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A study of an all-agency teen-age
committee: what the experience meant
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to it

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A STUDY OF AN ALL-AGENCY TEEN-AGE COMMITTEE:

WHAT THE EXPERIENCE MEANT TO THE MEMBER
AND HOW HE RESPONDED TO IT

A Thesis

Submitted by

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(A.B., Wilson College, 1945)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

1955

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Chapter I

Introduction

One hears much today about the adolescent and about efforts that are being made to reach him, both through individual contacts and contacts through the group. Group work agencies seek to learn what his interests and needs are in order to set up programs that will be designed to meet them. Some workers decry the fact that "all they want to do is dance", and some refuse to accept this as a legitimate program activity for them to provide. Others run dances on a mass activity basis and discover oftentimes that discipline problems are more than they can cope with. In some cases closed dances are held, open to agency members only, and through a more controlled situation higher standards of conduct are upheld. One method of running such so-called closed dances that has been found to be fairly successful is that of the committee group. A committee, made up of teen-agers who are generally house members, is set up, and through it regular dance programs, on a weekly or monthly basis, are sponsored. In vesting the committee with the responsibility for running the dances, the staff is usually thinking along the lines of making the dances more successful and providing an opportunity for the members themselves to assert some leadership and have an experience in democratic self-government.

The writer was interested in knowing to what extent such committees were actually fulfilling these broad aims and how the members were responding to the opportunity to run their own program. The writer also wanted to know what meaning the experience was having for the committee members. Hence, the present study was launched.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the meaning that serving on an all-agency teen-age committee in a settlement house had for the members and how they responded to it. Questions to be asked in the study are:

(1) What did the experience mean to the members in terms of (a) how they felt about joining the committee, (b) what satisfactions they got out of it, and (c) how they felt about the need for having a committee?

(2) How did they relate to each other?

(3) How did they respond to their task role on the committee in terms of (a) acceptance of responsibility, and (b) participation in discussion?

Scope of the Study

For the purpose of this study the writer confined her research to the Junior Dance Committee of the Elizabeth Peabody House, a settlement in Boston. The committee was made up of six boys and eight girls, all but three of whom had been chosen to be committee members by members of their respective clubs

in the agency. The study covered a period from October 25, 1954, to April 30, 1955. Although new members were added to the committee toward the end of this period, the writer chose only to include in the study those who became members during the first month of the committee's operation (a period covering October 25 to November 25, 1954).

Method of Research

Owing to the absence of written records the methods which the writer used in carrying out the study were: (1) individual interviews with the fourteen committee members, (2) observation by the writer of six committee meetings, and (3) interviews with the committee advisor.

The interviews with committee members took place toward the end of the period of study and were focused on a number of questions which the writer had set up relative to the study. (See Appendix i). In order to encourage true expression of feeling on the part of the interviewees, the writer did not limit the interviews to these questions alone, but provided, also, for some free conversation to take place between interviewer and interviewee. In this way she hoped, also, to make clear to the interviewee that neither the writer nor the study would have any direct bearing or consequences insofar as the member's relationship with the agency in question was concerned. She also made it clear that the interviewee's name would not be used in connection with the study and that all of the informa-

tion which was given would be held in confidence. In almost all of the cases the interviewees responded positively to the writer's purposes in interviewing them and were quite free in expressing themselves.

A third part of the interview was devoted to the securing of certain concrete facts on each interviewee which were later assembled and used to describe the committee group. (See Chapter III and Appendix ii.)

The interviews with the committee advisor were unstructured and were held at various times throughout the period of study with the following purposes in mind: (1) to acquaint the writer with the purposes and method of organization of the committee group, (2) as a basis for determining and defining the categories that would be used in the evaluation charts, and (3) as a basis for re-evaluation and refining of the charts after the separate test evaluations of the writer and the committee advisor had been made.

The group observation was carried on for a period of six consecutive meetings which took place during the months of February and March, 1955. This marked the second half of the period under study, as the committee had already had twelve meetings before the observation was begun. When the writer first entered the meetings her purpose for being there was explained by the committee advisor and was accepted without too much question by the members. The writer was a silent obser-

ver of what took place in the meetings. After each meeting she made a detailed recording of all that had taken place, and this recorded material served as the raw data from which later evaluations were made. The attendance picture for the meetings under observation is shown in Table I.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS
DURING SIX-WEEK OBSERVATION PERIOD

Number of Meetings	Number in Attendance
0 to 1	5
2 to 4	7
5 to 6	2

Because of the fact, as shown in the table, that five of the members only attended from 0 to 1 meeting, the writer was forced to exclude these five from her own evaluations and to rely entirely on the committee advisor's judgment for the response given by these five individuals.

