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Enabling an adolescent to meet her needs through a small friendship club.

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ENABLING AN ADOLESCENT TO MEET HER NEEDS THROUGH A SMALL FRIENDSHIP CLUB

A thesis

Submitted by

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(S.B., Simmons College, 1954)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The adolescent is of particular concern today. There are many conditions which seem to be associated with the widespread anxiety about high school boys and girls. War fears, the probability of military service, and the conflicting values of our atomic age are affecting everyone but are particularly baffling to adolescents who are struggling to achieve some identity in our world today.

> "At a period of life when security is of particular importance, they are surrounded by uncertainty and problems not of their own making. In addition all too many of them have suffered the ravages of family disorganization, economic deprivation, racial or religious discrimination, distorted ethical values, poor housing, and inadequate educational, recreational, vocational and health facilities. Finally it should not be overlooked that social workers both in individual or group services have not developed effective enough ways of reaching teenagers." 1/

Although newspapers and radios are filled with stories of juvenile delinquency and the attempts made by professional and civic leaders to get a better understanding of their behavior, little is heard of the average teen-ager struggling under similar obstacles to maintain adjustments and equilibrium today. The realities of the situation, the high rate of juvenile delinquency and the shortage of staff in group work agencies located in disadvantaged areas demand that a great deal of energy be spent

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1/ New York City Youth Board, Reaching Teen-Agers, Monograph No. 1, 1954, p.13

with the delinquent and pre-delinquent children in the area.

It would seem also that positive members* of these agencies should not be neglected and programs should be devised not only to specifically build on their leadership but also to present them some practical means of helping them through the storm and stress of adolescence.

In group work agencies friendship clubs have been an important part of agency program. However, there are those who say that friendship clubs allow little opportunity for social and emotional growth and that today the traditional small groups under adult leadership are being replaced by mass social activities. Trends have shown that teen-agers are drawing away from classical small friendship groups and are moving towards less intimate mass groups.2/

Are we in social group work to accept the fact that these trends prove that the teen-agers do not still seek and need the intimacy of the small group?

Perhaps there is some way to utilize the friendship group so that it will offer the adolescent an opportunity for close association with her peer group, individual attention by the leader and provide some practical means of help in becoming an adult.

> "We need to reexamine the existing programs for young people in the light of the new knowledge about their developmental needs. It is well recognized that there are not nearly

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2/ Bureau of Personnel and Training of the National Jewish Welfare Board and New England Section-Jewish Welfare Board, In-Service Training Program, 1953, p. 4.

* Well adjusted mature members who are able to contribute a great deal to the group experience. (Discussion with John Atwater, Group Worker, Roxbury Neighborhood House, April 11, 1956.)

enough services to meet the needs of this group."[3/]

It is a friendship club in a group work agency that will be the concern of this thesis. More specifically, this study will focus on a small friendship club of four sixteen and seventeen-year-old girls who are considered positive members of Roxbury Neighborhood House.

Purpose of the Study.-- The purpose of the study is to examine this friendship group and the methods used by the leader to enable the adolescents to meet their needs through this group.

The study will seek to answer the following questions:

What are the characteristics of adolescents?

(a) physical
(b) psychological
(c) environmental factors affecting today's teen-agers

How are the needs of the adolescents met in a small friendship club?

(a) definition of a friendship club
(b) background of the neighborhood
(c) background of the members

What is the role of the leader in enabling a group of adolescents to meet their needs through a small friendship club?

What is the responsibility of the leader in this type of social group work?

Scope of the Study.-- This thesis will be confined to a study of a friendship club for a period of four months from October 6, 1955 through February 6, 1956.

The first two chapters will contain some background considerations for this study.

The first chapter will contain some physical and psychological

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3/ Melvin Glasser, "The Young Adult in the Current Social Scene," The Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1952, p.168-170.

characteristics of adolescence today. This chapter will also contain a definition of a friendship club, citing some of its advantages and disadvantages.

The second chapter will contain more specific background information and will describe the neighborhood in which Roxbury Neighborhood House is located, its implications on adolescents and will close with a description of the group that is to be studied and its members.

The remainder of the study will be divided into four chapters, each covering a one month period. The chapters will focus on how the needs of the members were met through this small friendship club. Each chapter will be divided into three areas: (a) background considerations; (b) activities of the period; (c) summary of the period.

Methodology.-- For this study much of the material has come from the records the writer kept while leading this group. The records will be used to point out the activities of the group and the methods used by the leader.

Interviews were held with those staff workers directly involved with the teen-age members of the agency. These interviews, supplemented by informal discussions were for the purpose of discovering their opinions of a small friendship club and the responsibility of the adult leader in this type of group.

Limitations of the Study.-- One of the obvious limitations of this study was the factor of time. This study was confined to four months of observation, participation, and recording in the group, and perhaps more valuable results could have been found had the study been undertaken for a longer period of time.

Since this study is limited to one group in one agency no quantitative results can be indicated.

This study will also be limited to an agency in a particular economic and social setting. Some of the factors to be considered may be applicable only to agencies in similar settings.

The writer realizes that this study can be subjective in that the writer is evaluating her own group.

Value of the Study.-- The writer hopes that this study will point out an approach to a friendship club that might be useful in working with teen-agers.

This thesis will also show the use of this type of program for positive members in insecure neighborhoods such as the area in which Roxbury Neighborhood House is located and may be valuable to other agencies located in similar areas.

Finally, the writer hopes this thesis will point out a need for a more systematic approach to a small friendship club and encourage further research in this program area.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

> "Adolescence is an intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood and has been likened to a vestibule or threshold, signifying growth from one phase of life to another." 1/

The key word, then, to describe adolescence is growth. Although the growth process is continuous from childhood to adulthood it is during adolescence that rapid physical and emotional changes occur. Physically some of the outstanding characteristics of early adolescence are rapid increase of height and weight, development of secondary sex characteristics, and a certain awkwardness due to the lack of physical coordination resulting from unevenness of growth. In later adolescence body functioning becomes more uniform and the awkwardness decreases. Psychologically, adolescence marks the end of the relative peace and quiet of the period before which is known as latency. When the reproductive organs begin to function, sexual impulses which the adolescent must handle in some way are aroused strongly.

Environmental Factors Affecting Today's Teen-Agers.-- All these changes occur within the environment of the adolescent. Unlike some primitive societies, the adolescent in our culture is not given certain initiation rites which mark the social and biological transition from childhood to adulthood. The adolescent in primitive societies is given

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1/ New York City Youth Board, op. cit., p. 11.

more of a feeling of who he is and where he is; this tends to decrease his confusion and anxiety.[2]

> "Girls today are facing an even more difficult task than boys because suddenly they have emerged from the minority group status, where for generations they were handicapped by law, church and customs. Now they have to make innumerable choices and decisions for which there is nothing in the feminine traditions to help them. That is why it is felt that we ought to give considerable attention to helping girls clarify their choices and decisions."[3]

It is difficult to grow up in a world which has many inconsistencies. The adolescent is taught the values of democracy and the rights of individualism and yet there is also a tremendous stress placed on conformity. The adolescent also learns the importance of brotherhood and idealism, but in his daily life he sometimes sees a dichotomy between what is and what should be. His parents tell him he is no longer a child yet when he tries to assert his independency he is often told he is too young to know what is best for him. The young person, unsure of his own goals strongly feels the social confusion. When he tries to find answers through his family and the world outside of his family, he finds that many times neither group can give him answers that are without contradiction.[4]

Is it therefore any wonder that the adolescent, confused about himself and the world around him, attempts to find answers to his questions by banding together with kindred souls and forming, what has been referred

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2/ Irene M. Josselyn, The Adolescent and His World, Family Service Association of America, 1952, P. 26-27.

3/ National Jewish Welfare Board, Teen-Agers In the Jewish Community Center, Report of Consultation, New York, 1955, p. 7.

4/ Irene M. Josselyn, op. cit., pps. 27-30.

to, as a separate youth culture with its own values and patterns of behavior?

This youth culture is characterized by two elements: compulsive independence and antagonism to adult authority--anyone who adheres to parents are outcasts; and compulsive conformity to the peer group--the adolescent cannot be different due to fear of being excluded by the peer group; his one means to security.5/

In this period of growth, the adolescent has certain specific needs:

> "These include the need for emancipation, the working out of changing, more mature relationships with parents and other adults, the development of boy-girl relationships, status and acceptance among peers, new experiences, opportunity to assume responsibility and to integrate reality limitations, and a personal value system. In the course of attempting to meet these needs, the adolescent is frequently at odds with himself and the world around him. While he is struggling toward independence, he still retains dependency needs. While his physical development propels him toward the opposite sex, he still has some need to consolidate his identity with his own sex." 6/

Responsibility of Leisure Time Agencies.-- The writer feels that understanding the developmental process and needs of adolescents is only a first step. Failure to implement these factors with some practical means of helping the adolescent to settle his confusion and aid him in becoming an adult represents a lack of responsibility on the part of all those working with teen-agers.

