

1946

# Dramatics: a method in group work as practiced in selected group work agencies

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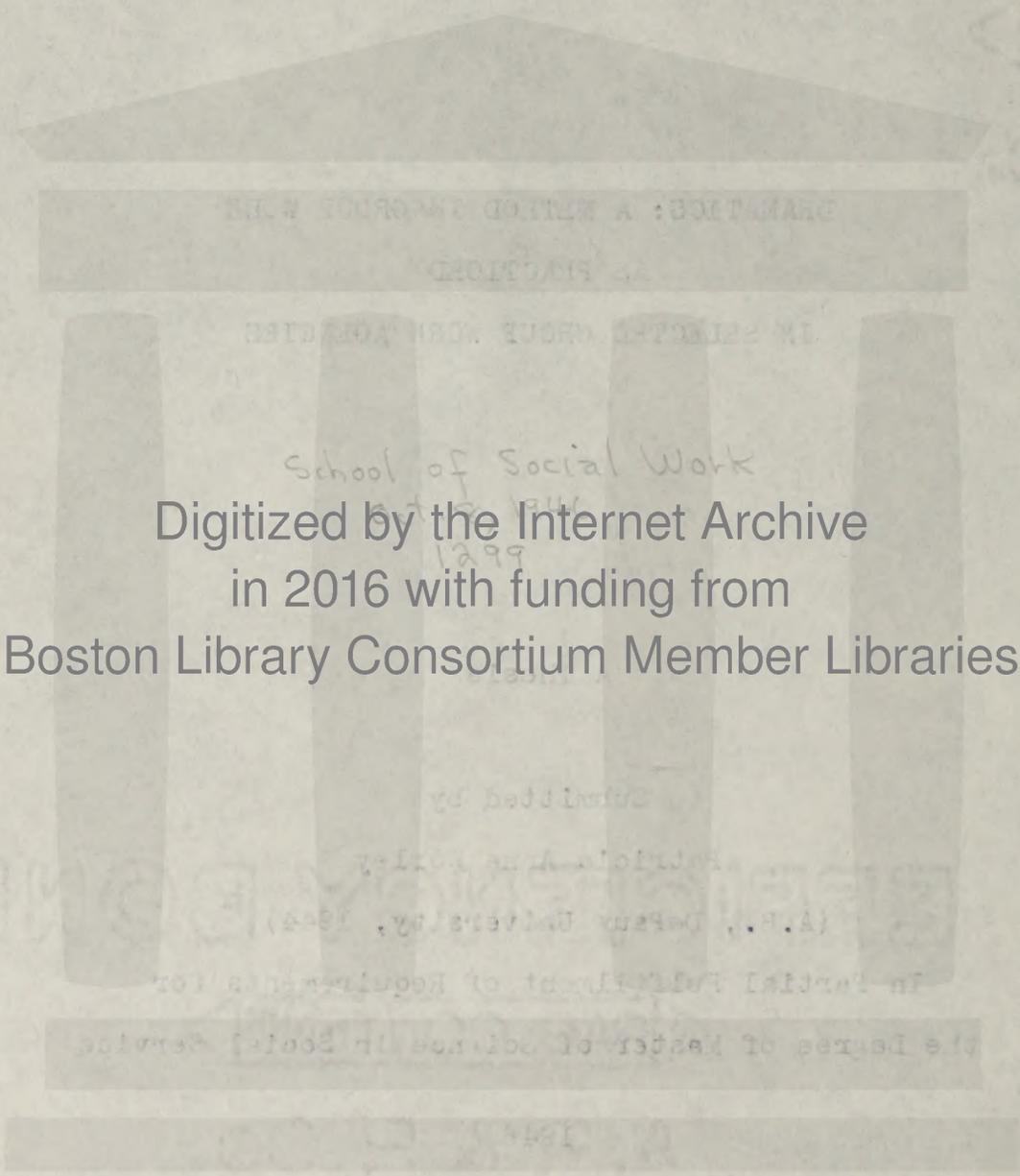
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1946

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Interest in drama has increased within the last thirty-five years to extend far beyond the bounds of the professional theater. The influence of Little Theater groups and the Drama League has been felt in our communities. As schools have become more interested in the development of the entire personality of their pupils rather than merely the intellect, drama as well as the other arts have been added to the school curriculum. Group working agencies and settlement houses, also interested in the entire personality of an individual, have found drama a valuable method for their work.

Recently some thought has been given to the methods which should be used in dramatics to make it further the aims of group work as it is conceived today. Because of the aims of group workers, principles have been formulated for their dramatic work which differ from the established procedures of the professional theater.

However, dramatics as it is actually practiced in our group work agencies may be based on principles ranging from those of the traditional theater to those of present-day educators and group workers. The purpose of this thesis is to study the methods which are being used in eight group working agencies in Boston, to discover the possibilities of the method,



and to ascertain if possible in cases where poor methods are being used the reasons which make them poor.

Eight selected group working agencies in Boston were studied. An attempt was made to find out what types of dramatic work were done in the agencies and what methods were used. These findings were compiled and set against what are theoretically considered to be good standards for dramatics in group work.

A study of this sort would seem to be of value for several reasons. Very little study and research has been done in the field of group work or of dramatics as a method in that field. Dramatics as a method has almost unlimited possibilities. It may be used with any age group. It may require elaborate facilities or none at all. It can be a long term project or simply an evening's activity. Dramatics can be an important factor in personality growth or it can be destructive.

The child too shy to come forward on his own account, in assuming another personality, will forget his timidity. The aggressive child, the "show off", finds that his activity must fit into a prescribed pattern. Both children lose their great consciousness of self in working for an end that is outside of the self.<sup>1</sup>

Most of what has been written concerning dramatics as a method in group work has been done from a theoretical point

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<sup>1</sup> Corinne Brown, Creative Drama in the Lower School, p. 220.



of view. These writers have explored the possibilities of the method. Where actual groups have been written of and discussed it has been done by someone well versed in group work theory who has been pointing out what can be done with good group principles. Writers in the field of progressive education have written of experience with group dramatics done in a creative way. Both group workers and progressive educators have prepared books and pamphlets laying down principles which should be followed. To find out what is actually being done in the light of what are considered to be good principles is the task this study sets for itself.

#### The Method of Procedure

Because it would be impossible in a study of this sort to visit every group working agency in Boston a sample of different types of agencies was studied. The Directory of Social Agencies lists seven church-sponsored neighborhood houses, twenty-three settlement houses and thirteen youth agencies. Eight agencies for study were selected representatively from this group. They were selected from different types of agencies so that the study would be well balanced. <sup>2</sup> Agencies

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<sup>2</sup> Two groups in one agency were studied making nine groups in all.



were also selected from different parts of the city.

CHAPTER II  
THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY

The method of procedure was to contact the agency, to make arrangements for observation of a dramatic group, and to interview the leader of the group. The schedules used may be found in the appendix. Each group was visited once. The executive of the agency or a staff member other than the dramatic leader was also interviewed in each agency.

Development of individuals through the group experience and at the use of the group by its members for social purposes. . . . Group work is a kind of guided group experience in which individuals are helped to meet their needs and to develop their interests along socially acceptable lines with the assistance of a group leader.<sup>1</sup>

It follows that the aim of dramatics in group work would be in keeping with this major aim in all of its implications. The special and specific aim of dramatics as a part of group work must also be considered. Slavson states it as follows:

The emphasis in professional production is entirely upon external effects; in educational production, the end aimed at in a play is its developmental value to the participants.<sup>2</sup>

That are some of the values which may be found in the use of the dramatic method in group work? We may first of all consider the values to the individual. Good use of the dramatic method may help an individual to gain poise and help his

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Coyle, "Social Group Work", Social Work Year Book, 1939, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Slavson, "Creative Dramatics and Play Writing", Creative Group Education, p. 118.