Evaluation Charts

In order to have some basis for evaluating the writer's observations and the committee advisor's judgments in regard to the separate aspects of the study especially concerned with the members' response, the writer devised a series of three evaluation charts. Two of these charts were made up in dupli-

cate so as to serve both the committee advisor and the writer in making independent judgments. The third was used by the committee advisor alone, as it concerned a phase of the study on which the writer did not feel qualified to make an evaluation from her observations. The two charts which were used in duplicate served as a check on the reliability of the writer's findings. For the third chart there was no way of determining its degree of reliability. In order to assure as closely as possible the validity of the charts, a test was made of each of them by both the committee advisor and the writer, and following this certain revisions were made as seemed fit in the eyes of the writer and the committee advisor.

In the case of the five members who attended from 0 to 1 meeting during the observation period (See Table I, page 5), the writer decided to copy the advisor's findings onto her charts. Although this would have the effect of lessening the degree of reliability possible, it nevertheless served to give a clearer and less complicated picture of the total results of the study for the purposes of drawing the final conclusions.

In the case of the other nine members, in order to ascertain whether the figures given in the totals of the two charts (committee advisor's and writer's) represented the same individuals, the writer made a spot check of both charts, the results of which will be incorporated in the material under

Analysis of Findings (Chapter IV).

Limitations of the Study

One of the most obvious limitations of the study is the absence of written records, which places complete reliance for the findings on the interviews and the group observation. The writer had no convenient way of checking the reliability of the interviews and had only the advisor's evaluations on two of the charts to check the reliability of her own findings.

The small size of the sample used in the study limits the degree of generalization possible and largely limits the value of the study to the agency in which it was made and to the particular committee studied.

The degree of reliability possible is also limited further by the low attendance at the meetings during the observation period, thus weakening somewhat the data secured on certain members and causing the writer to place greater reliance on the advisor's judgment in certain cases. This also reduces the number of independent judgments available for the study.

Value of the Study

Some value that the study might have can be seen in the light of its contribution to the area of teen-age programming and especially to the ever-present question of how much can be expected of teen-agers in setting up their own program.

Little material is available on this particular phase of teen-age programming.

The study might also have some value in helping the agency in question to evaluate this aspect of its program especially in terms of the meaning it is having for the teen-age member and how this ties in with the purpose which the agency sets up for working with this particular age group. It might help to answer such pertinent questions as: (1) Is the meaning that the experience is having for the members sufficient to warrant the agency's continuing to run the program and to expect more from them in the future? (2) Are the agency's aims and objectives for the committee in line with the interest and ability of the members, as seen in their response to the experience? (3) Might the committee experience be looked upon as having potential for broadening the scope of the members in their total participation in agency activity?

The study might also be of value in pointing out some practical ways in which a program such as that of having a committee could be made to have greater meaning for the committee members.

Chapter II

The Teen-ager and Committees

According to Harleigh Trecker the group work method is geared to help in groups where members are learning to "take a maximum amount of responsibility for their own affairs."¹ This would apply to any group which is organized for a purpose and which has a qualified leader and program and an agreed-upon method for selecting members. To clarify further the broader aims of group work and recreation with young people a report from the National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency states:

1 . . . all youth programs must provide opportunity for creative self-expression, must stimulate young people to think for themselves, and must encourage young people to assume an ever-increasing amount of responsibility for their share in the affairs of the community.²

It is in line with thinking such as this that many group work agencies, including some settlements, have sought ways and means of involving teen-age members as much as possible in planning their own programs. This philosophy permeates most settlement work, where much of the emphasis in the area

¹ Harleigh B. Trecker, Social Group Work Principles and Practices, p. 62.

² Report on Youth Participation, National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency, p. 5.

of teen-age programming is on the friendship club and on coed activities such as canteens, lounges, and dances, where some of the responsibility for running the program, deciding what they want, and creating an organization that will achieve the combined purposes of staff and members is vested in the hands of the members. Hence, the development of teen-age house councils and special events committees.

Alan Klein describes the purpose of committees in the following way:

(Member) committees are brought into being (1) to carry out a special job; (2) to provide a training ground for committee work and the democratic process; (3) to provide for member involvement in policy making and program planning; and (4) to provide for an on-going group experience related to social work objectives.³

In addition to fulfilling the above objectives Klein states that in order for the committee to function effectively it must provide "basic satisfactions" for its members and it must meet their needs, including the need for recognition, the need for status, the need for feeling a sense of importance and belonging, and the need for feeling a sense of adequacy. He explains that the point of meeting such needs is that the "satisfactions are part of the obligation to get a job done."⁴

³ Alan Klein, *Society--Democracy--and the Group*, p.199.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 203-204.

Grace Coyle, in describing the purpose of the Gay Canteen Youth Committee, refers to certain "unavowed purposes" in the work of the Committee:

Although this administrative purpose is the recognized purpose of Committee members, actually the members come to the meetings with much the same ideas that they have in coming to the Canteen. It is a place where they can meet with the other young people-- boys and girls-- only in a more intimate situation than obtained on Canteen nights. They not only hold their business meetings, but they have fun while doing so. . . for one of the main unavowed purposes is the desire for boys to be with girls and girls to be with boys.