5/ Boston University, School of Social Work, "Growth and Behavior Notes," January 3, 1955.

6/ New York City Youth Board, op. cit., p. 11.

Mass activities have become increasingly important to teen-agers today. Increased mobility of today's youth, the desire for anonymity and less-structured groups are cited as some of the reasons for the trend away from traditional small friendship groups. While there should be recognition given to this "new look" in group work, there must not be a rush to abandon the services to small groups which are still seeking a place in the agencies.7/

> "Canteens, teen-age clubs, and recreational halls are very useful, but if they are set up without accompanying facilities for small groups and, perhaps, individual counseling they may serve only to aggravate the teen-age problems the community thought they would solve."8/

The remainder of this chapter will consider a definition of a friendship club and some of the advantages and disadvantages of this type of grouping.

> "The distinguishing characteristic of the friendship group or "natural" group is the fact that it is originally formed and is held together by friendship.
>
> The friendship group is natural in the sense that it tends to develop spontaneously in neighborhoods, schools and other settings and is usually not formed by the group workers.
>
> The meetings of the Friendship Group (usually occurring once a week) are only segments of its stream of life."9/

Advantages of Friendship Groups.-- The friendship group can be a

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7/ In-Service Training Program, op. cit., p. 4.

8/ Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, A Healthy Personality for Every Child, Washington, 1952, p.177.

9/ Chester Rubin, "A Study of the Friendship Group," Unpublished Master's Thesis, School of Social Work, Boston University, 1949, p. 3-4.

major source for satisfying the adolescent needs for a sense of worth, acceptance, status, and achievement. Secondly, this type of group can be an important "bridge" between childhood and maturity. Not only can it provide a sense of security but it can also be of assistance in helping the adolescent to attain social and personal maturity.[10/]

In infancy and childhood the chief center of influence for personality and character development is the home. During adolescence it is the peer group which is of prime importance to its members and the chief influence for character development. Often there is a dichotomy between the standards, attitudes, and values that the adolescent learns in his home, school and church and the way he conducts himself in his peer group.[11/]

> "An intergration of ideals and habits is found when the young person belongs to a group that both defines its ideals and purposes and gives its support to the practice of these ideals.
>
> The normal unit for character education is the small group which provides through cooperative experience the moral support for the adolescent discovery and effective use of ideals in the conduct of affairs."[12/]

Disadvantages of Friendship Groups.-- One of the disadvantages cited is that the small friendship group allows little opportunity for social and emotional growth.[13/] It has also been said that the adolescent is

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10/Roy Sorenson, and Hedley Dimock, Designing Education in Values, Association Press, 1955, pp 43-44.

11/Ibid.

12/Ibid.

13/New York City Youth Board, op. cit., p. 29.

sometimes lost in the conforming influence of the group, for often he may have to give up some of his individuality due to the importance of developing a common group feeling.[14] Another disadvantage is that the security given to the adolescent through the friendship group is false and prevents the adolescent true means of growth to adulthood where he will not have the security of the peer group.[15]

Opinions of Workers at Roxbury Neighborhood House Regarding Friendship Clubs.-- The workers at Roxbury Neighborhood House, who are directly involved with teen-agers, felt that a friendship club can be a way of meeting friends in a directed group activity, and can provide the members with an opportunity for experimentation of ideas, new experiences and an outlet for healthy constructive fun. It was also felt that the friendship club can provide its members with a sense of security.

A disadvantage of the friendship club stated by the workers was that the members tend to set exclusive standards for themselves and not accept other people. Other disadvantages cited were that the close we feeling could prevent growth and the fear of being different was more pronounced in a friendship club.

One worker felt that in a friendship club the members tend to use

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14/ Fred Hurley and Beverly Ross, Teen-Age Participation In Neighborhood Centers." Unpublished Master's Thesis, School of Social Work, Boston University, 1955, p. 40.

15/ Monthly meeting of the Teen-Age Study Committee, Recreational, Informal Education, and Group Work Division of United Community Services, Trinity House, February, 1956.

it as their only outlet and see the group as something permanent.

The workers felt that the responsibilities of the leader of a friendship club were: help in broadening ideas and experiences, clarification of ideas, work with individuals, and help with the teen-age conflict over authority.

The writer feels that the opinions stated by the workers at Roxbury Neighborhood House seem to agree with some of the advantages and disadvantages of friendship clubs cited in the preceding section.

This chapter briefly considered some developmental needs of teen-agers today; the responsibility of leisure time agencies in programming for this age group; a definition of a friendship group and some advantages and disadvantages of this type of group.

This chapter was meant to introduce the reader to this study by considering some general factors involved in teen-age programming as well as providing him with more specific information about friendship groups.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFIC BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter will contain a background of the group that is to be studied, and will include a description of the neighborhood, the group and its members.

Description of the Neighborhood.-- The area served by Roxbury Neighborhood House is called the Dudley-East Area of Roxbury and contains approximately 20,000 people. This area, which is a lower economic section of Boston, is one of the sixty-three neighborhoods that make up the fifteen health and welfare districts of Boston.[1/]

A fact immediately observable when one enters the area is that housing is extremely poor. It is one of Boston's most crowded and badly housed areas. Buildings are in poor repair and are rapidly deteriorating due to overcrowding. Some relief in this housing situation took place as a result of the development of the Orchard Park Housing Project in 1940, which provided accommodations for eight hundred families. Still, the area shares with lower Roxbury in having the lowest rating when crowding, density, and rents under $25.00 per unit are combined.[2/]

Most of the men who are members of Roxbury Neighborhood House earn their living in such positions as short-haul truck drivers, clerks and

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1/ Jean M. Maxwell, "Roxbury Neighborhood House Study," Study Advisor of National Federation of Settlements, Inc., 1950, p. 2.

2/ Ibid.

other unskilled service jobs. One of the contributing factors for this can be found by an examination of the educational picture in Roxbury.3/ Not many young people get to high school and less finish.

There are many Irish and Italian people living in this area. Negro residents have increased since 1940 as a result of the construction of the Housing Project. The instances of racial tension that have occurred will probably increase in the area which is economically and psychologically insecure.4/

There have been many changes in the neighborhood since 1878, when Roxbury Neighborhood House first began as a day nursery and kindergarten.* At that time the area was a village and contained mostly German and Irish people with limited incomes. As the city emerged, the neighborhood became cosmopolitan and began to know the problems of modern city life.

"It seems that the values of the community have shifted from 'be good in order to survive' to 'get out of the neighborhood by any means' in order to survive."5/

3/ Ibid., p. 3.

4/ Ibid., p. 4.

5/ Discussion with John Atwater, Group Worker, Roxbury Neighborhood House, November 4, 1955.

*For a more detailed description of the history, purpose and function of Roxbury Neighborhood House see: Richard Howard Johnson, "Junior Leadership, Their Selection, Training, and Use at Roxbury Neighborhood House," Unpublished Master's Thesis, School of Social Work, Boston University, 1955, pp. 18-23.

> "The general neighborhood has always been and still is curiously lacking in opportunities for constructive recreation; hence the natural trend of the House to expend a great deal of its effort to supply that need. The old housing is deplorably inadequate, and social conditions have many pitfalls for adults as well as young people. There is a definite lack of real responsibility about these conditions. Parents on the whole seem to be unaware, helpless or indifferent, and the share of responsibility for what happens seems to grow less rather than greater."6/

Implications on Adolescents Living in the Area.-- A question which seems to follow from the description of this area is: What happens when the idealism, typical of adolescence, comes in conflict with the realities of a neighborhood such as Roxbury? This is an example of a situation which goes contrary to the teachings and practices learned in school and in church. These contradictions can make development of a sense of identity--which is central in adolescence--difficult. "For an adolescent to admit that he is one of the despised in a society that maintains that all are of equal worth is most difficult."7/

> "Being a teen-ager in Roxbury is not easy with its cramped quarters, inadequate funds in a price-tag world, trying to reconcile what adults say you must do about sex, drinking, and getting along with people and what you see them do. The youngsters in Dudley-East get in trouble with the law more often than most neighborhoods in the Boston area, rating 57th out of 63 neighborhoods in the incidence of juvenile delinquency." 8/

Description of the Friendship Group.-- The group that is to be the focus of this study consists of four adolescent girls, ages sixteen and seventeen. Two of the girls are juniors at a parochial school and the

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6/ Jean M. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 6.

7/ Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, op. cit., p. 47.