## CHAPTER II

### THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY

In a discussion of the theoretical basis for this study of dramatics as a method in group work it is well to look first at the aim of group work in general.

Social group work aims at the growth and development of individuals through the group experience and at the use of the group by its members for social purposes. . . . Group work is a kind of guided group experience in which individuals are helped to meet their needs and to develop their interests along socially acceptable lines with the assistance of a group leader.<sup>1</sup>

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to learn to work with others. Good dramatic experience may lead to a release of tension. "Drama offers an opportunity in a natural way for the exercise of pantomime or gesture, good carriage and bodily poise."<sup>3</sup> It may be of value to a shy person who can be helped to portray another when he is too insecure to be himself.

Charlotte Chorpenning who has written a great deal in this field has analyzed quite clearly what drama can do for personality growth.

Some twenty-five years ago, I began asking why certain methods of rehearsing plays apparently produced observed profound effects in personality growth and development. Some five years ago, the complex answer began to emerge from certain ways of thinking of the personality and of the dramatic experience itself. . . . Because it is unique, every personality is to some extent its own prison. You can learn a lot about another personality by reading or by observation; but you can experience it only in so far as you can take on the tension pattern which is his unique configuration. . . . We should all be hopelessly cut off and alone if we had no way to do this. . . . Under the stimulus of imagination, your pattern may reconfigure itself to approach that of an imagined character so nearly that your organism will be flooded with emotion and meaning alien to your own skin. . . . It is this dramatic experience of another personality through a more or less extensive reconfiguration of the actor's own tension pattern which seems to bring about the changes in personality growth and adjustment spoken of above.<sup>3</sup>

Winifred Ward who is the supervisor of dramatics in the public schools of Evanston, Illinois, and an instructor in

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<sup>3</sup> Corinne Brown, op. cit., p. 214

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Chorpenning, "Dramatics and Personality Growth", New Trends in Group Work, pp. 140-142



dramatic production, School of Speech, at Northwestern University, has written two books on dramatics. Her Creative Dramatics is relied on by group workers as an excellent guide.

As the drama is an integration of all the arts it offers probably the greatest possible opportunity for creative self-expression recognizing that the creative is the richest life, both for the individual and for society. Bound up in these great aims are all the lesser ones. The oral English training which is involved, with its development of vocabulary, voice and diction, is a tremendous help to every child in learning to express himself. Freedom of bodily expression, with the poise that results from ease of movement, fits him to appear well with his fellows. The independence, resourcefulness and ingenuity always evident in a creative drama class develop personality and leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Dramatics is also valuable for the group. "A group displays the integration which is so vital for members when there is a common purpose which requires members to do things."<sup>6</sup>

It can be used for broadening horizons and for developing creativity. "The drama, more than any other single art, represents an integration of all the processes of self-expression. Hence, its creative possibilities are practically unlimited."<sup>7</sup>

5 Winifred Ward, Creative Dramatics, p. 9

6 Charlotte Chorpenning, "Contrasting Values of the Drama and Festival in Group Work," Proceeding of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 356.

7 H. O. Rugg and Ann Shumaker, The Child Centered School, p. 264.

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<sup>6</sup> Charlotte Chorpennig, "Contrasting Values of the Drama and Festival in Group Work," Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1932, p. 338.

<sup>7</sup> H. O. Rugg and Ann Shumaker, The Child Centered School, p. 284.

### Techniques to be Used

Group work according to the stated aims of leading group workers is primarily interested in the growth and development of the individual. Professional theater is a business enterprise designed to provide entertainment for the audience. The feelings and needs of individuals in professional theater are not one of the major considerations, although Stanislavski in his Moscow Art Theater did encourage a more subjective approach than is used in other schools of the theater. This subjective approach is the aspect that Charlotte Chorprenning stressed as an important factor in personality growth and development.

If dramatics can have such values to the individual it would be well to consider now what techniques should be used to obtain these values. It must be borne in mind that dramatics used in group work is basically group work and not professional theater. "The Commercial Theater with its single stress on 'The play's the thing' proved inadequate to implement the purpose of providing a more enriching experience for the individual."<sup>8</sup> The materials used for dramatization would

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<sup>8</sup> Louis H. Blumenthal, "Enter by Stage Door," The Practice of Group Work, p. 155.

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8 Louis H. Brumenthal, "Enter by Stage Door," The Practice of Group Work, p. 155.

either be creative or at least within the experience and capacities of the individuals participating. "The material must not be difficult until the children have had considerable experience in dramatizing."<sup>9</sup> Their level of experience should be gradually broadened. "Analyze your players and select material that will lead them up or around to good plays a few steps at a time."<sup>10</sup> (Italics in the original)

When formal plays are used, an important first step is the discussion of the underlying motive of the play and the careful analysing of the characters. This gives the participants an opportunity for creativity in the development of their parts. "Each member must have a share in originating and defining the purpose. . . A group creating something also creates itself."<sup>11</sup> The aim in casting should be to put people in parts which will help them and still not ruin the play.

The general rule for casting is that the weak individual should be given a part which is not too much for him to interpret satisfactorily and which has elements of character in which he seems to be lacking.<sup>12</sup>

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9 Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 35.

10 Pearl LeCompte, Dramatics, p. 18.

11 Charlotte Chorpenning, "Contrasting Values of the Drama and Festival in Group Work," Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 355.

12 Pearl LeCompte, op. cit., p. 69.

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The general rule for casting is that the weak individual should be given a part which is not too much for him to interpret artistically and which has elements of character in which he seems to be lacking.

9 Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 33.

10 Pearl LeCompte, Dramatics, p. 18.

11 Charlotte Chorpennig, "Contrasting Values of the Drama and Festival in Group Work," Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 335.

12 Pearl LeCompte, op. cit., p. 69.

Every member of the group should be made to feel that he is an important part of the group. "Teamwork must be cultivated and the teacher finds it necessary to call attention often to the reaction of one character to another."<sup>13</sup>

The director should be a group worker in that he likes people and is sensitive to their needs. He acts as a "guide and co-worker rather than as director."<sup>14</sup> Ideally he should have the "skills of a dramatic director and skills of a group worker."<sup>15</sup> Methods of directing may be divided into the following types: dictatorial, chaotic, and democratic or cooperative. The dictatorial method of directing is one in which the actors must conform to preconceived patterns set by the director. This is of little value to the participants. On the other hand a director who expects things simply to take their course and offers no help to the group is also of little value. A good director for dramatics in group work should work as a part of the group and should encourage their creativity. He should be able to understand the needs of individuals and the interactions among them. He should remember that he is working with people trying to help them have a satisfactory group experience.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 44.

14 Ibid., p. 41.

15 Louis H. Blumenthal, op. cit., p. 156.

16 This material is adapted from a course given in Group Work Activities at Boston University School of Social Work, 1946.

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13 Winifred Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

14 *ibid.*, p. 41.

15 Louis H. Elmenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

A good teacher knows she is justified in giving a generous amount of praise to those who are lacking in self confidence when they make an effort that is only mildly successful. . . She will be a fellow worker and because of her experience, she will be able to help them to build better than they could alone.<sup>17</sup>

Thus we see that a theoretical basis of good dramatics in group work would rest on the following things. The interest in the welfare of the individual should be primary. Creativity should be developed and encouraged. Good literary standards should be sought, and horizons broadened. The leader should work along with the group, be able to understand the needs of certain individuals, and be able to help the individual work these out through group activity. The following chapters will show what is actually being done in groups in Boston in the light of these principles.

The Margaret Fuller House in Cambridge had the following program: story acting for children, four to thirteen; a teen-age group working on plays; an older teen-age group working on a show for the USO; and a Mothers' Club which was doing a more formal play.