An additional unavowed purpose, only partly conscious, is that belonging to the Committee definitely gives status in the Canteen. Members feel that there is a certain importance attached to belonging. They are the Canteen representative body. Unconsciously they all have this need for status in the large Canteen group, for recognition and acceptance, and for the security of having been elected and of belonging to this group. All of these unconscious motivations and unavowed purposes keep them coming to the Youth Committee meetings.⁵

It would seem especially important to keep both the "avowed" and the "unavowed" purposes in mind in attempting to evaluate the committee from the standpoint of the meaning that the experience will have for the younger adolescent, which is the group with which this study is concerned. Adolescence, according to Wilson and Ryland, is an age marked by conflict,

⁵ Grace Coyle, Group Work with American Youth, pp.70-71.

caused when the adolescent's needs to be both dependent and independent are striving to achieve a balance. It is a time when "his imaginative plans far exceed his ability to carry them out" and when fluctuations occur in the way he accepts and carries through responsibility, "one minute accepting and carrying through a responsibility, and the next, avoiding or failing to carry the responsibility he has assumed."⁶ It is, also, a time when psycho-social factors are beginning to have importance in new forms of behavior and relationships, and when relationships with the peer group become of primary importance. It is largely through these relationships that the adolescent gains the support which he needs to work through his conflicting drives to grow up into adulthood and to remain a child. Thus, in order to know how the younger adolescent will function on a committee, or task group, of his peers one has also to understand what the experience means to him in the way that it meets his needs and fulfills certain basic satisfactions and how he will respond to the challenge that the experience opens up to him to form new relationships, accept responsibility, and participate in committee planning and discussion.

⁶ Gertrude Wilson, Social Group Work Practice, p. 108.

Chapter III

The Agency and the Committee

The Elizabeth Peabody House was established in Boston in 1896. It began as a kindergarten and later the program was broadened to include older children, teen-agers, and eventually adults of the neighborhood. Located as it is in a lower-class, deprived economic area of Boston, it aims to serve the needs of the neighborhood people for recreation, informal education and leadership in securing some needed neighborhood improvements. The program is largely structured around the small-group activity, where the members join clubs or interest groups of their choice and are helped, under the guidance of an adult leader, to develop their own form of group organization and government. Some mass activity programs are run by the agency, usually with the help of committees or councils which are made up of the members. One of the most prominent of these committee groups in recent years has been the Senior Dance Committee. This committee has successfully carried on a program of weekly dances for the older teen-age membership for a period of some eight years. The record of this group has undoubtedly been an important influence in the development of subsequent committee groups, which have been set up from time to time to assist in carrying out certain special phases of the agency activity. The most recent of these groups is

the Junior Dance Committee.

The Junior Dance Committee was organized in the fall of 1954. It came into being as a result of a concerted demand from the younger teen-age House members for a dance program of their own. (The senior dances were closed to members under fifteen years of age.) Because of the apparently genuine interest for such a program, the agency staff took steps to initiate a program of junior dances by organizing a committee. The staff hoped, through such action, not only to assure the success of the dances, but also to provide a new kind of experience for the members in running their own program and in assuming leadership positions in the agency.

Members were selected for the committee by the various friendship and interest groups in the agency from this age group. Each group was allowed to select two members to represent it on the committee. By the end of the first month of its operation the committee membership comprised a total of fourteen members, including six boys and eight girls. Ten of these members were from friendship groups, one was from a special interest group, and three were members-at-large, having once belonged to friendship groups but later having either changed their affiliation or dropped out of the group altogether. The total membership of club and interest groups which the ten members represented was fifty-one. The age span of the committee members was from eleven to fifteen, with half of the member-

ship falling within the age thirteen category. All of them had had a number of years of agency affiliation, ranging from two years to five or more years, with nine of them falling into the category of "five or more years." None of them had had previous experience of being on a coed committee or task group such as the dance committee; however, most of them were well acquainted with each other, both through their agency affiliation and also through neighborhood and school ties. (It seems appropriate to mention here that through the interviews the writer learned that most of the committee members belong to a so-called neighborhood "gang", supposedly numbering about fifty or sixty members, all of whom fall within the ages of twelve through fifteen. All of the "gang" attend the dances at the agency and go out together afterward. It is apparently a large coed friendship group, held together only by ties of friendship and mutual interest in the Peabody House dances.) For most of the committee members (twelve) this was the first year of their participation in coed activities in the agency.

Because of the enthusiasm and interest which were sustained by the total membership in the weekly dance program throughout the year, it could probably be stated that from the standpoint of holding the members' interest, the dances were a success, and from this that the committee was fulfilling a part of the objective for which it had been organized. However, it is not the intent of this study to make an evaluation of the

committee from the standpoint of how it carried out the objectives which were set up when it was organized. One could naturally expect that in the first year of operation of a committee which was made up of a young and inexperienced group of teen-agers there would be many ups and downs, and the success of the operation could not be viewed solely from the standpoint of how it accomplished its task. The writer was more concerned, in making the study, to evaluate the committee experience in the light of how the members responded to it and to try to discover in what way it was successful in meeting the members' needs and how it was succeeding in supplying them with the necessary "basic satisfactions" required for successful committee operation. These, therefore, are the areas with which the study will concern itself.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

The material in this chapter will be presented in three sections, corresponding to the three sources from which the data were obtained. These sections will be: (1) Member Interviews, (2) Writer's Observations, and (3) Committee Advisor's Evaluations. Each section will be marked by subdivisions which correspond to the questions asked in the study.