8/ Jean M. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 3.

others are seniors at different high schools in Roxbury. All of the girls, excepting one, have been members of the same friendship group at the agency for the past three years. The fourth had not belonged to a group at the Neighborhood House, but had lived in the area all her life and was known both to the other girls in the group and to the agency.

The group represents positive members of Roxbury Neighborhood House. All of the girls have been camp counselors in the agency's camp and have been actively involved in service and leadership activities of the Neighborhood House.

Description of Each Member.-- Judy is sixteen years old and a junior at a parochial school. An extremely active participator in agency programs, she was both a junior leader and a camp counselor and is currently leading an afternoon cooking class. Judy was one of the three representatives chosen from Roxbury Neighborhood House to participate in a leadership conference in New Hampshire last year and has expressed a continuing desire to be a social worker when she finishes school.

Ruth, who is seventeen years old and a senior at a large high school in Roxbury, has been both a junior leader and a camp counselor. She is one of this year's representatives to the leadership conference in New Hampshire. Though maintaining high honors at school, she changed her course from a college curriculum to a commercial one last year and now plans to continue her part time job as a filing clerk after graduation this June. Ruth is a daughter of a mixed marriage; her father is Jewish and her mother Baptist.

Sue is seventeen years old and a senior at high school. She has been both a camp counselor and junior leader and is currently in charge

of an afternoon gymnasium class at the Neighborhood House. Although Sue had never been a member of the group before, she knew the girls, having been at camp with them last summer. She intends to enter Nursing School in the fall and has a part time job as a Nurse's Aid. When Sue was very young her mother died and she was adopted by her grandmother.

Peggy, the oldest member of the group, is seventeen. She and Judy go to the same parochial school where Peggy is also a junior. Because she had rheumatic fever as a child she had to repeat a year in school. Academically Peggy does not do as well as the other girls and has not considered plans after her graduation next year. Peggy now has a job as a filing clerk which she seems to enjoy very much. She was not a junior leader but was a camp counselor last summer.

CHAPTER IV

PERIOD I

Background: Building a Relationship

During the first four weeks of leadership with this group the worker attempted to build a relationship with the members.

> "The concept of relationship refers to the bond of feeling which exists between the worker and the group and the group members themselves." 1/

Essentially then relationship seems to involve a mutual acceptance between the group members and the leader. The writer feels that without this mutual acceptance little benefit can be derived by the members from the group experience. As Gordon Hamilton, Professor of Social Work, New York School of Social Work says: "Basic to all practice in social work is the concept of desirable and undesirable ends, goals, or outcome."2/

The use of atmosphere was one means used for establishing a relationship. The atmosphere created at these meetings was permissive and not highly structured. The meetings were held in a small room equipped with a table, chairs and two desks.

Group meetings were held on a week day night and usually lasted for three hours. A victrola was brought into the meeting room, giving the girls an opportunity to listen to records and to dance. At the close of

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1/ Harleigh Trecker, Social Group Work Principles and Practices, New York: Woman's Press, 1948, p. 48.

2/ Herbert Bisno, The Philosophy of Social Work, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1952, p. 10.

the meeting coffee and cake were served.

There was little questioning by the worker during the first meetings. The worker listened and observed. The emphasis was on warmth and friendliness. The worker's goals during the first period were to learn the interests of the group members and to gain a better understanding of their needs. By needs the writer means the areas of concern that were brought out by these group members.

Activities of Period I

The four meetings of this period consisted of two informal discussion meetings, a supper party and a bowling trip to the Y.W.C.A.

In the first two meetings the group revealed itself to be a cohesive group with strong evidences of a "we feeling." This was apparent in the first meeting which was an informal discussion meeting

> At the end of the first meeting Judy said she was hungry and wanted a coke. Judy said to worker, "You want one too, don't you?" Worker said that sounded like a good idea. Judy collected the money and got the cokes while the other girls got the ice cubes from the refrigerator. Worker suggested a toast. The girls raised their glasses and Judy said: "To us."

Particularly in the first meetings there was evidence of the members' attempt to get to know the worker. Questions such as: Are you a social worker?, What nationality are you?, and Have you ever worked?, were asked.

The girls had never known the worker before and their personal questions were an attempt to develop some picture of their new leader. Before a satisfying relationship between the worker and the group can come about each must learn about the other.[3/]

3/ Harleigh Trecker, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

The third meeting of this period was a supper party at the Neighborhood House. This party was suggested by the worker but it was quickly picked up by the girls and planned by them. The worker felt that type of activity was especially beneficial in the relationship forming period. "Eating together promotes sociability."[4] Food supplies many other needs than fuel for body functioning. Food is generally equated with love. It can be a way of the worker showing the group how she feels towards them and also can be a way of promoting friendliness and unity within the group.[5]

The following conversation took place just before the spaghetti supper.

> Peggy had been late in arriving and the supper had not been prepared. The girls were sitting around in a circle. Worker said that at least they had the spaghetti sauce which she had prepared at home. Worker said she wondered how good it was. Pat (a visitor who had been a member of the group last year but who had since moved from the neighborhood) said: "Yes, I told Ruth that I wondered how good it would be since you are Jewish." Some of the girls immediately began to ask Worker about Jewish customs. One of the girls said: "What does 'kosher' mean?" Before the worker could answer Judy said: "The rabbi does it." Worker explained about some Jewish food. Pat mentioned how much she liked Jewish food. Pat had to leave soon after supper. As she was leaving she asked the worker if sometime she could bring in some Jewish food she spoke about.

It was through informal discussions such as this that the worker was able to get some understanding of the girls.

4/ Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, Social Group Work Practice, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949, p. 320.

5/ Ibid.

The fourth meeting of this period was a bowling trip to the Y.W.C.A. The girls seemed to enjoy being out of the House very much, and took great delight in running through the streets in Bermuda Shorts. They also seemed extremely please at the remarks made by boys passing by in cars.

Being out of the Neighborhood House gave the girls an opportunity to behave in a manner not associated with them in the House. It seemed to give them a chance to "let loose." The worker interpreted this behavior as a means for the member to test the worker in an attempt to see what her reaction would be and whether or not she would accept them when they behaved this way.

When the group returned to the Neighborhood House, there was evidence of the members' desire for the informal meetings.

The worker mentioned the following week's meeting.

> Ruth said: "Why don't we stay in and plan our program for the next two weeks? The other girls agreed and Judy said: "Yes, let's stay in the House for awhile."

Summary of Period I

There seemed to be particular trends in the discussions during these four weeks. The girls seemed anxious to have experiences outside of the neighborhood.

> The worker tried to lead the girls into a discussion of the club. Peggy said: "I want to get out of the neighborhood." The worker suggested some trips and the girls seemed very enthusiastic. Sue said: "Why don't we get a piece of paper and mark these things down." The girls agreed and Peggy got the paper and pencil.

All of the girls were in the process of getting part time jobs and there seemed to be some anxiety in this area. There was also concern for plans after high school.

The worker asked Ruth whether she had gotten a job yet. Ruth replied that she had applied for a job at the First National Bank but doubted whether she would get it. Ruth described the aptitude tests she had taken and said she was sure she had not done well. Worker said that aptitude tests were often very tricky and hard on the eyes. Worker also said that often you do not think you do well but actually do better than you think. Ruth said she had resigned herself to the fact that she probably would not get the job, since there was such terrific competition. Worker and Ruth talked about the type of job Ruth would like. Ruth said she would like some type of office job that she could continue with after school. Worker said that perhaps she could help her with it and Ruth thanked worker.

There also seemed to be a good deal of interest in boy-girl relationships and the girls had questions such as: "When is it good to go steady?" "How do you know when it is the right man?" "When should a girl get married?" The girls also were greatly concerned about the lack of boys in the area and seemed anxious to broaden their acquaintances.

The girls began to talk about a girl who recently got married. Ruth said that she was only seventeen and her husband was just eighteen. Worker remarked that that seemed a little young to get married. Ruth said laughingly that she was going to get married that winter. Worker laughingly said: "Oh, you are." Peggy said to worker, "When are you going to get married?" Worker said when she found the right man. Judy said: "That is a good answer."

The girls began talking about the "right man" and mentioned that most of the boys they had dated had left the neighborhood and there was no one around to date.

Another trend in the discussions was in the area of different racial and religious groups.

On the trip to the Y.W.C.A., we passed several churches. When we passed the Baptist church, Ruth commented that her mother was Baptist. The girls were especially interested when we passed a building which said "Seventh Day Adventists." Judy said: "Sue can tell us all about that, she used to go with a Seventh Day Adventist." Sue began talking about some of their customs. After Sue finished, worker remarked that another interesting religion was the Quakers. Sue said: "O.K., you tell us about one group and then we will discuss another."