The Becht House in Dorchester was planning a drama festival in which thirteen club groups were participating. The leader who was working as a consultant for these groups also had her own Little Theater Group at the House. This was a group of fifteen girls fourteen to eighteen years of age.

Another group in the house worked with younger children in story acting.

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<sup>17</sup> Winifred Ward, op. cit. pp. 22, 26.



CHAPTER III

TYPES OF DRAMATIC WORK DONE IN THE AGENCIES STUDIED

Many types of dramatic work were being done in the agencies studied. The following is a short summary of the types found.

In the Boys' Club in Charlestown about twenty-five boys were working on a review type of show made up of songs and repartee. They eventually hoped to put it on in the army and veterans' hospitals.

In the Central Square Center in East Boston two afternoon groups were working on plays. There were eleven girls aged eight to twelve in the group visited.

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At the Olivia James House there were two dramatic groups. One group of teen-agers had been working on a musical review. The other group was made up of younger children aged eight to twelve who were working on plays.

At the North End Union one group of girls were doing some dramatic work as a part of their club program. There was story acting for the younger children and a group in choric verse.

At the Roxbury Neighborhood House the younger children have done pantomime and plays especially suited for them. A teen-age group put on plays for the younger children. They have just finished working on Snow White and Seven Dwarfs in which both groups worked together. There was a women's group who did more serious plays.

Various types of dramatic work were done at the Boston Young Women's Christian Association. In the Younger Girls' Department there were three groups which did plays. A part-time leader worked with them. The specialist in drama employed at the YWCA works with a first and second year course in drama, a selected group which has made trips to army hospitals, and the business girls who did dramatics as a part of their club work.

In the course of the study four agencies were contacted which had no dramatic work. Three of these stated that they would like to have this activity but they were unable to get



leadership for groups in dramatics. One agency had had a dramatic group until very recently when the volunteer leader who was working with the group left. The worker interviewed said that this leader had been more interested in the dramatic production than she had been in the people in the group.

The drama consultant at Hecht House was a part-time worker. She said Leaders in the Agencies Studied three nights a week but that she usually put in more time than that, as she was. In dramatics as in any form of group work the type of leadership is important. Various aspects of leadership were studied in the agencies visited. In a study of this sort it was important to know whether the leader was a staff member or a volunteer. It was valuable to know the other type of work done by the leader as well as his background and training for dramatic work and work with groups.

The leader of the group at the Boys' Club had been with the group only three months. He was a full-time worker and besides his work with the group visited, did similar work in another center of the Boys' Club as well as publicity work for the agency. He had had no special training in dramatics although he was a good musician.

The leader of the group at the Central Square Center was holding her second meeting with the group at the time of the interview. She was a student at Emerson College and was working with the group as a part of her school requirements. This was the only group she worked with at the agency.



At the Margaret Fuller House the dramatics leader was a full-time staff member. Besides her work with the drama groups she did home visiting for the house. She received her training in music and drama at the New England Conservatory and had been with the groups four months.

The drama consultant at Hecht House was a part-time worker. She said she was supposed to be there three nights a week but that she usually put in more time than that, as she was needed. She had been working at the agency for five months. She also received her training at the New England Conservatory and had been in professional theater work for two years. She had also had experience in a creative drama experiment with children a few years ago.

The leader of the group visited at the Olivia James House in South Boston was a full-time staff member. Most of her work was with the nursery school and general club work rather than dramatics. She took this group because the Agency had always had a dramatic group and there was now no one to lead it. Her training was in nursery school work. She had been working with this particular group in dramatics for five months.

The headworker at the North End Union spoke of the difficulty she had had in getting a leader for the dramatic group. She said that while they were working on the Christmas play the group had had three different leaders. The leader of the group visited had been with them less than two months.

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She had received dramatic training at the Leland Powers School of Drama and was working in the settlement because it might be a lead toward getting on the stage. She was a part-time worker and did most of her work with general club groups rather than dramatic groups.

At the Roxbury Neighborhood House the worker doing the work with dramatic groups had been with the agency for a number of years. She did both music and drama in the agency as well as home visiting, and was a full-time staff member. Her training was at the New England Conservatory and she had taken special summer courses at Harvard in dramatic technique.

The leader of the three groups of teen-agers at the YWCA was a part-time worker who had been with them five months. Her regular work was with the Girl Scouts. She also attended the New England Conservatory and had worked in adult dramatic groups at the YWCA. The drama specialist employed by the Association worked also for the Cambridge Y.W.C.A. She had had special study in drama at Stanford University, and in London and Oxford. She had been working in the Boston Association for nine years and during the summer was the Director of a professional summer theater.

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mind, a relaxed condition of muscles, a receptive emotional attitude.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROUP WORK ASPECTS OF DRAMATICS

There are a number of factors in dramatics that carry important implications for group work. Some of the techniques in dramatics may be used in different ways which may have vastly different results for the individual in a group and for the group as a whole. The method used in handling different aspects of dramatic work may give important clues to the leader's whole relationship with the group. Leadership, selection of material, the methods used in starting work with a group, casting methods and the handling of disciplinary problems were studied in different agencies and will be discussed in this chapter.

#### Leadership

One of the most important aspects of drama in group work is the relationship of the leader to the group.

The amateur director who likes persons, likes drama, and knows a great deal about both can, if possessed of common sense, tact and some degree of charm, plus patience and time, successfully manage and develop the most uncertain of all animals, the amateur actor. . . constructive work can only be done by well-poised individuals who can put their players into a cooperative frame of



mind, a relaxed condition of muscles, a receptive emotional attitude.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship of the leaders in the agencies studied ranged from sympathetic interest and understanding of the individual in the group to situations in which the leaders were not interested in the members as individuals. In one group the leader knew the individuals well and knew their families. She tried to understand the meaning of group interaction and sibling rivalry. The method she used in her work was to accept each individual for what he was and help him gain support where he needed it. For example, she encouraged a child who could not read well rather than passing him by for a more able reader. She helped him in such a way that he seemed to gain confidence in himself as a reader and as a person.

Another leader seemed to be aware of individual capacities and to be accepting of them. Because of the large number of individuals and groups worked with she did not have an opportunity to have too close a relationship with the group members. She seemed to recognize and understand how to work with dominant and shy members of a group.

A third leader interviewed could have gone on the stage rather than worked with groups if it had not been for the fact, as she stated it, that she was more interested in people

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<sup>1</sup> Pearl LeCompte, op. cit., p. 116.



than she was in drama. She had a number of groups under her direction and preferred to work with incoming groups so that she could help them build up a real group feeling. The workers under her took some of the more advanced groups.

The leader of another group studied considered her leadership of a group something similar to the coaching of a basketball team. She worked with the group by reminding them that they were like a team and therefore dependent on cooperation and work together. During the interview she talked at length about the problems of certain individuals which she had noticed in the course of her work.

The leader of another group seemed bored. She did not seem to have an understanding of the group members as individuals. She had set down definite rules which the group members were to follow. She seemed annoyed when those in the play said a line in a way that she did not think was just right and she would correct them bluntly. Another leader said she was trying to help the individuals in the group by the use of drama. A great deal of this help took the form of "lectures" on discipline. She was annoyed and impatient with the group and with individuals when lines were not said as she thought they should be.

The individuals in another group seemed to be to the leader not persons with distinct personalities but only performers. In many cases the name of the individual was not known.



These reactions of the leader to the group are not presented for comparison but to show the different types of leadership found in the cases studied.

#### Selection of Material

Careful selection of material is important because it is the foundation from which the group starts working. As stated in Chapter II, this material should be in line with the group's experience.

The material. . . is to be chosen with greatest care, for the interest of the children is always centered on content, and this material must, therefore, suit their needs and tastes if it is to bring satisfaction and growth.<sup>2</sup>

The material should also seek slowly to widen the experience of the group.