Member Interviews

The interviews with committee members were conducted for the purpose of learning what meaning the experience had for the members. Subdivisions include: (1) Their ^Feelings about Joining, (2) Satisfactions They Derived from the Experience, and (3) Their Opinions about the Need for Having a Committee.

Their Feelings about Joining

All but two described their initial feelings about joining the committee as positive. These two voiced some doubt, based, in the case of one, on some pre-conceived notion that the members of the committee were "show-offs", and in the case of the other one, on some fear that she might become bored sitting through committee meetings every week. In general, the members viewed being on the committee in a positive light.

Satisfactions They Derived from the Experience

Of the fourteen interviewed three expressed negative feel-

ings toward the committee experience, three did not express themselves either way, and eight expressed a liking for the committee. Reasons given for not liking it were:

- (1) "Didn't like the dances."
- (2) "Didn't know the committee members."
- (3) "Meetings interfered with club meetings."
- (4) "Didn't like the way the members behaved at the dances."

It can be seen that of the reasons given for not liking the committee experience, two (Numbers 2 and 4) were related to the committee itself, and two (Numbers 1 and 3) were based on factors outside of the committee.

In the case of those who did like it, the reasons given were:

- (1) "Knew and liked the members."
- (2) "Liked the dances."
- (3) "Liked the way the meetings were run."
- (4) "Made more friends."

Those individuals who expressed a liking for the committee seemed to place greatest emphasis on the personal satisfactions which they derived from it.

Their Opinions about the Need for Having a Committee

All of the members seemed to feel that having a committee was a good thing and seemed to have a high regard for the job the committee was doing. Answers given to show this were as follows:

- "The members know best what they want."
- "They (meaning the staff) need the members to help control things at the dances."
- "The dances are better."

"The committee is doing a good job."

"House members cooperate better when the members are in charge."

"The committee helps bring in more people to the dances."

"It (the committee) is a good way of bringing kids together from different clubs."

The members appeared able to accept the purposes behind having a committee and in this way to regard it as a privilege to serve on it. Answers to this reflected their pride in what the committee was doing and their desire to have it continued. One or two were able to state rather objectively some of the faults which they saw in the committee but to approve its overall purposes and method of functioning. Faults which they mentioned were:

"The committee members acted up too much at the dances."

"One or two members took over the job of running things."

"The committee advisor did not always respect the members' wishes."

"Committee meetings were too disorderly."

Writer's Observations

The purpose of the writer's observations was to see how the committee members related to each other in the committee group and how they participated in committee discussions.

How They Related to Each Other

The writer was interested in noting in this section how the individual related to the group and how he was accepted by the group. In order to have a basis for evaluation, certain

categories were set up by which the writer's findings could be charted. (See Table II, page 21, for list and interpretation of categories.) The writer's evaluations showed that six out of the fourteen related to most of the group, i.e., attempted to establish a positive relationship with most of the group; four related to only one or a few members of the group, i.e., attempted to establish a relationship with one or a few members; and four did not relate to any of the group members, i.e., did not attempt to establish a relationship with any group members. Insofar as their acceptance in the group was concerned, seven were accepted by most of the group, i.e., succeeded in establishing a relationship with the majority of the group members; four were accepted by only one or a few of the group members, i.e., succeeded in establishing a relationship with only one or a few group members; and three were merely tolerated by the group as a whole, i.e., were not successful in establishing relationship with any of the group members. No one in the group was rejected by any of the group members.

A more detailed examination of the charts reveals a close correlation between the individual markings in the two sections. For example, of the six individuals who related well to most of the members, all were accepted by most of the group; of the four individuals who related well to a few of the members, three were accepted by one or a few; and of the four who did not relate to any of the members, three were merely toler-

TABLE II

INTERPRETATION OF CATEGORIES FOR DETERMINING
MEMBERS' RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GROUP

Title of Category	Interpretation of Category
(a) How the Individual Related to the Group	
Related to most of the members	Attempted to establish a positive relationship with most of the group
Related to one or a few members	Attempted to establish a relationship with one or a few members
Did not relate to any members	Did not attempt to establish a relationship with any group members
Related negatively to one or a few members	Showed a hostile attitude toward one or a few members
Related negatively to the group	Showed a hostile attitude toward the group as a whole
(b) How the Individual Was Accepted by the Group	
Accepted by most members	Succeeded in establishing a relationship with the majority of the group members

TABLE II
 INTERPRETATION OF CATEGORIES FOR DETERMINING
 MEMBERS' RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GROUP

Title of Category	Interpretation of Category
Accepted by one or a few members	Succeeded in establishing a relationship with only one or a few group members
Merely tolerated by the group	Was not successful in establishing a relationship with any of the group members
Rejected by one or a few members	Open dislike was shown by one or several group members
Rejected by the group	Open dislike was shown by the group as a whole

ated by the group as a whole. Thus there is indicated a pattern of group acceptance based on the individual's attempts to relate. As a result, the total pattern shows that roughly one-half of the members related well, both on the basis of their own efforts and on the basis of their acceptance by the group as a whole, roughly one-fourth of the members related with and were accepted by a few members in the group, and roughly one-fourth did not relate with and were not accepted by any of the members.

