This was also the favorite arts and crafts activity at the Bradley Hospital. This points up the principle in programming which Fritz Redl refers to as, "Concessions to sociological taste patterns." He says:

"Program planning has to start with activity patterns which are familiar to the sociological framework from which they, the youngsters, come and are not loaded with an undue amount of new elements or strange gratifications."9

Arts and crafts activities were of more interest to the acting out group than to the other boys. The leader used Indian stories from which to motivate the making of tomahawks and the club name for the making of plaques. The leader was unable to motivate the passive group in this area. This activity was part of the curriculum at Bradley and possibly the older boys looked for more variety in the club than the periods of arts and crafts.

This activity helped the leader individualize and form a closer relationship with some of the boys. The very nature of arts and crafts requires a certain amount of dependence on the leader for help. Many times the leader can not individualize because of the nature of the activity. It is important

9. Redl, Fritz and Wineman, David, Controls from Within, p.93.
isolation into socialization through the media of activities. The acting out child who needs a consistent male figure to support a weak superego can be helped through a group work program. The club can be a place where a member can relax and feel free of the pressures of institutionalism. The role of the group worker is to be a permissive, non-authoritarian, giving adult. The group worker has in mind all the goals for a group of healthy children in addition to the specific agency goals. All this in preparation for the day when these children will be returned to the community. Redl sums up the role that program has in rehabilitating emotionally disturbed children:

"The task of program, then, becomes, not to cure these children of their basic pathology, but to supply them even while they are still disturbed or incapacitated with the same ingredients which others can easily find for themselves from the various offerings in their neighborhood." 11

Because group work is still in its swaddling clothes as professions go, research and verification of research are needed, especially in new settings. These conclusions are based on a small sample and should be interpreted accordingly. I feel that through increased emphasis on research on all levels, group workers are beginning to arrive at some valid generalizations about a multitude of specific activities and their effect on individuals. There is a small body of knowledge growing which deals with group work in the psychiatric setting. Konopka has described six group work

that during the club life he should know and spend time with each boy. This is one activity in which this can be accomplished naturally.

Games were found to be pleasurable areas for both groups. These were used as part of a larger program, cooking, woods, miscellaneous activities and hardly ever as a complete meeting's activity. Games helped to relax the members when these games were kept simple and short. The leader found that ending a game on a high note for the younger boys was insurance that they would want to play the same game at another time. The older boys seemed to concentrate on one game for a longer period of time.

Competitive activities for both groups were avoided after one experience in the acting out group which led to conflict. Programs were geared to include parallel activities. Gordon Hamilton recognized the need for activities as an outlet for aggressive behavior, but cautioned against using competitive activities for this purpose. For both groups it appeared that there was movement in the six areas of behavior and attitudes through the influence of the same programs, woods, cooking and model making.

What are some of the specific contributions of social group work in this psychiatric setting? Because of the agency setting, the club experience is of therapeutic value to children. The withdrawn, passive child can be moved from

methods for use in a psychiatric setting. In the area of activities and their influence on behavior, Redl, Bettelheim, Gump and Sutton have published material. Yet the field is still shy of producing qualitative and quantitative scientific material in the special settings.

**Recommendations:** This type of study should be extended to include a larger sample over a longer period of time. Because the social group worker is new to the psychiatric field, he is still learning how to adapt his methods and skills in this setting. The more research the more scientific and exact can he become. One of the limitations was the long period of time it took to establish working relationships with the children. I would also recommend the introduction of different activities. A social group worker usually has his favorite activities or those in which he is skilled and comfortable. The activities the writer chose were most familiar to him. Further research with different activities may bring forth other conclusions.

The writer found the team approach invaluable as an aid in working with the children and as a source for his thesis. It is recommended that if others should do research at this agency, they take advantage of the excellent consultation that all the disciplines there are willing to extend.

*Accepted*

David Landy

Research Associate
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