The teacher should be sure that the children vary their dramatic presentations with an occasional production of a literary story in which plot and situation are of a quality that children could never invent themselves, the characterization complete enough to require study for interpretation, and the dialogue and action of good quality.<sup>3</sup>

The material selected should serve the real needs of the group. These needs may be purely recreational or there may be a need for a deep experience which dramatics can provide.

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<sup>2</sup> Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Corinne Brown, op. cit., p. 56.



The leader should make a real attempt to understand the needs of the group and to select material to meet them.

Leaders of the groups studied were asked how the material was chosen. In story-acting groups of young children the procedure was usually as follows: the group read together a number of stories and chose one to act out as a group. The leader would select the stories. One leader stated that she selected plays to fit in with the needs of certain individuals in the group. The evening the group was visited she had just started work on a play for four boys. She had particularly selected this play for these boys. One of them had a bad heart and she was trying to help him find some other interest in the agency besides the gym. Another boy lacked the self confidence needed even to read in a group. The leader stated that she tries to pick material which teaches and stimulates.

In another group the leader selected the material. It did not seem to be within the experience of the group. For example they had to be told to laugh after one of the jokes, the leader had selected, was told. There was no attempt on the part of the leader to explain or interpret the material or to widen the group's experience so that they might understand it.

In another group the leader stated that she tried to select plays according to specific needs. One need she spoke of was the need of a certain group for a certain type of play.

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In another group the leader stated that she tried to select plays according to specific needs. One need she spoke of was the need of a certain group for a certain type of play.

For example, she would select a number of plays that she felt might meet their needs and then let the group make the final decision. Her selections were more on the group basis rather than the individualistic selection mentioned above.

A fourth leader selected the plays herself. These plays, although they were considered good from a literary standpoint did not seem to interest the children very much. The cast had been changed several times as there was always someone dropping out.

Another leader stated that the selection of material was by far the most difficult part of her work. She stated that she must keep in mind the ideals of the agency she worked for although most of the members of the groups did not seem to care whether the material had any real significance. She said that she did not object to comedy if it was taken as that. She felt that one of the things which must be kept in mind is the nature of each particular group, as each one is different and the material selected must be something that that particular group can do.

In another group the group itself selected the play. The leader realized that with this method the play sometimes was suited to the group and sometimes not. Another group chose the play they would work on from a number that the leader had brought in. In the other two groups the leader selected the play in both cases. One leader said that she tried to pick plays which were especially suited to the group



and which had value. The other leader said that the group had told her the type of play they wanted and she brought one in.

Any one who has done dramatic work will recognize how difficult it is to find good material for groups to work on. The leaders of most of the groups studied seemed to take this part of their work seriously and to make an attempt to select good material. In one case the material selected did seem to be especially bad for the group. It was in poor taste from both an educational and moral point of view. In three cases the leaders seemed to be able to make very definite contributions to the groups and the individuals in them through the selection of material. In cases in which the group did not have any part in the selection of the play they seemed to have a certain lack of interest in it. In one case where they had the full responsibility for the selection the leader felt that the selection was not always a very good one.

One of the basic premises in the theoretical basis for the study was that the leader and the group should work together. This applies to the selection of material as well as other phases of dramatic work. Both the leader and the group have something to contribute: the leader, her knowledge and experience; and the group, its interest and enthusiasm. The selection of a play would seem to be, therefore, one of dual responsibility with the leader guiding and the group participating.

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### First Steps in Working with a Group

The method of procedure is an important next step in consideration of group work techniques in dramatics. It is at this point where the individuals taking part may get an awareness and insight into the types of persons to be portrayed or they may not. Here also the full creativity on the part of the group members may be encouraged or it may be ignored. The initial working out of personality difficulties in terms of security, finding one's place in the group and cooperation with other members may be begun, or on the other hand a competitive and jealous spirit may be fostered.

A large part of the work in creative drama consists in the analysis of character and plot. Discussions concerning the ethics of certain actions, concerning cause and effect are constantly going on, with the result that old, childish attitudes are being laid aside, and new and better attitudes built up in the minds of the pupils. And these new attitudes grow not from the precepts of the teacher but from the perspective gained through living the story and analyzing the character and situation.<sup>4</sup>

Dramatics leaders in the agencies studied started their work with their groups in the following ways.

One leader started the work with the group by lining them up and telling them to be quiet while the "stars" of the

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<sup>4</sup> Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 28.



performance said their lines. The leader told them just what to do and the members of the group were allowed no opportunity for creativity. There was no interpretation of the material used or discussion of it. The members of the group did not know each other well and the leader knew only the names of the few boys with leading roles.

Another group started with a club meeting. The leader was quite dictatorial at this meeting. She told the girls several times that they acted like five-year-olds; she wished they would act their age and do what she told them to. They then started their work on the play by reading it, not for understanding but for tryouts. The leader made no effort to bring good feeling or interpretation of the material to the group.

In another group the leader started out by casting the play. Neither she nor the group were familiar with the play. The casting was done by vote although the group was not acquainted with each other as a group but each member only with a few individuals. The play itself was not discussed and the characters were only in relation to how much they had to say in the play as they were being cast.

The method used in another group was for the group to read over the plays selected by the leader. They were then cast by the leader. There was not a great deal of opportunity for creativity. However, the leader did seem to know the

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different girls by name although the group was not a very constant one.

Another group always discussed plays before starting to work on them. The leader tried to see that there was an opportunity for creativity by letting the group members freely participate in the development of their parts. She tried to make the work in the drama group fun by working along with the group and by not making too heavy demands on the group members.

Several leaders liked to use pantomime or some simpler form of drama to start a group. One of them said that pantomime helped them get a feel of acting and enabled her to get to know the group better. She did not select her plays until she did know the group fairly well. She liked to encourage play writing.

One of the other leaders who started with pantomime first had the group read together a play before starting work on it. She selected a number of plays and if the group did not seem to be really interested in them as they read them over she found another one. During the reading of the play every one had a chance to read. (In some of the instances mentioned above only a few were selected to read.) She accepted the ideas of members with regard to interpretation of the parts and explained things in the play to them which they might not know. She was extremely accepting of each member's contribution to the reading of the play although



some of them did not read very well.

One of the leaders interviewed, who had had a good deal of experience with drama groups, said that she liked to start a group off first of all with a feeling of rapport. The first thing she was interested in was building a group feeling. She wanted them to feel at ease with each other because she felt that that is a good basis for dramatic work. She liked to work with a group not by telling them how to do something but by touching off a spark in them so that they felt free to express themselves. She stated that one of the most important assets for a dramatics leader is that she should be sensitive to the group. She considered that the group has different feelings and moods on different nights and believed that there should be time taken to react to these different moods. She did not feel that a leader does very good work if she gets angry with a group. She felt that a good sense of humor is a definite asset. She had collected a number of interesting and humorous stories about different phases of dramatic work. These she brought in when a tense feeling in the group or disorganized session seemed to call for them.

In this discussion of the method of procedure it may be noted that at this point of the work there is an opportunity for quite a bit of creativity. The leaders who were most insecure in their work were the ones who did not allow creativity on the part of the group members. This tendency

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is probably generally true in all education and was apparent in this study. The four leaders who did encourage creativity had all had specialized drama training. However, two of the leaders who were dictatorial with their groups had also had specialized training; but, these two leaders had not had any particular group work training or experience. They were using their work with groups in settlement houses as a possible path to stage work or merely as experience in directing plays. The four leaders who allowed for creativity mentioned several times that they were extremely interested in people, or that they were more interested in people than in drama itself. The leaders who did not seem to have any definite goals in the way of creativity and yet were not dictatorial seemed quite insecure with their groups. They did not seem to know exactly what they were trying to do. Their work with their groups seemed variable.