A comparison of the findings of the writer with those of the committee advisor (See Table III, Page 24) for purposes of testing the reliability of the writer's findings, reveals some discrepancies. The total picture through the committee advisor's evaluations shows a less exact correlation between the markings on the two sections of the chart. It shows, first, that while four members related to the majority of the group, six were accepted by the group as a whole; second, that while eight sought a relationship with one or a few members, only six were accepted by one or a few of the members. The third items show an exact correlation. A closer examination of the charts reveals that the difference involved only two members. The results suggest that there may have been some difficulty in deciding, in the case of two members, whether they fitted into the category of "Related to Most Members" or that of "Related to One or a Few Members". In discussing this later with the

TABLE III

WAY IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUALS RELATED TO THE GROUP AND
THE GROUP'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUALS, SHOWING
COMPARISON BETWEEN EVALUATIONS OF OBSERVER AND
COMMITTEE ADVISOR

(a) How the Individual Related to the Group

Evaluator	Related to Most of the Members	Related to One or a Few Members	Did Not Re- late to Any Members	Related Nega- tively to One or a Few Members	Related Negatively to Group
Writer	6	4	4	0	0
Committee Advisor	4	8	2	0	0

TABLE III

WAY IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUALS RELATED TO THE GROUP AND
THE GROUP'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUALS, SHOWING
COMPARISON BETWEEN EVALUATIONS OF OBSERVER AND
COMMITTEE ADVISOR

(b) How the Individual Was Accepted by the Group

Evaluator	Accepted by Most Members	Accepted by One or a Few Members	Merely Toler- ated by Group	Rejected by One or a Few	Rejected by the Group
Writer	7	4	3	0	0
Committee Advisor	6	6	2	0	0

committee advisor, such appeared to be the case, and his feeling was that these two tended to fall more in the category of greater than of less acceptance, which would bring the committee advisor's findings into closer agreement with those of the writer.

A comparison between the advisor's evaluations and those of the writer reveals an even greater difference in the total picture. However, taking into account the advisor's second evaluation regarding two of the members, some of the discrepancy would be eliminated, as the writer had placed these two in the greater acceptance category, thus making her figures in the first category agree more nearly with those of the advisor.

In the second and third categories, the writer would tend to give a half and half distribution in the two categories, whereas, the committee advisor places a greater number in the category of relating to one or a few than in that of not relating to any. The only explanation which the writer has for this is that in the period of observation her raw data on these two individuals, which would be the same two on both charts, were not complete enough to give her a fair picture of their relationships on the committee, and therefore, it could be assumed that the advisor's judgment in this case would very likely be the more reliable of the two.

How They Participated in Discussion

In this section the writer was interested in noting the

degree of the members participation in committee discussion and the quality of their response. As a basis for evaluating this phase of the activity, categories were set up in chart form. (See Table IV, page 28, for listing of categories and their interpretation.) The writer's findings showed that insofar as degree of participation was concerned three out of fourteen were very vocal, six were moderately vocal, and five were quiet. None showed uneven participation. According to this, the majority fell within the range of "moderately vocal" to "very vocal." In the area of quality of participation three made a positive contribution at least 75 per cent of the time, three made a positive contribution from 50 to 74 per cent of the time, and eight made little or no positive contribution. No one made a mostly negative contribution. This shows that slightly less than half of the members made a positive contribution more than half of the time, while slightly more than half made little or no positive contribution, indicating that much of the contribution was made by a nucleus of six people.

Viewing the total results from participation in committee discussion as observed by the writer (and using the advisor's findings in five of the cases) it appears that of the nine who participated actively in the committee discussion, only six made any worthwhile contribution. A closer check of the individual markings shows this deduction to be valid.

TABLE IV
 INTERPRETATION OF CATEGORIES FOR DETERMINING
 DEGREE AND QUALITY OF PARTICIPATION
 IN COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Title of Category	Interpretation of Category
(a) Degree of Participation	
Very vocal	Participated in 75 per cent or more of the discussion
Moderately vocal	Participated in 50 to 74 per cent of the discussion
Uneven	Varied between being extremely vocal and moderately vocal
Quiet	Seldom entered into the discussion
(b) Quality of Participation	
75 per cent or more positive	Made a positive contribution at least 75 per cent of the time
50 to 74 per cent positive	Made a positive contribution at least 50 per cent of the time
Less than 50 per cent positive	Made little or no contribution of a positive nature
Mostly negative	At least 75 per cent of the contribution was negative, i.e., hampered the progress of the discussion

A comparison of the findings of the writer with those of the advisor for purposes of testing the reliability of the writer's findings reveals a close measure of agreement. (See Table V, page 30.) The committee advisor found that in degree of participation, ten out of the fourteen fell in the categories of "moderately vocal" to "very vocal", or one more than the writer found. In regard to quality of participation, the committee advisor placed four in the category of making a 75 per cent contribution, and two in the category of 50 to 74 per cent contribution, in comparison to a three and three distribution made by the writer. However, there is agreement as to the number who fell within the category of making less than 50 per cent contribution.