On the basis of the worker meeting with the group for four weeks certain goals were set up by the worker, in consultation with her supervisor, in relation to the needs expressed in the group. The needs were:

Boy-Girl relationships.-- The girls seem to need in two specific areas: (1), clarification of their ideas about boy-girl relationships, and (2), opportunity to broaden their contacts with boys.

College and job planning.-- The members need direction with their future plans.

Moving out and broadening their experiences.-- Although the group has expressed a desire to move out of the neighborhood there seems to be a certain amount of fear due probably to the lack of security. The girls need motivation and encouragement from the leader to accomplish this.

Other racial and religious groups.-- The group's interest and curiosity in other racial and religious groups should be given expression.

The group has at times seemed constrained and the members unable to relax. One reason for this is probably due to the fact that the members have many outside responsibilities and little time of their own. The girls need outlets for good wholesome fun.

The next three chapters of this thesis will be focused on how the worker attempted to make use of these goals in enabling the adolescent members to meet or find satisfactory outlets for their needs through this small friendship club.

CHAPTER V

PERIOD II

Background: Role of the Leader

In the permissive and informal atmosphere that was created in the group meetings, the worker hoped to establish a meaningful relationship. By meaningful, the worker means a relationship which would enable the individual member to explore, think through, and, with the help of the worker and the other members of the group, to clarify or gain a better understanding of her areas of concern. Relationship was used as a tool for creating a response from the group. It was only when a positive relationship between the worker and the group had developed that the members felt free to express themselves. The worker saw her role not as a mere listener nor did she attempt to probe deeply the feelings of the group members. It is important to remember that the worker operated within the policy of a group work agency. It was not the worker's function or her intention to conduct therapy sessions.

The worker attempted through the informal discussion meetings and the other activities of the group to:

(1) Create an atmosphere in which the members would feel to express their feelings and bring out their areas of concern.

(2) To guide and steer the conversation around these areas of concern without losing its informality.

(3) To help connect their feelings and their attitudes as well as to expose the group members to new experiences which might enable them to see their attitudes in relation to these experiences.

(4) To thus enable the individuals to clarify or gain a better understanding of their areas of concern.

The values of clarification by the group members themselves was not forgotten. It was understood that the peer group is extremely important to adolescents, and recognized that any adult figure could represent authority from which the adolescent is trying to achieve some independence. Thus, it was considered extremely beneficial when the members could clarity their feelings for themselves.

> "The average adolescent can understand, accept and assimilate the teachings of his own peers with greater facility than he can the teachings offered by individuals from a more psychologically alien world." 1/

Activities of Period II

In this period the activities consisted of two informal discussion meetings, a Thanksgiving party and a trip to X. agency.

The following discussion with Sue took place before the first discussion meeting of this period and points out the role of the leader. This discussion also seems to give a picture of the idealistic teen-ager reaching out, but coming into conflict with the realities of life.

> Sue turned to worker after they were seated and said: "I don't know whether to go steady or not." Worker asked her to tell her about it. Sue said: "Well, there is this boy Bob I go with and he wants to go steady. He is very nice and goes to college. When I go out with him we talk about philosophy and religion and other things. On Sundays we sometimes go for a ride to the ocean. It is so beautiful - the black ocean, the blue sky and the sea gulls flying. He is nice, I guess, but he is so fidgety and nervous." Worker said: "Maybe he is a little nervous because he is not sure of you." Sue said: "I never thought of it that way. Yes, you are right, maybe that is so. Another thing I am supposed

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1/ Irene M. Josselyn, op. cit., p. 89.

to be going with another boy right now. He is in Italy in the service. He also is nice but he isn't good looking. Isn't it silly to think of looks?" Worker said that as much as one did not want sometimes to admit it looks did count. Worker said: "How old are you Sue?" Sue said that she was sixteen. Sue added quickly: "You know I am too young to be going steady." Worker said that sixteen did seem a little young to tie herself down especially since Sue did not seem sure of the other boys.

Sue said: "Do you want to hear some more of my troubles?" Worker said that she would be happy to hear anything Sue wanted to tell her. Sue said, "Well you know the boy I have been going out with a few times - Bill. Well yesterday he came running up to me and said he wanted to talk to me. He walked back and forth for the longest while. Finally he said: Sue I can't go out with you any more I am engaged. Was I surprised. If he had just come out and said it. But no, he walked back and forth, back and forth." Worker said: "He probably was concerned about your reaction." Sue said: "You know I never thought of it that way. Yes, you are right, he was concerned about what I would think. It's funny when you are in a situation, you don't stop and think until afterwards, and then things look different." Worker said that she was right, - when a person was in a situation their emotions often took hold of them and it was only after they were out of the situation that they were able to see things clearly.

Sue said: "You know, life is so complicated. People say things and act differently. I was so surprised last night. People just are not what they seem to be." Worker said that life did get a little complicated and often people surprised you, but it was important to remember that people are just people and there are lots of things that go into making a person.

At the second informal discussion meeting, the question of the "right man" came up. This discussion seems to point out not only the worker's role, but also the group's role in clarification of their own feelings in this area.

The girls began to question what the right man was. The girls seemed vague when worker asked them what they thought about this. Worker then said: "What do you think is important now?" Peggy said: "I really cannot

> put my finger on it. I go out with a boy and then I find out I really do not like him." Sue said: "Once you have him, you do not want him." The girls laughed and worker said that there probably was a lot of truth to that.

The girls' concern over boy-girl relationships was evident in both of these discussion meetings. It is to be remembered that the goals that were set up by the worker in consultation with her supervisor regarding this area of need were: (1) clarification of their ideas and (2) broadening contacts with boys. It was felt that this second area should not be neglected and the girls motivated to broaden their contacts with boys. The fact that Thanksgiving was approaching led the worker to suggest an informal party for the third meeting of this period. The girls seemed very eager at the worker's suggestion and said they were certain they could bring boys although the party would be the following week.

The ambivalence of teen-agers towards meeting with boys is evident in the attitude of the two members who came early the following week to prepare for the party.

> Ruth and Peggy came to the House in the afternoon to prepare for the party. They told the worker that there probably would not be any boys at the party. Ruth said: "We don't need boys anyway." Peggy said that it would be a better time without boys. The worker agreed we could have a good time but suggested that perhaps next time we could plan a little ahead of time. Peggy said that some of the best parties are not planned but just informal. The worker agreed to the emphasis on informality but felt that preparing for a party does take some planning.

One boy, a friend of Sue's, did attend. The group at first was very disorganized and obviously upset by the presence of one boy. Peggy

exclaimed to worker: "Get us some boys." Judy said: "I don't know I feel so crazy tonight." After awhile the girls became more relaxed. Billy, their guest, began to talk about his trip to France with the Boy Scouts the previous summer. The girls lit a fire in the fireplace, toasted marshmellows and sat around talking.

> Billy said: "What is love anyway?" The girls began to laugh and sigh. Worker said that one of her teachers had said that love was an itch in the heart that you could not scratch. Every one laughed. Worker said that part of love was surely the "Bing Bong" of the heart but it seemed also that it was more than that. Judy said: "You are right, it is much more than that because when you think of spending the rest of your life with someone."

It was evident when the girls had enough of this discussion. In this small group the members could be relied upon to take off pressure from the discussions when the material became too emotionally laden.

> The girls began to joke. Sue suggested doing some exercises. The girls got up and began doing exercises to the song: "Love and Marriage."

Although the party was not a success in the fact that there were not many boys, the worker believes it gave the girls the opportunity to talk informally with one boy and perhaps would enable them to feel more at ease in similar situations with other boys.

The fourth meeting of this period was a trip to X. agency. The group that the girls were going to have supper with at X agency was an all Negro group.

> Just before the food was going to be served, the girls from the Neighborhood House sat down together. Worker went into the kitchen for a moment and when she came back she saw the girls changing their seats, leaving every other seat empty. Peggy smiled and said: "It isn't right for us all to sit together; it will make them feel strange."

During the supper there was not too much interaction between the two groups. Worker and the leader of the Debs (the group from X agency) tried to make conversation. Worker told the girls how they had gotten lost. The girls began to loosen up and talk about different club activities. Worker mentioned the Thanksgiving party. The girls all laughed and told the Debs about it. Judy mentioned how nice Billy was. Peggy agreed and said: "You know I bumped into him and he said that he had never seen such a group of intellectual girls in his life. He said he could not keep up with us."

After supper each of the Debs took one of the group to personally conduct them on a tour of the house. The girls first stopped at the lounge where a band was practicing. The girls were at first hesitant about going in. Worker led the way and the girls followed. The girls enjoyed the music very much and struck up conversations with the people around them.

After touring the house Worker said it was about time to go. The girls reluctantly got their coats and one of the girls said: "We don't want to go." The girls thanked the Debs very much and said they would like to have them come to the Neighborhood House very soon.