#### Casting Methods

In professional drama a person is usually put into a part for which he is most suited according to the demands of the character to be portrayed. He is selected for the part he can best represent to the audience without consideration for his own needs. In group work there is an opportunity to do more in the way of casting. There should be an effort made in group work to put people in parts which will be



helpful to them and still retain good drama standards. Since the basic proposition of dramatics as a method in group work is that the individuals worked with are of greater importance than a polished performance, casting methods are an important aspect of this study. Something should be said here about the procedure often followed of letting the group members cast their own play. There have been positions stated on both sides of this question by group workers.

It may be necessary, through lack of time, for the coach to use arbitrary choice in some of the roles, but try-outs where the group chooses by vote are more democratic and educational.<sup>5</sup>

The actual casting of the parts was done as late as possible. Each actor was chosen primarily because of his need for playing a special part. Experience has shown that many a child has found himself as the result of acting the right part of the right play under the right leadership.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps no rule can be set for individual cases on this point. The important thing is that the casting be geared to the needs of the individual involved. If the leader does the casting he should check himself to be sure that he is casting with the needs of the individual basic in his mind. If the group casts the play by vote the leader needs to be very skillful to determine that this casting shall not be

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Leader: Casting methods in the agencies studied varied greatly. In some cases they seemed helpful to the individual and in some cases they were either not helpful or detrimental to personality growth. The discussion of the methods used will be divided into two parts: groups in which the leader cast the play and groups in which the group members voted on the cast. When the leader casts a play he may do so for expediency or he may do so because he feels that he knows best which individual should take each part. His decisions may be based on what is good for the play or what is good for the individual. In the interviews for the study leaders were asked what methods they used for casting.

Leader: In one case the leader said that he had seen the group members around and knew which ones had the ability to do certain parts. The evening this group was visited the leader and the group members waited around for quite a while for the boy who had the important part in the skit. He was the master of ceremonies, carried half of the dialogue when other speaking parts were introduced and sang a solo with the rest of the group coming in on the chorus. They had to wait for him this evening because he had been barred from the building, presumably for not complying with the rules. The leader finally substituted some one else for the part. He called for volun-

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teers and selected the boy who seemed to be talking the loudest. As a part of this show there was a dance. The two boys who were scheduled to do it did not know how. The leader did not try to show them but asked if there was some one else who knew. A number of boys volunteered and the leader selected two of them; one was the boy who was already master of ceremonies. He, however, did not know how and was pushed aside for some one else who thought he did. In this case the leader selected all the parts and the boys pleaded with him to be selected. The aim of the leader seemed to be to develop star performers and the motivation of the participants to gain recognition.

In another group the leader chose the parts after the girls she picked read them. She asked one girl if she wanted to read a part. The girl did not answer right away and the leader said to her, "Well, say yes or no; just don't look at me." It seemed to the interviewer that the girl questioned was a shy girl who wanted to read but did not have the security to say that she did. She was not given a part to read and later left the group early. Some girls were reading parts for the second time while some had not read at all. One girl who was a poor reader had the part taken away after two or three speeches. When the leader was asked about her casting methods she said that she did as much type casting as possible. She said that she had tried to give girls parts in this play who had not had them in a previous play but there was a

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powerful clique in the group who insisted they should have the best parts. They had made it very difficult for the leader when she tried to include the other girls and so she had given in to them.

The leader of another group cast the play by asking girls who were interested in the parts whether they had ever been in plays before, whether they thought they could talk loud enough and whether they would be willing to learn the lines. She seemed primarily interested in getting people to fill in and work on a play for which there were more parts than people interested. The casting was done on a piece-meal basis without very much consistency or continuity.

Another leader stated that she liked to cast to type because a child feels that he is more of a success when the role that he works on is within his powers. She stated that she tried to make all she can of all characters. She would put in extra characters if there were people left over who had a real interest in being in the play.

One leader encouraged every one interested in a certain part to read it. She described the character carefully before work is done. She was more interested in voice than appearance in casting. If a person in her group has a physical problem of some sort she would think twice before casting him, as she would not want him to be laughed at for that irregularity. She felt that it would be important for that



person to have something to do, however, if he were not to go on the stage. He would be the stage man or a scenic designer if he so desired.

Another leader stated that it is her principle to "Bring a child forward through drama in the area in which he is backward." Social service reasons were in back of her casting methods. For example, a deaf and dumb child was cast in a non-speaking part so that he could be a part of the group expressing himself in his own way. A Negro girl was a princess in one play. A child with poor posture was chosen for the king so that he would have to stand up straight. A boy who read poorly was given a part and helped with his reading through the work on the play. The leader seemed to know the individuals and their backgrounds very well and took them into consideration when necessary to help the children in the play.

Casting in one group was half way between casting by the leader and casting by the group. According to their leader the group, before they started work on plays, had learned "to criticize and diagnose each other's work critically, understandingly, lovingly and sympathetically." They all discussed the casting of a play and the leader encouraged them to say that they disagree with her if they do. The leader guided the group's thinking if necessary with such remarks as, "She'll gain so much by having this part." The final decision rested with the leader but the group had had a voice in it.



Two other leaders had their groups cast by vote. One leader said that she tried to keep the same popular child from being the star each time but that she always was the star at first. She mentioned one instance when a tall girl was given a role which emphasized her tallness, which was out of proportion for her age. She seemed willing at first but when the time for the play came she did not appear and had not been in a dramatics group since. She was put in the role for a comedy effect and said that she did not come the day of the play because she thought it was silly.

In the other group in which casting was done by the group the leader did not seem to make any attempt to guide the group. She was not familiar with the play or the parts in it and looked it over during the meeting while the girls sat and watched. She told them a little about each part before the girls tried out for it. At certain times she selected only one or two girls to try out while some did not have any chance to do so. Some parts were selected by the leader rather than the vote of the group. During the try-outs the leader had the attitude of professional theater toward the girls. She would interrupt them in the middle of a speech if she thought she had heard enough. The girls did not know each other very well. The voting seemed to be quite easily swayed and several counts had to be taken before the girls were sure whom they wanted to vote for. When there was a tie, two of the girls' names were written on paper and they drew to see

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who would have the part. They started going over the play before it was completely cast. At this point some of the girls had two parts while some had none at all. Those who had no parts had nothing to do but sit and watch. Two of them wanted to go home early and tried to get one of the girls who had a part to go with them. They said they had to be somewhere but the girl who had a part insisted that they did not. In this group also the main drive on the part of the members seemed to be for recognition. This feeling was aided by the leader, who emphasized the amounts different characters in the play had to say. perhaps their families well. There were cases in which Thus, in the larger number of groups studied, the leader casts the plays. Only two cast by vote of the group, and in neither of these cases did the plays seem helpfully cast. Some of the girls having two parts and some having none, and the sensitive, tall girl in a part emphasizing her height are cited as examples. Skillful leadership could have probably prevented both of these examples of poor casting. In the case of casting by both the group and the leader the method seemed quite satisfactory because of the training of the group and the skill of the leader in understanding the needs of the individuals in the group.

In the six groups studied where the play was cast by the leader, examples of both good and bad casting were to be found. Some of the most vicious casting was found in these instances. In one case one boy was almost the whole show

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while the others sat around and watched and were supposed to laugh at the clever lines this boy was given to say. In another case the leader said that a powerful subgroup had prevented her giving parts to those who had not had them before. In both of these instances it appeared that the leaders either did not know of the needs of individuals in a group, or did not know how to go about meeting them.

In others of the groups studied in which the leader cast the play some of the most helpful casting was found. Some of the best work was done where the leader knew the individuals and perhaps their families well. There were cases in which through skillful casting the leader could make up to a child some of the inadequacies he had found in his home or school life.