A spot check revealed that findings in the first section of the chart were at variance in the case of three individuals and in the second section in the case of two. For the most part, it can be said that there was fairly close agreement between the writer's and the advisor's evaluations, indicating that the writer's findings could be considered to be fairly reliable insofar as this phase of the committee activity is concerned.

Interviews with Committee Advisor

The purpose of these interviews was to find out how the committee members responded to the total experience. Areas of special concern in this section include: (1) rate of atten-

TABLE V

DEGREE AND QUALITY OF PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEE DISCUSSION, SHOWING COMPARISON BETWEEN EVALUATIONS OF OBSERVER AND COMMITTEE ADVISOR*

(a) Degree of Participation

Evaluator	Very Vocal	Moderately Vocal	Uneven	Quiet
Writer	3	6	0	5
Committee Advisor	3	7	0	4

(b) Quality of Participation

Evaluator	75 Per cent or More Positive	50 to 74 Per cent Positive	Less than 50 Per cent Positive	Mostly Negative
Writer	3	3	8	0
Committee Advisor	4	2	8	0

* Numbers in the table refer to number of committee members.

dance at committee meetings, and (2) how the committee members accepted responsibility.

Attendance

Because there were no records kept of committee attendance through the year, the writer had to rely on the advisor's estimate, based on percentages of meetings attended from October 25, 1954, to April 30, 1955. (See Table VI, page 32.) The total number of meetings that were held within this period was twenty-two. According to the advisor's estimate three of the fourteen members attended at least 75 per cent of the meetings (or approximately 18 to 22 meetings), six attended from 50 to 74 per cent of the meetings (or approximately 12 to 17 meetings), and five attended at least 25 to 49 per cent of the meetings (approximately 7 to 11 meetings). No one attended less than 25 per cent of the meetings (less than 7 meetings). From this estimate it can be seen that nine of the fourteen members attended at least half of the meetings, while five attended less than half, and none attended less than seven meetings. (It should be stated here that all of the five who attended less than 50 per cent of the meetings dropped off the committee before February 1.)

Acceptance of Responsibility

In this section the writer is concerned not only with how the committee members accepted responsibility but also with the type of jobs most readily accepted. It was felt wise to classi-

TABLE VI

COMMITTEE ADVISOR'S ESTIMATE OF RATE OF ATTENDANCE
AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS, IN PERCENTAGES

Percentage of Meetings Attended	Number of Members
75 per cent (approximately 18 to 22 meetings)	3
50 to 74 per cent (approx- imately 12 to 17 meet- ings)	6
25 to 49 per cent (approx- imately 7 to 11 meetings)	5
0 to 24 per cent (approx- imately 0 to 6 meetings)	0

fy the tasks by setting them up under three categories. (See Table VII, page 34.) Each individual was checked by the committee advisor in regard to the type of job which he was usually most ready to accept. Since it was possible for an individual to volunteer for or accept any one or several of the jobs listed, the different categories in this section of the chart are not mutually exclusive.

The findings show that five out of fourteen usually volunteered for or accepted special committee tasks, eleven usually volunteered for or accepted special assigned tasks, and three seldom volunteered for or accepted any task. Noone consistently failed to volunteer for or accept a task. The evidence would indicate that eleven of the fourteen were most likely to volunteer for or accept some kind of task, most usually that kind occurring on dance nights, while three of the fourteen were less apt to volunteer for or accept a committee task.

The extent to which responsibility was carried out satisfactorily is shown on Table VIII, page 36. The findings indicate that five members usually carried out their tasks satisfactorily, and one seldom carried out tasks satisfactorily. Noone ever failed consistently to carry out a task satisfactorily.

A comparison of the two sections of the chart reveals that the majority of the committee members only sometimes carried out their tasks satisfactorily and that the kind of

TABLE VII

INTERPRETATION OF CATEGORIES FOR DETERMINING KINDS
OF TASKS ACCEPTED AND WAY IN WHICH
RESPONSIBILITY WAS CARRIED OUT

Title of Category	Interpretation of Category
(a) Kinds of tasks most usually accepted	
Special committee tasks	Tasks involved with the carrying out of committee responsibility outside of meetings, such as buying of records, helping with decorations, getting prizes for special dances, etc.
Routine assigned tasks	Fulfilling a special function at the dances, such as reception duty, putting on records, checking the halls, getting the room set up, and cleaning up after the dance
Special assigned tasks	Filling in at other than assigned duty, when extra help was needed or committee member assigned to task failed to carry out his duty
Seldom accepted a task	Attended dances but seldom volunteered for or accepted a committee task
Never accepted a task	Failed consistently to volunteer for or accept a committee task