The experience of going to a settlement house in a different town afforded the girls the opportunity of seeing how another settlement house operates. The girls were obviously impressed with the many activities going on in the center and were able to carry back some ideas to the Neighborhood House. Also important, the worker felt, was the opportunity offered to meet another racial group. The group had often expressed negative feelings to the Negro group. Worker felt that this summer party provided the girls a contact with a Negro group which could allow them to reevaluate some of their attitudes to these people.

An important part of this experience was the trip going home. The following conversation is another example of the group clarifying their own feelings:

The worker asked the girls what they thought of the evening. All of the girls said they had a very good time. Sue said: "There was only one thing wrong - we had to leave too early." Judy said: "You know the one thing I don't like about the colored people is that they are sometimes cheap. But those girls weren't cheap." Sue said: "So are some white people cheap." Judy said: "Yes, you are right."

Summary of Period II

This period was marked by some progress towards the goals established in Period I. The two discussion meetings gave the girls an opportunity to discuss and perhaps get a little better understanding of their feelings towards boys.

These meetings were not used as an end but provided a "springboard" for the Thanksgiving party. The trip to X agency was an outgrowth of the members' desire to get out of the neighborhood, as well as the curiosity and interest of other racial and religious groups that had been expressed.

It was considered an advantage, by the worker, when the members did not arrive at meetings together. This gave the worker an opportunity to get to know each individual better and gain a better understanding of their particular needs.

The next chapter will stress how individual needs can be met through this small group setting.

CHAPTER VI

PERIOD III

Background: Individualization in a Small Group

Although it is important to understand the significant role of the group to teen-agers, it is also extremely important to recognize that many of the problems facing them are individual problems. The worker should see the group member as a unique personality rather than as immersed in a group of teen-agers and should seek to understand the distinct needs and problems of each individual.

> "Most generally stated, the challenge of leisure time workers is to recognize the outstanding strengths and weaknesses of each child in the group and to know what to do with the understanding thus acquired.
>
> The difficulty of identifying individual characteristics is increased when the worker has a large, active group of changing membership rather than a small intimate one that meets frequently and limits its membership." 1/

It was one of the worker's goals to gain an understanding of the individual's needs and problems. If they could not be met through this group setting, it was the worker's responsibility, through referral, to guide the individual to other resources which might be of help with her particular problem.

Activities of Period III

In this section the writer will first describe some of the

1/ Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, op. cit., p. 174.

individualization that took place in this group. This will be followed by a summary of the group meetings and their values in enabling the girls to meet their needs.

Ruth is a short, slight, seventeen year old girl. On first meeting Ruth, she gave worker the impression of being rather "flat and emotionless." The worker has felt that Ruth harbors a great deal of hostility within her which she is unable to express. She often has referred to her home as a "shack," and has spoken of a desire to go back to the country where she was born.

Her attitude towards her parents is somewhat revealed in the following remarks about the parents of one of her boy friend's.

> "His parents are so hard on him. They want to know where he is going all the time. My parents are so easy on me. They don't care where I go or what time I come in. Of course on school nights I won't stay out late. One time I came in very late. My father got a little mad, but my mother is so easy."

Through discussion, the worker was able to see that being the daughter of a mixed marriage evoked a great conflict in Ruth. The following discussion between Ruth, Sue, and the worker gives indication of her confusion.

> Sue: You do not have Baptism in your faith do you?
>
> Worker: No, but when a boy is born he is circumcised.
>
> Ruth: That is right. My brother was circumcised. And when a boy is thirteen, he is bar-mitzvahed.
>
> Sue: I read a story about that. It was about a little boy. I think his name was Danny. Anyway it tells how he grew up and how he was confused about alot of things. It also tells how he was bar-mitzvahed at thirteen.
>
> Worker: Oh yes, "A Stone for Danny Fisher."

Sue: That's right.

Ruth: I want to read it. You know my mother is Baptist, and my father is Jewish.

Worker: It probably is difficult coming from a mixed marriage.

Ruth: Yes, it is very hard. You know, no one wanted them to get married. They just ran away and got married.

Sue: Well I think they produced very fine children.

Ruth: Thank you, but you know it is hard to make a choice.

In this conversation, Sue brought up in a religious home, and always having a strong identification with her church is fairly secure in this area. At completely the opposite extreme is Ruth, coming from a mixed marriage and at odds with herself about her religious feelings. No religion is practiced at home. However, her brother was circumcised and her family never has had a Christmas tree. Her friends and the boys she dates are not Jewish.

There also seems to be a strong need for Ruth to identify with a religion. This is part of her being a member of her particular peer group, since her friends are very religious and eager to talk about religion.

The worker saw Ruth alone soon after this discussion. The worker felt this was a way of getting to know Ruth better. Most of the conversation centered around her current activities, and her new job as a filing clerk. Worker did discuss the possibility of going to a temple service. Ruth responded eagerly mentioning that she had only been to temple once.

The worker recognized that ultimately Ruth would have to answer these religious questions for herself. However, it was hoped that by

providing her with outlets to find expression for some of her questions such as discussion and going to religious services that some of her anxiety in this area would be reduced.

Only Ruth and Sue attended the temple service with the worker. The other girls, because of religious reasons, were unable to come. The girls seemed to enjoy the service, but they both appeared a little uncomfortable. Perhaps this was due to the fact of it being such a new experience, and also due to the fact that the temple was in a high-middle economic section, completely different from the girls' immediate environment.

Worker later questioned Ruth about the service:

Worker: What did you think of going to temple?
Ruth: I had a good time. It really was different.
Worker: Different?
Ruth: Yes, I had been to temple only once before.

Shortly after, Ruth came to the meeting early. After talking about boys and clothes for awhile the following conversation took place:

Worker: Did you finally have a Christmas tree, Ruth?
Ruth: No, but I will soon.
Worker: Have you decided to follow the Christian religion?
Ruth: Yes I have.
Worker: It is probably very hard coming from a mixed marriage.
Ruth: Yes, everyone has one big problem and I guess that is mine.
Worker: Ruth, I know it is hard but sometimes it is good to try and accept these things.
Ruth: But accepting and understanding are two different things. There are lots of things about the Christian religion which I don't understand. But I am going to follow the Christian religion if I am what I am now.
Worker: What are you now?
Ruth: I am nothing.

This was a case of the worker recognizing the limits of her role.

Although the worker had hoped through the use of relationship and outside experience to help Ruth understand her feelings in this area a little more clearly, she realized she was not qualified to help her with this particular problem. Although discussions and visits to other religious services were important the worker realized after this conversation that it would be best to refer Ruth for additional help with her particular problem.

Judy is an attractive girl who seems continually "on the go." Judy is very involved in house activities and maintains an outside job also. She is popular with the staff and the house members and is looked upon as a leader with a good deal of ability.

One of Judy's specific needs seemed to be help in making future plans. Although she had expressed some desire to go to college and become a social worker, in the past year Judy had changed her course and was taking some commercial courses. Judy explained to the worker that she still hoped to go to college but wanted to be prepared in the event her plans did not materialize.

When worker 'phoned Judy to make an appointment to discuss this situation more fully she told the worker that during the Christmas season she had a temporary job as a filing clerk in addition to her regular job. Judy told worker how bored she was with her filing job. She said: "One way I know I want to go to college is the fact that I don't want to file."

> The worker asked Judy what her plans were now. Judy said she was not sure but thought she might like to do Social Work. Worker said she thought July would make a good social worker. Judy asked Worker about the possibility of going into Social Work without having to go to

graduate school. The worker told her about the program at Simmons College which had a specialization in Community Organization in which she could probably do Social Work after graduation. Worker also mentioned the fact that she found out that she could probably get a job in the field after graduation from a liberal arts college. The worker said that if her employer wanted she could go to school on a part-time basis while working.

Judy and the worker went through the courses that Judy will have completed after graduation from high school. The worker expressed her opinion that Judy could enter many schools with her courses. Judy seemed very pleased at this.

Judy expressed her interest in going to a Catholic school. Judy mentioned Emmanuel and asked the worker whether they had any social work courses. The worker said she knew it was a good school but was not sure about the courses.

Judy said it was hard to pick a vocation. The worker agreed saying that at sixteen it was difficult to make decisions about important matters like vocations. The worker mentioned the possibility of her taking aptitude tests. Judy got very excited saying she would like to take them. The worker said she had heard that they were given at the "Y" and said she would find out the details and speak to her about it.

In the meantime, the worker went to visit Judy's family. The worker asked her parents how they felt about college for Judy. Her father, who appeared to be the more passive parent, said he would like her to go to college very much. Her mother did not seem as certain. Judy's mother said: "I don't know. I told Judy to take some commercial courses and be realistic. I would like her to go to school but you have to be realistic. It won't be any fun for her to have to work and go to school at the same time and that is what she will have to do."