On the whole it would seem that the interests and skill of the leader were the most important things when it came to casting. In the groups where the leader seemed uninterested or bored the casting did not fulfil the needs of the individuals. The leaders who seemed genuinely interested in the people in their groups worked toward their interests and needs in casting as well as in other ways.

between was their own \* \* \*

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Charlotte Chorprenking "Contrasting Values of the  
Drama and Festival in Group Work," p. 356.



### Disciplinary Problems

Disciplinary problems formed another area of study considered under the general heading of group work aspects of dramatics. With something like a play where there is a specific job to be done certain problems of discipline may arise. Here again the general principles of group work are to be considered. The group must get enjoyment through coming to rehearsals and dramatic group meetings, yet the group can be offered more than an opportunity for having a good time. Here is a chance to help a group see a project through and take responsibility. Each member should have a certain job to do which is essential to the group as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Group leaders were asked how they handled disciplinary problems, and groups were observed in action with reference to this point.

Only one leader stated that she did not have any disciplinary problems. She felt that the people who worked in her groups were really interested and therefore did not fool around. The groups were made up of older adolescents. However, this leader usually only worked with the group as they selected the play, cast it, and finally presented it. The work in between was their own.

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<sup>7</sup> Charlotte Chorpenning "Contrasting Values of the Drama and Festival in Group Work," p. 356.



A number of leaders set down rules. One leader made it clear that those in a play must come to rehearsals or they would lose their parts. She might ask an individual to leave if he talked too much. Another leader said that she would ask a child to leave the group or sit in a corner if he did not behave. She admitted that this had not worked well and if the behavior persisted she might talk it over with the head of the department to get some understanding of the reasons for misbehavior. A third leader stated that she had told the children that if any of them were absent or late three times they would be out of the group. If they talked during the meetings they were asked to focus their attention on the person performing.

Another group tried to maintain a schoolroom discipline to a certain extent. Those without speaking parts were "dismissed" after a certain part of the rehearsal had taken place. However, his discipline did not seem to be too effective. He had asked the boys a number of times not to play the piano but some one started in every time he went out of the room.

When asked how she handled disciplinary problems one leader said that she just lectured the girls. She said that she had only been with the group a little while, and they were just seeing what they could get away with. Throughout the rehearsal she corrected them in an annoyed way. She told them she would do something "drastic" to them if they came to the meeting with gum.



Another leader stated that she liked to emphasize the team work idea when working with a group. If a child misbehaved she would tell him that his part would be given to some one else. She did not believe that a child who does not show interest should be urged to be in plays.

One leader mentioned the fun the children had in doing dramatics. They had not had dramatics at the house in a number of years, and the children seemed very happy to have it again. If a child selected for a part did not come to several rehearsals the leader visited his home to see if there was a good reason for his not coming. She had two casts in mind but liked to stick to the original cast because the members of that cast were picked for special reasons.

Another leader felt that it was important for the group to have fun and for the leader to have a sense of humor. She thought it especially important that the leader be aware of different group feelings on different nights and be able to fit in with them. She felt that she could get more done with the group in this way than if she were a strict disciplinarian. This group did a great deal of entertaining outside the walls of the agency.

In this phase of the study it was noted that often leaders who were insecure with their groups had the most trouble with disciplinary problems and handled them in the poorest manner. They would often ask the interviewer for

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suggestions on how they should do the work. One leader who gave her group lectures asked the interviewer to talk to the girls too and tell them how they should act.

In an earlier chapter the theoretical values of dramatics as a method in group work were discussed. It may be well now to consider the values and limitations of this method as it is used in the agencies studied. For purposes of discussion these values will be considered under the following headings: social, aesthetic and therapeutic values. The heading "social values" will include such things as learning to get along with others in the group, as well as an increasing understanding of different people and an awareness of social problems. A deepened aesthetic and artistic appreciation and a broadening of horizons will be considered under the topic aesthetic values. Therapeutic values are evidences of individual personality growth.

#### Social Values

In every group studied but one the leader seemed to feel that there were social values which could be fostered through the use of dramatics. The leader in most cases felt that the group was helped to gain in poise and cooperation. In the other group there was little opportunity for coopera-



## CHAPTER V

### VALUES AND LIMITATIONS OF DRAMATICS

#### AS A METHOD IN GROUP WORK

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#### Social Values

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tion as each member was out for himself to get a starring role. When the leader was asked if he felt that dramatics had any particular values as a method of working with groups he replied that it was a good way to get up enthusiasm.

Some of the social values mentioned by different leaders when interviewed are as follows: "Drama can create a good group feeling with tolerance and understanding among the members. Here is a place where background and fancy clothes do not make much difference."

"People in a dramatics group have the experience of working with other people. The theater is a disciplinarian. A person has to be attentive and listen to what another person is saying."

"Dramatics can get a young adolescent away from the sophistication of the movies."

One leader, however, who mentioned that drama was of value in helping children cooperate with each other and work together, gave them practically no opportunity for that in her work with the group. Things were put on a competitive basis. The group started their casting before they had an opportunity to know each other and to build any sort of group feeling. In one other case also the actions of the leader with her group did not seem to bear out her statements as to what she was trying to do for and with the group.



Drama can help agency workers instill in the group members an increased understanding and tolerance of other people.

Vastly more important than the attitude toward dramatics is the great number of other attitudes which are constantly in the process of building: attitudes toward standards of right and wrong, toward existing institutions,<sup>1</sup> toward qualities of character and personality.<sup>1</sup>

A number of leaders mentioned some of these values and attitudes in their work. One leader who works full time with her agency said that because she worked with that agency she had a responsibility to see that material which furthered the purposes and policies of the agency was used whenever possible. She cited a case where she had selected a play around a general theme. She used both white and Negro girls in the cast. No mention was made or suggested in the play that any of the girls were any different from the others.

Another leader who worked with a group who selected their own plays found that they had chosen a play which depicted an undemocratic attitude toward a Negro character. She was able to get them to think through their own attitude on this point and asked them if they really wanted to have that as part of the play. The boys decided to use another play.

One leader stated that she tried to bring an international note into her work no matter how young the children

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<sup>1</sup> Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 28.



are. She found that she could not blend races in her work but worked with each group separately for the time being.

The other leaders interviewed did not mention any social values of this type that they might find through the use of dramatics.

### Aesthetic Values

Since drama in the true sense of the word is an art, certain aesthetic values may be looked for in its use as a method in group work. "Drama is an art in itself which has, in common with all other arts, the primary purpose of opening new vistas of truth and beauty to the sons of men."<sup>2</sup> This may take the form of a deepened appreciation of its artistic elements and perhaps also of music, which is often an accompaniment of drama. It may take the form simple of broadening the horizons of the individuals in a group. Keeping this value in mind the leader should not work as a professional dramatist but keep good artistic taste in mind and not be satisfied, or let the group be satisfied, with sloppy work. "Encouragement is desirable and even necessary, but it should be a stimulus to further achievement."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pearl LeCompte, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Winifred Ward, op. cit., p. 27.



One leader liked to start work with very young children by using stories which are on their level and yet unfamiliar to them, and so help them broaden their horizon in that way. With older groups she made a special effort to find really interesting material for them. She felt that in the schools the boys and girls had been required to do a certain amount of reading but the desire to read had not been instilled in them. As a part of her work with them she wanted to help them find a real interest in their own reading.

Another leader liked to develop an appreciation for worth-while material among her groups by sometimes suggesting that they dramatize one scene of a good play rather than a trite one-act play. She stated that she would like to lift the group's taste to a higher level without their realizing it. She felt that dramatics could definitely broaden the horizons of group members because of the mere fact that they have the opportunity to do something creative, and have the experience of working with other people in close harmony.

To use music of good quality as well as drama selected according to good standards was the aim of another drama leader interviewed. She felt that the aesthetic values of drama are even further exemplified through the use of music. She also felt she had a responsibility to do a sound job of dramatic technique which would serve to build up the taste of the group members so that they would become discriminating in other fields.