TABLE VII

INTERPRETATION OF CATEGORIES FOR DETERMINING KINDS
OF TASKS ACCEPTED AND WAY IN WHICH
RESPONSIBILITY WAS CARRIED OUT

Title of Category	Interpretation of Category
(b) Way in which responsibility was carried out	
Usually carried out tasks satisfactorily	In 75 to 100 per cent of the time member fulfilled responsibility acceptably
Sometimes carried out tasks satisfactorily	In about 50 to 74 per cent of the time member carried out tasks acceptably
Seldom carried out tasks satisfactorily	In less than 50 per cent of the time member carried out tasks acceptably
Never carried out tasks satisfactorily	Failed consistently to carry out tasks acceptably

TABLE VIII

COMMITTEE ADVISOR'S EVALUATION OF KINDS OF TASKS
ACCEPTED AND WAY IN WHICH RESPONSIBILITY
WAS CARRIED OUT

(a) Kinds of Tasks Accepted

	Special Committee Tasks	Routine Assigned Tasks	Special Assigned Tasks	Seldom Accepted a Task	Never Accepted a Task
Number of Individuals	5	11	5	3	0

(b) Way in Which Responsibility Was Carried Out

	Usually Carried Out Tasks Satisfactorily	Sometimes Carried Out Tasks Satis- factorily	Seldom Carried Out Tasks Satis- factorily	Never Carried Out Tasks Satisfactorily
Number of Individuals	5	8	1	0

task most frequently volunteered for was that of routine jobs at the dances. The writer tried, through a comparison of the individual scores, to find some further meaning between the type of job accepted and the way in which it was carried out. However, there did not seem to be any way of arriving at any sound conclusion, based on such a comparison, as it was impossible to find any recognizable pattern or correlation between the two sets of markings. The only conclusion that could be reached, therefore, was that the type of job which was accepted bore little or no relation to the way in which it was carried out.

Chapter V

Interpretations and Conclusions

In this chapter an effort will be made to make certain interpretations based on the material presented in the study and to draw certain appropriate conclusions.

As stated in Chapter II, there are certain recognized unavowed purposes for which teen-agers serve on committees and councils. Some of these purposes fall in line with the purposes for which the committee exists and form part of the basic satisfactions without which the committee could not be successful. The purpose of the first part of the study was to explore what these unavowed purposes were in the case of one particular committee group and to try to discover in what way they determined the meaning of the experience and affected the response which the members gave to it.

The second part of the study concerned itself with how the members responded to the requirements of being a committee member, or to the task role of the committee. Here it must be kept in mind that being on the committee was purely voluntary for the members. They did not have to accept the appointment from their clubs, nor were they committed to any definite period of committee service. They could also choose whether they wanted to be active or inactive members of the committee. The only requirement that was set up was that in order to be con-

sidered a committee member in good standing the individual could not miss more than three consecutive meetings during the year. The result of such a set-up was that the members were for the most part guided by their own interest and desires as to how much they would invest in the experience and what status of membership they would seek on the committee. Likewise, they were probably motivated in the beginning by what they hoped to gain from the experience and what it might mean to them.

Meaning of the Experience to the Member

Various methods could have been selected for determining what meaning the experience had for the member. The method chosen for this study was the use of the individual interview involving the writer and each of the teen-age committee members. This method had certain limitations in that it was entirely dependent on the mood of the members when interviewed and on the emotional tones of the interviews, either of which could have colored the members' responses to some extent. However, the writer attempted first to establish a rapport with the interviewee and then to set up the questions so that the key question could be approached gradually. In this way she hoped as nearly as possible to learn the true meaning that the experience was having.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the responses to the interviews is that for the majority of the members the

experience did have a positive meaning. In the case of those who voiced certain expectations which they had in joining the committee, these expectations were met. It should also be pointed out that of those who were unable to find the satisfactions which they were seeking from the committee, there were in some cases factors outside of the committee setting itself which prevented their fulfillment and which also determined to what extent they would become involved in the experience.

In the evaluation of the committee all of the members, both the active and the inactive ones, seemed ready to admit that a committee was a good and necessary organization for running dances. Although they voiced some disapproval of some aspects of the committee operation and the conduct of members at the dances, they were unanimous in endorsing the principle of having a committee to run the dances.

How the Members Related to Each Other

Because teen-agers are generally known to be strongly influenced by the relationships which they maintain, especially with their peers, it was felt wise to look into the realm of relationships for factors that might have some bearing on how the members responded to the task role. The conclusions that could be drawn from this aspect of the study are that most of the members related well to either a few or the majority of the committee group and were likewise well accepted by the group as a whole. Those who did not relate were among those who dropped

off the committee for reasons partly connected with the committee and partly connected with other causes, indicating that they were not ready to become fully identified with the committee group. The close identification of the majority of the members with the wider neighborhood group could also have been a factor in determining the degree of unity that existed on the committee.