The worker mentioned the possibility of taking aptitude tests at the "Y." Both Judy's mother and father seemed quite interested in this but her mother still questioned the feasibility of Judy going to college. The worker has gone to the counseling service at the "Y" and explained

the situation to them. After tests are completed more plans will be made. However, in making these plans it is important to recognize certain real factors such as the ambivalence of Judy's mother and the fact that no matter how good a scholarship she may be able to get it may not be practical for Judy to go on to college.

Sue is a tall attractive girl of seventeen. Sue reads a great deal. She is very much interested in poetry, religion and in generally learning about the world.

This fall Sue was beaten up one evening while walking through the Commons. Sue was returning from church and evidently noticed a man crying on one of the benches. She reached out to help him. The man probably was mentally ill and when Sue reached out to help him, he beat her severely cutting her face badly.

Sue often has come early to meetings and seems quite eager to talk with the worker. The following is a typical conversation with Sue:

Sue: I had a good time with Joe. He is not like other boys.

Worker: What do you mean?

Sue: Well he does not talk about little surface things.

Worker: You mean he thinks a great deal.

Sue: Yes, that is right. He is searching.

Worker: Do you think you are searching too?

Sue: Yes, but I just do not know what to think sometimes. I guess I am searching, but I do not know what for.

Worker: Growing up is hard, Sue, and it takes time.

Sue: Yes, I know.

Worker: I think it is wonderful that you are seeking. But you know, maybe it is sometimes good not to try and look for reasons for everything, but try and take things as they come.

Sue: Do you mean there has to be a balance?

Worker: That is exactly what I mean.

Although Sue is well accepted by the group, she sometimes tends to set herself apart from her friends and often finds it difficult to accept anything that she cannot find an answer to.

Sue related a dream she had and kept asking worker to interpret it:

Sue: What does it mean?
Worker: It is difficult to interpret dreams. Why is it bothering you so much?
Sue: I just don't know but it is. It is not good to be blind to things.
Worker: But certain things have to be accepted.
Sue: I suppose so.

The worker believes that relationship with her peer group is very important for Sue. The group is concerned with some of the same questions Sue is, and help to reinforce worker's individual discussion with Sue where it was pointed out that she is not alone in her confusion.

Peggy.-- The worker has not spent much time individually with Peggy. Peggy seems to exhibit no specific needs such as Judy and Ruth do, and she does not often come to meetings early or alone. She does seem very enthusiastic about the club, attends meetings regularly, participates in the discussions and seems well accepted by the other girls.

Peggy seems to be struggling to discover what kind of a person she is and what kind of a person she wants to be. She is very attractive and has often won beauty contests. Although she has sometimes accused the girls of being "high brow," winning beauty contests does not seem to satisfy Peggy. The worker recalls how enthusiastically she remarked that Billy (the Thanksgiving party guest) "thought we were the most intellectual girls he has ever met."

There does not seem to be the need for an individual approach with

Peggy, yet she seems to be one who can especially benefit from a small group experience. In this small, not highly competitive setting, in which Peggy is accepted by the worker and her friends, she can be more clearly seen as an individual with her own worth and does not have to prove herself. Thus, in this security-giving experience she is given the opportunity to try and discover who she is.

Summary of Period III

The activities of this period consisted of two informal discussion meetings, a dance at the Y.W.C.A., and a trip to a Jewish temple.

The discussion meetings were not as much concerned with the topic of boy-girl relationships. The group, in this period, brought out many questions about God, religion, and predestination. The group seemed to be becoming more secure with the worker and better able to freely talk with her. The worker, on her part, felt more secure in her relationship with the girls and considered it appropriate to participate more actively in the discussions.

The "Y" dance was a Christmas party. They had decided that they wanted to meet new boys and did not want a party at the House. The dance at the "Y" was unfortunately small and not many boys came. However, the boys that were there were extremely attentive to the girls. This experience seemed to give the girls a good deal of confidence in themselves and had special significance since they were in a different setting. After the early part of the evening the worker did spend much time with the girls. The worker felt that although the girls welcomed the worker's presence they felt a little embarrassed by it. The worker noted that the girls at times laughingly referred to her as their "keeper."

The worker feels the temple meeting would have been more successful if the temple had been in an environment more closely related to the girls'. The temple was in a fairly high income section and the boys and girls who attended the service were more elaborately dressed than the girls in the group. This added to the fact that it was a new experience, seemed to have the effect of making the girls insecure and anxious to leave.

CHAPTER VII

PERIOD IV

Background: Responsibility of the Leader

The worker was aware of her responsibility for helping the members, through this small group experience, to become clear thinking and responsible adults.

> "The good group experience is not a too protective one where youth will be tempted to prolong membership as he does in a family relationship. Rather it is the protection of the group which enables youth to learn, grow, develop new interests and ultimately move on to adulthood." 1/

This friendship club was used as a means by which the group members, through discussions and outside experiences could find satisfactory outlets for their needs that were expressed, thus providing a way for further growth and development and serve as a means of helping these adolescents reach adulthood. For in order to proceed from one level of maturation to the next, needs at the lower level must be adequately satisfied. 2/

In achieving these purposes, the role of the leader was extremely important.

1/ National Social Welfare Assembly, Teen-Age Youth and Young Adults in Today's World, A Report Prepared by Marion Robinson, New York City, 1952, p. 5.

2/ Irene M. Josselyn, Psychosocial Development of Children, New York: Family Service Association of America, 1952, p. 47.

"The group worker should present himself to the adolescent as a complete person. As a purely permissive person who never expresses himself and his own values the worker deprives the youngster of a genuinely human relationship that he is in a position to develop. If as a human being the worker has certain values, the youngster should know that he has these values. At the same time the group worker should let him know that he recognizes his right to experiment with his own values and even reject the worker's values without rejecting him as a person. It is important to avoid a patronizing manner on the part of the adult in recognizing the adolescent's right to experiment with values and find himself." 3/

The small friendship club seemed to provide the oportunity for experimentation of the adolescent's ways of thinking in the presence of an adult leader and members of the peer group.

The leader felt it was her responsibility to:

1. Share some of her experiences, ideas, and help answer some of the questions that were brought out.

"The concept of Social Work has somewhat changed from the idea of giving, to enabling, to now more concern with the idea of sharing." 4/

2. Expose the members to new ideas and experiences and provide a setting for evaluation of these ideas and experiences.

Activities of Period IV

In this period the activities of the group consisted of a vocational meeting, two informal discussion meetings, and a return supper at the

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3/ National Jewish Welfare Board, op. cit., p. 16.

4/ Discussion with John Atwater, Group Worker, Roxbury Neighborhood House, January 19, 1956.

Neighborhood House, with the group from X agency.

The first meeting of this period was a vocational meeting. The program consisted of showing of the film, "Getting a Job."

The worker had seen the film, and when she mentioned it to the girls they seemed quite eager to see it. There were mechanical difficulties, however, which made it necessary to put the lights on and off. Sue had an important church meeting to attend and came to the meeting at the conclusion of the film. After the film, the worker tried to lead the girls into a conversation of the film but there was not an eager response.

Judy: It was good but I don't think you have to go through all that to get a job.

Ruth: I think it was good too. I got my job through the guidance teacher. I had an interview with the employer too, but I did not go up for my interview by myself. I went up with a bunch of girls and then we were interviewed separately.

Worker: What did you think of the job counselor in the film?

Ruth: I thought he was pretty good.

Sue said she did not see enough of the film to comment. She and Judy began to talk about some of their teachers.

In the first discussion meeting there seemed to be examples of some of the points the writer made in the background considerations of this period.

Sue was the first to arrive:

Worker: Are you still reading scriptures?

Sue: Yes, once in awhile.

Worker: Where do you read them?

Sue: At the missions.

Worker: Why do you do it?

Sue: I feel that I should.

Worker: But why?

Sue: It is important for them. They need it.

Worker: Sue, you are only seventeen.

Sue: I know that. The way the men look at me sometimes. It makes me feel nauseous.

Worker: Then why do you do it?

Sue: I don't know.

Worker: I don't mean to say that it isn't a wonderful thing that you should think of doing something like that. But, remember you are only seventeen. You have time for that.

Sue: Yes, I know what you mean.

Just then Ruth walked in. After greetings were exchanged Sue and Ruth began to talk about their boy friends. Ruth said she had a fight with her boy friend Bobby. Ruth said she was very upset by this but felt better now.

Ruth: I found out something about myself that I didn't know.

Worker: What is that?

Ruth: Well I am jealous. I did not know that before. We went to a dance last week and he danced with so many other girls. You know I was jealous. I found that out then.