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In the other groups studied there was no special emphasis on the aesthetic aspects of dramatics or on the broadening of the horizons of the group members. In one group the material selected seemed out of the range of interest of the group members and some of it in rather poor taste. However, in the other cases the material and methods seemed trite and non-descript rather than definitely bad for the group.

#### Therapeutic Values

Therapeutic values as considered in this study are those benefits that so-called normal children may gain from an experience in a drama group. This study does not attempt to deal with work with problem children such as might be found in therapy groups. Naturally every experience in a drama group may not be of value to a child. Some experience may be detrimental. Some of the theoretical potential values were discussed in an earlier chapter, and we may now consider which of these potential values were actually found in the agencies studied. The study does not attempt to evaluate the work done so much as to point out what different opportunities for personality growth leaders made use of, and to show approximately the weight of this emphasis in the total picture of the work.

For this part of the study leaders were not asked bluntly whether they thought there were any therapeutic values



connected with their work. They were asked the general question concerning whether they felt there were any special values to be found in dramatics. They were also asked specifically how they would handle especially shy or overaggressive individuals in their work. The methods the leader actually used were noted when the groups were visited.

One leader when asked if he found any particular values connected with work with groups in dramatics asked in reply, "Values for whom, the group members?" He seemed to have no recognition of the shy and aggressive traits of the group members although some had been barred from the building for aggressive behavior and some simply sat in the corner. He did not seem to understand the ego needs of individual members as some were made the whole center of attention for other members of the group to applaud. The other members had no other job and no other significance in the group than that. It was the leader who made all the decisions, and there was little opportunity for activity other than on the competitive level - a competition for prestige.

Another group leader felt that through the use of dramatics an individual could gain a certain amount of poise and lose some of his shyness. When asked how she would treat an overly aggressive child the leader replied that she would give him warnings that he would have to leave the group, and make him leave if the aggressive behavior persisted. She would have

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a shy child perform with the rest, not the first, however, and tell her to act her age and not be childish. In her work she seemed to have little understanding of the needs of a child, as was shown by her selection of those to perform and her abrupt treatment of them.

Another leader seemed to understand the differences in personality needs but did not seem to know how to deal with them. When interviewed she said she would put a shy child in a play to give him a sense of importance, but she would not force him. During the group meeting visited she talked abruptly to another child and then ignored a shy child. She did nothing to make it easier for that shy child to participate. If a child was overaggressive she said that she would not think about it too much. She mentioned that one of the girls was like that and she always had to give her one of the main parts because she did not like small parts. She had caused the leader a great deal of trouble when she was put into a smaller part. The leader did not seem to be able to work through with the girls the type of thing that would be valuable to them according to their individual needs. Her only way of working with the group was to lecture them on the things that she considered they did wrong.

The leader of another group stated that dramatics could bring out children who are in the background. However, she did not feel that there were any shy children in the neighborhood in which she worked. In this particular group there did

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This rather neutral quality was found in another group also. The leader did not seem to know the group members well. She stated that she would try disciplining an overaggressive child and if that did not work she would talk over the trouble with the head of the department. A shy child would be put in the play but not in a part beyond her capacity, according to the leader. However, the casting in this group is done by the children themselves, who may or may not have an understanding of the needs of the individuals involved. At one time, during the visit to the group, a shy child came to the leader privately and said she did not feel right about saying a certain line. The leader told her that she did not have to say that line. Later on, however, she said to the same shy child, "You should show more emotion when you say that." Another leader when she found an individual underacting asked her to try to think about what she was trying to get across.

The other four groups studied seemed to have some definite positive values for the individual involved. This usually stemmed from an understanding leader with skill and

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was not confined to any particular age group.

One leader liked to have young children play statues at times. They found real enjoyment in this "game" and it seemed to cool them off when they were nervous and confused. She found the children in the neighborhood quite often nervous, confused, and without imaginations stimulated; and she felt that drama was an effective way to work through these things. The casting of this particular leader, mentioned in the section on casting, was especially geared to the needs of the individuals in the group. The leader knew the individuals well and seemed to be really able to work with them through this method.

One leader who had a great deal to say on the value of drama to the individual mentioned a number of specific techniques which she had found helpful. She felt that the whole group should not be penalized for an individual if it spoiled the experience of the other members. She used the teamwork idea for both the aggressive and shy. The aggressive child was helped to think about his responsibility to the rest of the group while to the shy child the point stressed was that the play was a game for fun and not something in which he was to be judged. This leader had found dramatics an excellent way to hold teen-agers together. It had the good effect of lessening emotional tension in them. She felt that it was good for them to get a sense of drama outside of their own lives.

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The leader of another group felt that she could understand from observation and get to know which individuals in the group had been the center of attention at home and which ones had been pushed into the background. She tried to make up some of this to them in the drama group. The shy were helped to find some self-confidence and those who had always had attention found that they must work with and accept other players.

Another leader interviewed felt that through drama an individual could be helped to a new sense of freedom for himself developed through real creative expression. This leader also made special reference to individual needs in her discussion of casting methods.

In this study of therapeutic values or the meeting of the special needs of individuals in the group it was noted that the leaders who had a good secure relationship to their groups seemed better able to understand and handle individual needs.

As studied the leaders were receiving definite drama training. This, however, was professional drama training and did not include any group work training. These leaders were both quite distasteful with their groups, indicating a lack of security and a lack of security with the group members. In another case the leader had had neither drama nor group work training. It was in these groups that inadequate work was found.

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## CHAPTER VI

### FACTORS PRESENTING DIFFICULTIES

During the course of the study a number of factors not conducive to the best group work techniques were noted. It would seem wise to present them at this point.

A prime factor seemed to be lack of leadership. Four agencies contacted had nothing in drama specifically because no leadership of any kind could be found for it. In the agencies studied the dramatic and group work as presented in this thesis sometimes did not meet good group work standards. In one group the leader came to the agency to do another type of work. She had had no training in dramatics but was doing work of this sort because the agency had always had a dramatic group and needed some one to lead it. Her work suffered not from a lack of group work experience but from a lack of confidence that she could do work with a drama group. In two agencies studied the leaders were receiving definite drama training. This, however, was professional drama training and did not include any group work training. These leaders were both quite dictatorial with their groups, indicating a lack of security and a lack of understanding of the group members. In another case the leader had had neither drama nor group work training. It was in these groups that inadequate work was found.



The other five leaders interviewed had had some sort of dramatic training, coupled with group work experience. In most of these cases the study of drama had given them a security for work with their groups. Three of these leaders expressed spontaneously a keen and sincere interest in people. It was this combination that produced what seemed to be the best group work through drama. However, people of this type do not seem to be common.

Another limitation was found in the orientation of the drama leader to the agency. Several times an agency executive had a very different idea of what was going on in a drama group from what actually was. Questioning revealed that the drama leader had had some orientation to the agency and the leader thought she knew what was expected of her in her work with individuals. In some cases definite rules regarding work with the group, casting for example, were given to the leader. The interpretation of these rules and the using of them was left to the leader with varying results, such as are likely to follow rules without a true understanding behind them.

A limitation of rather surprising dimensions was the lack of continuity in group leadership. Only two of the leaders studied had been with their groups longer than six months. One group had had three different leaders in succession during the production of a single Christmas play.

A limitation so well known that mention of it is rather superfluous is the lack of adequate published material with



which to work. It is difficult for a leader to select good material when there is so little from which to choose. Original work on the part of the children is valuable but in most cases the leaders felt that it was too time-consuming and that they lacked the training and experience to carry such a project through. However, a great deal of spontaneous work was found in the story acting groups of younger children. The practice of letting the children bring in plays seems to be throwing the whole burden on to the children. In some cases they may be able to find something they are really interested in doing, but it is likely to be a rather frustrating experience for them without some guidance from the leader.