How the Members Responded to the Committee Task

As stated in Chapter II, in the matter of acceptance of responsibility the teen-ager is somewhat unreliable and his response cannot be completely depended upon, so caught up is he with the mood of the moment. For present purposes the mood would seem largely dependent on certain motivating forces or needs, which are stated on page 10. If these needs can find a way of being met, then there is some hope of a task being fulfilled satisfactorily.

On the basis of the findings the writer would feel safe in making the assumption that, having found some of the satisfactions that he was seeking through committee membership, the member would be more ready to respond to the demands of the committee in fulfilling certain tasks. However, before going on to state further conclusions it seems advisable to state here that regardless of what the intentions and motivations may be, any new experience requires some new learning and some adaptations on the part of the individual who is involved, and while

positive motivations are to be desired, they do not always determine what the outcome of an undertaking will be. In the case of a committee which is in the first year of its operation, there is much to be learned on the part of the members, and some of the effects of the learning experience can undoubtedly be seen in the findings from this third phase of the study.

While most of the members showed an interest and desire to take on responsibility, the extent to which tasks were carried out satisfactorily was somewhat limited. This might be partly explained by fluctuations of interest and mood and partly by the need to have a good time and not let committee tasks interfere. This would seem to be a particularly valid conclusion to make in view of the fact that the tasks which were most usually volunteered for had something to do with the dance itself, and the committee member's responsibility for carrying out a task might conceivably be forgotten as he was caught up with the mood of the moment and his desire to join in having fun. The fact that most of the members either "sometimes" or "usually" carried out their tasks satisfactorily indicates that committee responsibility was not neglected and at least five of the fourteen could be counted on regularly to assume their special duties.

In the area of participation in committee discussion, again it can be seen that while the degree of enthusiasm and

interest shown in participating were great the ability of the members to make a worthwhile contribution was less. Again it can be assumed that age plus lack of experience in such a role could be contributing factors in the majority of the cases.

The general conclusion which can be drawn from the evidence presented is that for the most part, committee members' eagerness to participate in committee assignments, prompted as it was by their needs for recognition, status, belonging, and a sense of adequacy, exceeded their readiness and ability to carry out the committee tasks satisfactorily.

In summation it could be said on the basis of the findings that the greatest meaning which the experience had appeared to be in the relationships that were established in the committee group and in the prestige value that committee membership carried among the teen-age membership as a whole.

Recommendations for Further Study

Questions which arise from the study and which would seem to indicate a need for further research are:

- (1) What progress is shown through the year in the quality of the members' response to the committee task?
- (2) How would factors of staff leadership, friendship ties, and club response, help determine what the member response would be to the committee experience?
- (3) What factors might have been responsible, within the committee group, for the drop-offs in committee membership?

Rose Bernstein
July 28, 1955

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONS USED IN INTERVIEWS WITH
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. How did you get on the Dance Committee?
2. Did you want to be on the Committee in the beginning?
3. How long did you stay on the Committee?
4. Did you like being a member of the Committee?
If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Do you think a committee is needed to run the dances? Why?

FORM USED TO SECURE IDENTIFYING
INFORMATION ON MEMBERS

Name.....Age.....
School.....Grade.....
Club group represented on committee.....
Coed activities participated in.....
Offices held on the committee.....
Number of years of agency affiliation.....
Clubs which he (she) belonged to this year.....
.....
Clubs which he (she) belonged to last year.....
/.....

TABLE IX
THE COMMITTEE GROUP

Individuals on Comm., de- signated by number	Sex	Age	No. of Yrs. of Agency Affilia- tion	Current Club Affilia- tion	Method of Selection for Committee	Coed Activities Engaged in at Agency	
						Type of Activity	Length of Participation
1.	M	15	4	Jr. Lees	Club Election	Sr. Dance Socials*	2 or 3 yrs. Current yr.
2.	F	13	4	Etiquettes	" "	Socials* Lounge	Current yr.
3.	F	13	5 plus	"	" "	Socials*	" "
4.	F	12	3 or 4	Celtex	" "	"	" "
5.	M	13	5 plus	Member at Large	Elected by Committee	"	" "
6.	M	11	2	Boy Scouts	Club Election	None	---
7.	M	14	5 plus	Jr. Lees	" "	Socials*	Current yr.
8.	F	14	5	Celtex	" "	"	" "
9.	M	13	5 plus	Jr. Dukes	" "	None	---
10.	M	15	5 plus	Celtics	" "	Sr. Dance	4 years

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Individuals on Comm., De- signated by Number	Sex	Age	No. of Yrs. of Agency Affilia- tion	Current Club Affilia- tion	Method of Selection for Committee	Coed Activities Engaged in at Agency	
						Type of Activity	Length of Participation
11.	F	13	5 plus	Member at large	Elected by Committee	Socials*	Current yr.
12.	F	14	4	Member at large	Elected by Committee	Socials*	" "
13.	F	13	5	Gardenettes	Club Election	"	" "
14.	F	13	5	"	" "	"	" "

* Refers to socials held by friendship clubs.