Worker: It is a natural emotion Ruth. Everyone has it.

Ruth: Yes, I know. And you know I felt better after I had spoken to him and told him how I felt.

In the first conversation with Sue, the worker feels that she was imposing her own attitudes on Sue and thus cutting her off from any objective evaluation of her own situation. Worker later felt that it would have been better to ask her why she felt it important to read scriptures at the missions, and encourage her to express her own feelings about this. After this, Sue with the help of the worker, could perhaps clarify some of her feelings about this situation.

The second conversation with Ruth was a different situation. However, here the worker feels she was both clarifying and supporting Ruth's feel-

ings. The worker, by explaining to Ruth that she was experiencing a natural emotion, perhaps helped to ease some of her anxiety at her discovery of her own feelings of jealousy.

The next conversation took place between Ruth and Sue just before Judy and Peggy arrived:

Ruth: Do you believe in predestination?
Sue: Yes, I believe in it somewhat. Man has free will but there are certain things he has no power over.

Just then the worker was called out of the meeting room for a moment. When the worker returned the girls were still discussing this question.

Ruth: Leah, do you believe in predestination?
Worker: What do you think about this?
Ruth: I don't know.
Worker: I do believe in free will. I believe in the strengths of man to overcome some circumstances.
Ruth: But doesn't man need help sometimes?
Worker: Yes, I do believe that man does need help at times. I really don't think that man can stand alone. But I don't think this takes away from his free will. I believe that it is part of it.
Ruth: But what about things like polio and some of the accidents you hear about?
Worker: Well I think that in some cases you cannot look for reasons. I think this is where faith in something bigger than ourselves comes in.

In this case worker at first returned the question back to Ruth. However, this was unsatisfactory to Ruth who was looking for some sort of an answer to this question. The worker realized this and then shared some of her own feelings about predestination and at the same time probably helped to answer some of Ruth's questions about predestination.

When Peggy and Judy came in, a conversation about one of the boys in the neighborhood took place. This conversation helped to relieve some of the pressure of the previous discussions between the worker, Sue,

and Ruth. Judy began by describing an accident for which she blamed Smithie, a boy in the neighborhood and refused to talk with him for months.

Judy: One day by accident I spoke to him.
Worker: Sometimes the longer you wait to talk to a person the harder it gets.
July: That is exactly right. Anyway, Smithie later told me he felt so bad about the accident. He said he couldn't sleep all night thinking about it. He said the night it happened he tried to call me but he couldn't get me in. I don't know though.
Worker: Don't you think he called you?
Judy: Yes, I guess he did.
Peggy: Smithie is so sensitive.
Worker: What do you mean?
Peggy: What is this, Leah, are you writing a dictionary?

The worker here was overstepping her role as a group leader and was attempting to probe too much into the feelings of the girls. Peggy was able to directly verbalize the fact that the girls just wanted to talk about boys without having their feelings clarified.

The second discussion meeting of this period was to plan for the return supper with the group from X Agency the following week.

> Peggy and Ruth took out some paper to plan for the supper. Peggy said: "Which one of us is going to take notes anyway? Ruth answered: "O.K. you can." The girls seemed upset by the fact that they had once made detailed plans for the party but had lost the paper. Judy said: "Come on, let's get this over with so we can do something else." The girls and the worker continued to make plans. Sue kept interrupting and seemed least willing to plan. The worker said she knew the girls were tired but really should plan since the party was only a week away. The girls came to a discussion of the dessert. Sue kept suggesting elaborate ice cream molds. Peggy said: "Come on let's be economical."

After the plans were made, the worker suggested that the girls could make ceramic pins. The girls were at first resistant to this idea but later decided they would like to try to make the pins. During this activity the group seemed very disorganized. Judy later apologized and said: "We are worse than little kids."

This was the first time there was any formal activity at the meetings other than the times that the girls had parties. Perhaps their bebehavior with this activity indicated a desire for the informal meetings in

which the girls are not focused on one particular activity but simply have a chance to talk. The activity probably brought an element of competition into the meeting such as: "Who will finish first?" and "Who will make the best pin?"

The last meeting of this period was a return supper with the group from X agency. The girls worked very hard the day of the supper and prepared an elaborate meal.

> After dinner the girls put on some records. The Debs began to dance together while the girls cleared the dishes. Worker suggested a tour of the house. All agreed and the girls arm in arm went through the house. When we reached the theatre both clubs ran on the stage and laughingly began to put on a "show." The Debs had a quartet and after some urging the group sang some songs. Worker noted that all the girls stood around and seemed deeply engrossed in the songs. The girls cheered loudly after the songs were over and the group sang a few encores. Peggy, Judy and Ruth then urged Sue to sing some songs for the group. Sue was a little self conscious, but finally did sing and received much applause.
>
> When the girls reached the gymnasium they asked if they could play basketball. The groups played together for some time and the worker had to break it up since it was getting late.
>
> When the groups reached the lounge again, the girls from both clubs began to dance together. Both clubs seemed unwilling to end the supper party. The Debs insisted on taking home the place mats. Since some of them were soiled, Judy went out and made some new ones, this time autographing the girls' and worker's name on the place mats.

This meeting involved a good deal of cooperative planning and participation by all the members. It will be recalled by the reader that the group from X agency was a Negro group and the girls had at times expressed negative feelings towards the Negroes. After the first supper party the girls were able to discuss some of their feelings. As a result of this first experience the girls were eager to see the group from X

agency again and the suggestion for the return supper came from them.

At the return supper the group seemed much freer with the Debs. The girls danced together, engaged in a competitive activity and seemed able to appreciate what each had to offer. This seemed to be indicated in the enthusiastic response the girls had for each other's "shows."

The worker feels that these experiences, no matter how positive, may not effect a real change on some of the attitudes that the girls may have towards the Negro people. The worker believes that one must take into account other important considerations such as the fact that many of these attitudes are deep rooted and reinforced by strong family attitudes.

Time necessitates that this study be limited to a four month period. However, the worker should like to include the discussion that took place the following week as it seems particularly pertinent to this present discussion.

This group had been chosen by the staff to be members of a panel for the Brotherhood Week program at the Neighborhood House. The worker told the group about it and mentioned that they had been chosen by the staff because they were the oldest club group in the House and also because the staff felt that they had various experiences such as the two suppers at X agency, and the trip to the Temple that perhaps they would like to share.

The girls seemed to be quite interested in what the worker said and very pleased that they were chosen for the panel discussion. When the worker mentioned the Debs from X agency, Judy quickly jumped in with: "They are such good kids." Then the following discussion took place:

Ruth: You know the other night I went skating with two girls. One of them was colored and we had a lot of fun. You know the president of our class is colored too.

Worker: Was this the first time you went out with a Negro girl?

Ruth: Yes.

All the girls began talking about different aspects of the racial question. The worker heard Judy talking about the Alabama situation. The worker said that sounded like an interesting topic.

Judy: Well look at the Alabama situation.

Worker: What do you think about it?

Judy: I think it is very, very bad. The next thing that will happen will be a civil war. Honestly, people will never change. It will always be the way it is.

Worker: Look at the changes that have been made up to now.

Judy: I don't think there have been many changes.

Worker: What about the anti-segregation laws? I think the cause of the Negro people has progressed a great deal.

Judy: I still don't think there have been many changes. You know either it is like it is down South with the Negroes having no freedom or else they let them run away with everything.

Just then Peggy told a story of an experience she and Judy had last year. Peggy told how they were walking down the street when some Negro girls approached them with knives. Peggy said they were not doing anything and Judy added that the girls had spit popcorn at them.

The worker said she could understand how very upsetting this must have been. The worker then asked the girls if they ever knew of any white people to act similarly. Sue kept adding how terrible some white people were and how often they acted that way.

Judy: Leah, you just don't know the Negro people in Roxbury.

Worker: Yes, Judy, I do know the Negro people in Roxbury and the ones I know seem very nice.

> Judy seemed upset by this conversation. The worker noticed how she took out her pen and began drawing on a napkin. After drawing for a while Judy looked up and said: "You know I was so mad when they spit popcorn at me. I would have yelled at them if they were Irish or Italian or even if they were Jewish. It really was not the point of them being Negro. It was just that they spit popcorn at me and got me mad."

Judy seemed particularly upset by this discussion. When the worker visited Judy's family, both her mother and father spoke very negatively about the Negro people in Roxbury. Their feelings and some of Judy's own feelings probably have evoked a conflict within her. This conflict seems to be indicated by her expression of negative feelings directly followed by a strong denial of it.

Summary of Period IV

In this period there also seemed to be progress towards the goals that were set forth in Period I. The worker would like to stress that these goals were not rigid but they did provide a framework for leadership of this group.