In some cases the children are inaccessible for any really satisfying dramatic work, which according to its nature requires a certain continuity. One agency reported that the children had to attend school movies every other week on the day set for the rehearsal. There was no other day to which the rehearsal could be moved.

Pressure to show results was a limitation found in a few agencies. If the drama leader was hounded to have his group put on a star performance and show off to the rest of the house or outsiders it was difficult for him to work with the individuals of his group.



CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown how in selected group working agencies in Boston, drama is used as a method. Various aspects of dramatic work were considered separately, and the method and technique used in each aspect by each agency were discussed.

The study did not include a large enough number of agencies so that conclusions can be drawn about the proportion of valuable or meaningless work done with people through this method. A study of this scope, however, is valuable in showing some of the range of work done and the possibilities which are being followed through. Also, through this type of study, it is possible to discover, when weakness occurs in the work, some of the limitations and conditions responsible. Furthermore, on the basis of the groups studied it is possible to lay down certain principles for the work which seem to produce more valuable results for the individual and the group.

We may consider first of all the leadership. That this is one of the most important single factors is indicated by the fact that time after time in the discussion of other aspects of dramatics as a method the attitude, interests and capabilities of the leader played a most important role. In the cases studied the leader who seemed to be of most value to the group was the leader who had security with them - often stemming from



real drama training - and one who had a vital and sincere interest in people and an understanding of the work she was doing with them. Both of these factors were present in the leaders studied who did good sound work with their groups. Presumably the first factor, a basic security, is not dependent on drama training as drama training alone did not produce it in others of the leaders included in the study.

A certain knowledge of techniques and methods is valuable to the leader, however, especially in such aspects of the work as the selection of material, the method of procedure, and casting. The conclusion that is indicated by this study as to the selection of material is that it should be a dual responsibility of the leader and the group with the leader acting as a resource because of wider experience and knowledge. In other words it would seem that the group should not be given the full responsibility for selection nor should the leader do the whole selection without at least consulting the group.

The work on the play seemed to be of most value when it allowed for freedom and creativity on the part of the group members. Casting may be one of the leader's best opportunities for helping the individual in the group. It seemed helpful for the leader to know the group well and to be aware of individual needs at this point especially. In the area of discipline it was found in the groups studied that the leaders who knew their groups well and had a basic security with them had fewer disciplinary problems and knew how to handle effectively those that



did arise.

The value in the use of drama in group work that the leader was most aware of, if he were aware of any, was social. Perhaps all the individual gained from certain of these groups was a certain amount of experience in working with other people. However, in some of the cases studied even this working with other people was on a negative basis. It was also noted that in cases where no social values were found no aesthetic or therapeutic values were present.

The study of values helps make one aware of the real possibilities which are being reached in some cases. As one leader said, "Drama is just a tool, but you can do some wonderful things with it." Instances found of understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, of freedom of expression for an individual, of a deepened aesthetic appreciation would indicate signs of a method with vast possibilities and too valuable for misuse.

In conclusion the writer would say to agency leaders that if they can find a person with a sincere interest in people and an ability to work with them, and can help this person to gain some knowledge of drama technique and the needs of an individual, they will have a leader who can bring true values to their drama groups.

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Approved,

Richard H. Conant  
Dean



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

I. Questions asked the agency leader.

Is the drama leader a full time staff member, a paid part-time worker, or a volunteer?

Does he do any other type of work in the agency?

What background does he have for this type of work?

How was he oriented to the agency? Is he familiar with the aims and policies for volunteers?

APPENDIX

What types of groups are there in the agency?

II. Questions to be asked of the drama leader.

How are the plays chosen?

What methods do you use for casting?

What happens to the individuals who do not fit into a part in a specific play?

How do you handle disciplinary problems such as lateness to rehearsals and digressions during scenes?

Do you keep anything in particular about the background of the individuals in the group?

What would you do with a child who talked continually and bored the others around?

What would you do with one who would hardly open his mouth?

Are you ever able to get the group to discuss the play, why certain characters act the way they do, for instance?

Is there any special value attached to the use of dramatization?

Is this a special interest group or a friendship group?

If dramatization is a special interest group does the group do anything else together?



## III. Questions to be answered through group observation.

## APPENDIX

Number, sex and age range of the group.

To what extent does the leader appear to understand the group feelings and interactions in his group?

Does the group appear to enjoy themselves?

## I. Questions asked the agency leader.

Is the leader dictatorial, chaotic or cooperative in Is the drama leader a full time staff member, a paid part-time worker, or a volunteer?

To what extent is creativity encouraged on the part Does he do any other type of work in the agency?

What background does he have for this type of work?

How was he orientated to the agency? Is he familiar with its aims and policies? (for volunteer)

How are the shy and dominant members treated in What types of dramatic work are done in the agency?

## II. Questions to be asked of the drama leader.

How are the plays chosen?

What methods do you use for casting?

What happens to the individuals who do not fit into a part in a specific play?

How do you handle disciplinary problems such as lateness to rehearsals and digressions during them?

Do you know anything in particular about the background of the individuals in the group?

What would you do with a child who talked continually and bossed the others around?

What would you do with one who would hardly open his mouth?

Are you ever able to get the group to discuss the play, why certain characters act the way they do, for instance?

Do you find any special values attached to the use of dramatics?

Is this a special interest group or a friendship group?

If dramatics is a special interest group does the group do anything else together?

APPENDIX

SCHEDULE

I.

Questions asked the agency leader.

Is the drama leader a full time staff member, a paid part-time worker, or a volunteer?

Does he do any other type of work in the agency?

What background does he have for this type of work?

How was he orientated to the agency? Is he familiar with its aims and policies? (for volunteer)

What types of dramatic work are done in the agency?

II.

Questions to be asked of the drama leader.

How are the plays chosen?

What methods do you use for casting?

What happens to the individuals who do not fit into a part in a specific play?

How do you handle disciplinary problems such as lateness to rehearsals and digressions during them?

Do you know anything in particular about the background of the individuals in the group?

What would you do with a child who talked continually and passed the others around?

What would you do with one who would hardly open his mouth?

Are you ever able to get the group to discuss the play, why certain characters act the way they do, for instance?

Do you find any special values attached to the use of dramatics?

Is this a special interest group or a friendship group?

If dramatics is a special interest group does the group do anything else together?

## III. Questions to be answered through group observation.

Number, sex and age range of the group.

To what extent does the leader appear to understand the group feelings and interactions in his group?

Does the group appear to enjoy themselves?

Is the leader dictatorial, chaotic or cooperative in his direction?

To what extent is creativity encouraged on the part of the members in the development of their parts?

What efforts are in evidence that would seem to broaden the experience and imagination of the group members?

How are the shy and dominant members treated in relation to their shyness or dominance?

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III. Questions to be answered through group observation.

Number, sex and age range of the group.

To what extent does the leader appear to understand the group feelings and interactions in his group?

Does the group appear to enjoy themselves?

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To what extent is creativity encouraged on the part of the members in the development of their parts?

What efforts are in evidence that would seem to broaden the experience and imagination of the group members?

How are the shy and dominant members treated in relation to their shyness or dominance?

II. Questions to be asked of the group leader.

How are the play's themes?

What methods do you use for casting?

What happens to the individuals who do not fit into a part in a specific play?

How do you handle disciplinary problems such as lateness to rehearsals and absences during rehearsals?

Do you know anything in particular about the personality of the individuals in the group?

What would you do with a child who talked back and bossed the others around?

What would you do with one who would never open his mouth?

Are you ever able to get the group to discuss the play's certain characters and the way they feel about them?

Do you find any special needs arising in your group?

Is this a special leader group or a special group?

If discussion is a special interest group from the group the members also together?

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