A study of ten selected cases of children who presented behavior problems at Lincoln Elementary School in Gary, Indiana September, 1950 - February 1951

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A STUDY OF TEN SELECTED CASES OF CHILDREN WHO PRESENTED BEHAVIOR
PROBLEMS AT LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN GARY, INDIANA
SEPTEMBER, 1950 - FEBRUARY, 1951

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
LOUIS WILLIAMS

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
AUGUST 1951
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Any study relative to the treatment of a child involves an objective interest in the child. Harry Baker\(^1\) postulated four characteristics of children with behavior problems. First, the behavior expressed by the child is often humiliating and aggravating to his parents, teachers, and peers. Second, his reactions are not a manifestation of deliberate hostility, but his way of resolving the conflict that has resulted in his discomfort and general unhappiness. Third, his attitudes and feelings caused by the conflicts in his interpersonal relationships often will be reactivated in situations similar to those in which they had their genesis. Fourth, in very severe cases of behavior disorders, the reaction pattern is merely symptomatic of a deeper underlying conflict. Coupled with an understanding of these factors, individualization seems essential to meet the needs of the child who is having difficulty in school relationships and achievement.

One outstanding development in this direction was the introduction of the visiting teacher to the school setting which emphasized an individual study of the child, and with it, an approach that augmented the skill of the teacher in dealing with the child with behavior problems. The subsequent development of social work in schools gave substance to a program for meeting specialized needs of those children who found it difficult to make an adequate adjustment.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Harry J. Baker, *The Diagnosis and Treatment of Behavior-Problem Children* (New York, 1936), pp. 4-6.

Following the pioneering efforts of private agencies, a number of public school authorities introduced visiting teacher projects into the publicly supported school systems. The greatest impetus, however, came from the program inaugurated by the Commonwealth Fund of New York. One part of its program was focused upon the National Committee on Visiting Teachers, affiliated with the Public Education Association composed of leaders in the fields of education and social work.\(^1\) After having contributed for eight years to a demonstration of social service in the schools, the Fund withdrew from the field in 1930. Many of its demonstration centers continued visiting teacher work as a permanent part of the school system.\(^2\)

Within the next decade and despite the depression, an increasing number of school systems inaugurated visiting teacher service because more, not less, social services were needed in the schools. Educators made clear the importance of understanding a child's emotional life and meeting his needs. Thus success in school became more than an arbitrary intellectual standard. It consisted of an adjustment of a child to the experiences he was undergoing which meant that greater attention had to be paid to the growth needs of children in school.

The visiting teacher became a social worker in a school setting, a person whose job it was to help a child, a parent or a teacher with a problem centered in the school and the child's adaptation to its setting. As a social worker in the school, he was sometimes called a school counsellor, a home or school visitor, but by whatever name designated, his function was essentially that of helping with problems of school adjustment. He served as a member of the teacher's staff, sometimes teaching a class.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 175.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 176.
It was during the period that the visiting teacher program had its inception, 1906-1909, that the city of Gary, Indiana was founded. Yet, it was fourteen years later that this young city joined a host of others in establishing the small beginnings of a visiting teacher program. A Department of Attendance, which later became the Child Welfare Department, was established in the Gary Public Schools in 1920 and the spirit motivating its development stemmed from many sources. Since its beginning, the Department has developed into a most important adjunct of the school program in working with emotionally and socially disturbed children.

Purpose of the Study

This study attempted to ascertain the causes and factors underlying the behavior problems of ten school children and to understand the etiology of their problems relative to the adjustment of these children at home and in the school situation. Attention was focused upon the early development of the children to determine the kinds of satisfaction these children were seeking. In addition, it aimed to point out the attitudes of the parents, the school officials, and the children toward their behavior difficulties.

Method of Procedure

Data were obtained from case records of the ten children studied by means of a schedule. The psychologist was interviewed about the cases studied for the necessary information as to psychological data. Interviews were also held with the parents of the children and the principal of the school. These cases were obtained by means of direct referral from the school personnel because it was felt that the child constituted a behavior problem at school. Additional information was secured from reference

\[^1\]: Ibid., 174.
readings to supplement the study.

Scope and Limitations

The study was limited to ten children known to the Child Welfare Department of the public schools of Gary, Indiana during the period from September, 1950 to February, 1951. The children were pupils of Lincoln Elementary School, Gary, Indiana, and ranged from six to twelve years of age.