Too often there is a willingness to depend on the "goodness" of the activity without being clear about its aims. Many programs for young people are preoccupied with the activities and the method. One of the reasons for neglecting specific objectives is the belief that if the means are right, the outcome will be good. Thus it is not necessary to be clear about the goals in advance. 5/

The vocational meeting was suggested by the worker in response to a need for vocational guidance that had been expressed by the members. The vocational meeting seemed one way within the group setting that this need could be met. The worker had already cited the case of Judy who seemed

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5/ Roy Sorenson and Hedley Dimmock, op. cit., P. 19.

to need help with her future plans that could not be met in the group setting. In this instance, the worker referred Judy to a guidance counselor who could better help her with her specific problem.

The discussions in the informal meetings centered on the questions of boy-girl relationships, religion, and predestination.

In the second discussion meeting the worker did not consciously attempt to test the girls' reaction to the informal group meetings by using a variable that is, the pin-making activity. No firm conclusions could possibly be drawn from this one experience. The worker realizes that there could be many reasons for the girls' resistance to this activity such as the method of presentation by the group leader and the particular feelings the girls might have had that evening. However, it would seem in this one particular instance that the girls enjoyed the informal discussion meetings which was less structured, less competitive and with a stronger element of interpersonal relationships, more than the jewelry making activity.

The last meeting of this period was a return supper held for the girls from X agency. The first of these suppers was leader directed and an outgrowth of the curiosity and interest at different racial and religious groups and the desire to visit other neighborhoods that had been expressed by the group members. As a result of this first experience the girls were eager to see the group from X agency again and the suggestion for the return supper came from the girls.

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CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

This thesis was a study of a small friendship group and the methods used by the leader in enabling the four adolescent members to meet their needs through this group.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

What are the characteristics of adolescents?

(a) Physical
(b) Psychological
(c) Environmental factors affecting today's teen-agers

How are the needs of the adolescents met in a small friendship club?

(a) Definition of a friendship club
(b) Background of the neighborhood
(c) Background of the members

What is the role of the leader in enabling a group of adolescents to meet their needs through a small friendship club?

What is the responsibility of the leader in this type of social group work?

This thesis was confined to a study of a friendship club for four months from October 6 through February 6. Much of the material for this study came from the records the writer kept while leading the group. The records were used to point out the activities of the group and the methods used by the leader. Interviews were held with the staff workers at Roxbury Neighborhood House who were directly involved with teen-agers for the purpose of discovering their opinions of the small friendship club.

The study first gave a very brief consideration of some of the physical and psychological characteristics of adolescents. It was emphasized that our present day technological civilization with its dichotomies and confusions puts particular strain on adolescents who are insecure and unsure due to the rapid physical and emotional changes during this period of growth.

A friendship group is formed and held together by friendship. Among the advantages of a friendship club is that it can be a source of security and can satisfy some of the adolescent needs for a sense of worth, acceptance, status, and achievement. The friendship club can also be a means of character education.

Some disadvantages of a friendship club were that it allowed little opportunity for growth, often stifled individuality due to the emphasis on a common feeling, and sometimes provided a false sense of security.

After four meetings certain goals were set up by the worker in consultation with her supervisor, in relation to the needs expressed by the group members. These were:

(1) Boy-girl relations

  (a) Clarification of their ideas about boy-girl relationships,

  (b) Opportunity to broaden their contacts with boys.

(2) Help in job and career planning

(3) Moving out and broadening experiences

(4) Outlets for curiosity towards other racial and religious groups.

The meetings consisted mostly of discussion meetings and outside experiences, as follows:

(1) One half or eight meetings were discussion meetings.

(2) Four meetings were trips. One was a bowling trip to the Y.W.C.A.; one a dance at the Y.W.C.A., a trip to X agency for supper; and a trip to a Temple.

(3) There were two suppers at the agency. One supper was for the group members and the other was a return supper for the girls from X agency.

(4) One meeting was a Thanksgiving party at the agency.

(5) One meeting was a vocational meeting.

The atmosphere that was created by the worker in the discussion meetings was permissive and informal. In this setting the members felt free to express themselves and with the help of the worker and the peer group, the individual had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of her areas of concern. The concerns that were expressed also provided a stimulus for outside experiences. Thus for example, a curiosity over other religious group expressed in the meeting resulted in the members' attendance at a different religious service.

The worker felt it was her role to:

(1) Create an atmosphere in which the members would feel free to express their feelings and bring out their areas of concern.

(2) To guide and steer the conversation around these areas of concern without losing its informality.

(3) To help connect their feelings and their attitudes as well as to expose the group members to new experiences which might enable them to see their attitudes in relation to these experiences.

(4) To thus enable the individuals to clarify or gain a better understanding of their areas of concern.

The leader felt it was her responsibility to share some of her experiences and ideas, help answer some of the questions that were brought

out, expose the members to new ideas and experiences and provide a setting for evaluation of these ideas and experiences.

Interpretation

A value of the small friendship club seemed to be the opportunity for experimentation of the adolescent's ways of thinking in the presence of an adult leader and members of the peer group. In the informal and not highly structured setting of the group meeting, the member was given the opportunity to discuss some of her concerns, bring out her questions and try out her ideas. Through her relationship with the leader and her friends she could achieve a better understanding of her concerns, have help in answering her questions and given the chance to experiment with her ideas.

Thus in this friendship club the individual was not lost in the conforming influence of the group. It was, however, the group setting that helped to build the adolescent's individuality.

The discussions meetings were not used as ends in themselves but provided a springboard for the outside experiences. With the security of the leader and the group, the members were given the opportunity to meet people and visit agencies and neighborhoods with which they were not familiar. It seems to the writer that if we are hoping for a free and enlightened adulthood, we in social group work have a responsibility to expose adolescents, who are on the threshold of adulthood, to new and broadening experiences and help make them aware of the world outside their immediate environment.

The writer recognized the importance of understanding the strengths

and weaknesses of the members. The small group provided a setting for the writer to gain an understanding of the individual's particular needs. The writer saw the limits of her role as group leader and referral was used when the individual's needs could be better met through outside resources.

As a result of her experiences with this small group, the writer can also see disadvantages to this type of grouping. In this small group the individual member was always in the foreground. It was impossible for the member to achieve anonymity within this group setting. This factor was even more pronounced by the content of the meetings in which the focus of attention was continually on the individual and not on a craft or a game as in the case of many club meetings. It sometimes seemed to the writer that the group compelled a member to express herself even if she did not wish to.

There also was a tendency for the group member to rely heavily on the group for security. When the individual member moved from the protective group setting she did not have the support of the leader and her friends to help ease some of her anxiety. During the writer's leadership of this group she was often told of some of the inadequacies of the girls when participating in activities without the other members. The writer feels there was a tendency in this small group for the members to see it as an all absorbing outlet instead of one of varied outlets.

Limitations of the program

The writer sees that realistic factors such as shortage of agency staff and time are real limitations to this program. This group was only one of the writer's responsibilities in this agency. The fact that

the writer was at the agency only on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays was also limiting to her activity with the group. The writer also realizes that the practicality of the small friendship group might be questioned in an urban, highly populated area such as Roxbury where the recreational demands are so great and the facilities so limited.

Recommendations

The writer hopes this thesis will be of value in encouraging group workers to undertake an evaluation of their friendship clubs for adolescents and a careful consideration of the goals of their programs.

Underlying this thesis has been the significance of this program in insecure neighborhoods such as the Dudley-East Area of Roxbury where it is so difficult to achieve a sense of identity. The girls in this group, who were considered positive members of Roxbury Neighborhood House, seemed ready for this program. Their enthusiastic response and their eagerness to use the small group setting as a means of bringing out some of their concerns seems to show that they were also seeking this experience. On the basis of this study it would seem that other agencies in similar areas could use the method described as a way of working with positive members. However, no definite conclusions can be drawn from this one study and the writer recommends that further research be done on the kind of individual that would benefit by this program.

Conclusion

Although no definite conclusions can be drawn from this study, the writer feels that certain inferences can be made:

(1) This group of adolescents seemed to seek, need and benefit from a small friendship club under adult

leadership as long as it was not used as an end in itself.

(2) The roles of group work with adolescents is not merely the development of a "we" feeling, guiding interaction and having a good time, but also to broaden experiences and help answer questions that are brought out by the group.

Accepted
David Landy
Research Instructor

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY GROUP MEETINGS

Program at Group Meeting

Group Needs Expressed

Individual's Needs

Methods Used by the Leader

Questions asked of staff workers who were directly involved with teen-agers at Roxbury Neighborhood House:

1. What do you consider are the advantages of a friendship club?
2. What do you consider are the disadvantages of a friendship club?
3. What do you feel is the responsibility of the leader in this type of social group work?

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