The writer recognized the limitations in evaluating the attitudes of the parents of the children studied because in an authoritative setting, attitudes were often colored by a desire or need to avoid further legal involvement. Much information was expressed by the parents in a routine fashion which seemed indicative of subtle resistance to the services rendered. Many of the parents associated the case work program of the school with welfare services about which they had preconceived, negative reactions. Moreover, in some cases, data pertaining to psychological materials were not available for research purposes.
CHAPTER II

PERTINENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDREN

The basis of maladaptive behavior lies in the family relationships. As one authority has pointed out, experience has made it clear that many of the symptoms, manifested in school behavior as well as failure in learning, result from situations existing in the home. Many family relationships with their accompanying tensions, are lacking in positive aspects and consequently, effect the mental and emotional development of a child. Broken home situations often contribute to maladjustment and behavior problems. Gillin points out that social maladaptive ways of behavior often result from broken homes, and many children are handicapped in their adjustments in their homes and schools. The broken home which may foster emotional insecurity is contributed to by economical conditions particularly if the mother had to work and cannot give proper supervision to her children.

Familial Factors

Of the ten children studied, only two children had both parents in their homes, in two other situations, there were stepfathers. In eight families, the natural mother was present, but in each of these homes, the father-person was absent. In two homes, neither of the parent persons were present, and in only one home studied, was the absence of the natural parent-person due to death, who was the mother.

Desertion was one factor responsible for the absence of father-persons from the home, with divorce causing the absence of the father in two families. The separation of the parents resulted in the deterioration of four

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1Jane F. Gulbert, The Visiting Teacher at Work (New York, 1929), p. 46.
families. In each instance, the child was living with the mother. In another family, one child was residing with his maternal grandparents.

The small sized family group was characteristic of the children studied. The maximum number of persons in the largest family was seven, and the minimum number in the smallest family was three. Siblings were present in all of the homes with the exception of three. In the remaining seven homes, three children had three siblings; in two four; in two only one. Three of the children studied were the oldest child in the family group.

Due to the absence of the father or a father-substitute in four homes of the children studied, the economic means of the family was somewhat limited. For example, in four fatherless homes, Aid to Dependent Children grants were given primarily as the sole sources of income. These benefits ranged from a minimum of $50.00 to a maximum of $122.00 monthly. The children who received these benefits resided in a public housing project which, to some extent, curtailed the rental expenditures of the parents as compared to rental charged by private real estate companies. In one family, the ADC allotment of $104.00 monthly was supplemented by a $280.00 income from a guardian, the children's grandfather.

There were six homes in which one of the parents was working, usually the father-person, but in only two homes both parents were working. The earnings of those employed ranged from a minimum of $200.00 a month to a maximum of $300.00. In spite of these reputed incomes, there was only one case in which the parents reported they were purchasing a home. The other families paid rentals for their living accommodations. The residential area in which the parents of six of the children lived formerly housed predominantly white residents, and many of those homes were aged and somewhat dilapidated.

Frequently, the educational status of an individual enhances his
economic opportunities. The majority of the parents of the children studied had Southern backgrounds and their educational opportunities had been limited, especially those who came from the rural areas. Consequently, many of the parents were limited as to occupational choice and employed either as domestics, or as laborers in the steel mills. Several parents were defensive about their educational achievements, and with some rationalization, adroitly pointed out their limitations as related to available educational opportunities.

The highest educational level attained by the parents was secondary schooling. Their educational achievements were as follows: three parents completed the twelfth grade; two, the eleventh grade; three, the ninth grade; one, the eighth grade; another the seventh grade; three the sixth grade; one the fifth grade; and one other parent, the fourth grade. The educational attainment of four parents was not available.

When there were persons other than the natural parents in the home, such as, step-parents or guardians, their educational attainments were similar to those of the parent-persons. For example, two step-fathers had completed the seventh and fifth grades respectively, and grandparents, who cared for one child, had completed the fourth grade.

Religious training in the home is considered as influence upon character building which tends to modify the behavior of an individual. However, over or under-emphasis of it can be harmful to the personality or ego structure of the individual. Among many of the children studied, there was a lack of religious influence and training, and most of the ten studied had never attended church or Sunday School or at least had not been in attendance so for many years. Regular Sunday School attendance was reported for only three of the ten children. Baker affirms that:

They hear no beliefs discussed and they are ignorant of the splendid moral lessons which are to be gleaned from the Bible stories....
It is rather, the absences of religious influences or the presence of badly presented religious forms which seem to contribute to the woes of behavior children.\(^1\)

Parents in four of the families stated that they had not affiliated themselves with any religious organizations. Of the remaining six families, the parents reported their religious denominations as follows: four Baptist, and two Church of God in Christ members. The parents who had no religious affiliations reported occasional church attendance.

Some indication of the parents' attitude toward the religious training of the children studied was illustrated by Donald. When Donald's mother was asked about Sunday School participation, she responded that she had been somewhat lax relative to this aspect of his activities. She stated that neither she nor Donald's father were affiliated with any church, but occasionally they attended church services.

Similarly, in the case of Roland, he seemingly liked to attend Sunday School and church services, and his mother made it compulsory that he attend services because she was a regular church goer herself. Ronald's mother felt that compulsory church attendance by him would serve somewhat as a modifying influence on his behavior.

Four of the children in this study have religious influence or at least a minimum of such training in their family groups. But the lack of religious training was not a major contributing factor to the personality disorders effecting the children studied. On the other hand, the attitude of the parent-people in their families toward religion and church attendance did tend to have some influence on the response of the children concerned.

Ages and Education

The chronological ages of the ten children ranged from six to twelve

\(^1\)Baker, op. cit., p. 304.
years. These children were in a latency period of their development, during which time it would have been expected that they would have been more out-going and socially motivated. During this period, children usually divert their interest away from their families, more outwardly to other persons, such as their playmates, teachers, or other adults. As they steer away from overt affections, their aggressive narcissistic responses should become increasingly linked up with their social experiences. In this process, they become more integrated socially and gradually gained control of their feelings. Two of the children studied were six years old at which age a child strives for some independence. The behavior of Dorothy and Mildred, both six years old, reflected much evidence of dependency. Dorothy showed symptoms of a hyperactive child with a great need for attention while encephalitic attacks effected the behavior of Mildred causing her to respond in an infantile manner. Because of the needs of these two children their behavior was more gross than was characteristic of their age group.

Three children were eight years old, a period characterized by a child trying to follow rules and respond to reasonable appeals. A child of this age is usually aware of himself as a person and seems proud or ashamed of his behavior. If trained, and if he has acquired some degree of ease with others, he can carry on a polite conversation and show thoughtfulness of others. He resents being ordered around and is prone to argue, alibi, or tells fibs rather than admit blame. He identifies strongly with parents, teachers, or an older child, depending on them for strength and protection.


as if they were a part of himself.\textsuperscript{1}

Donald and Frank, two eight-year-olds, were not responsive to reasonable appeals. They were rather resistant to reasonable appeals by their teachers, and consideration of others was not a part of their social skills. This was especially true of Donald who was very destructive of the property of others. On the other hand, Frank showed an attitude toward his teachers and elders, which reflected some difficulty in accepting authority.

Sidney and Samuel, nine years of age, could not be considered self-reliant or thoughtful of the wishes of others.\textsuperscript{2} Nor did they adopt the standards of their playmates relative to accepting criticism. On the contrary, Samuel was extremely adverse to criticism, constructive or otherwise. Whenever he was reprimanded by his teachers regarding his conduct, he sought to rationalize and point out that others were guilty of misconduct and were not reprimanded by the teachers. Samuel did not appear to have any concept of his difficulties especially as they pertained to his scholastic activities. He felt that his inability to do his class work was due to the school and not his learning ability. Although Sidney presented a problem different in nature from that of Samuel, in the classroom, he was similar that is, defiant and resistive to any form of authority.

One of the children studied was ten years old, one eleven years old, and one twelve years old, an age group which covers the gang stage\textsuperscript{3} in which reactions are frequently characterized by day dreams and fantasy life. John, Henry, and Roland, ages ten, eleven and twelve respectively, were in this age grouping and revealed no gang associations of any significance. They

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 138.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 139.

\textsuperscript{3}Young, op. cit., p. 377.
did not show evidences of indulgence in fantasy life to an extreme. Aggres-
sive and negativistic behavior was their chief response to the classroom
activity and experience.

A comparison of the chronological ages and grade placement of the chil-
dren studied pointed out great variances and discrepancies. Of the ten chil-
dren studied, only three were in the correct grade corresponding with the
age for that grade. Seven of the children were below the grade level com-
mensurate with their chronological ages. The case of Donald, previously
mentioned, showed the discrepancy existing as to age and grade. Donald was
eight years old and in the first grade or was two years retarded. His emo-
tional development in all probability had some bearing on his grade place-
ment in addition to a lag in his social maturation.

In the case of Sidney, a nine-year-old, who was in the second grade,
there was also retardation in his scholastic development. He appeared to
be emotionally disturbed and had been suspended from school indefinitely
because of his classroom difficulties which further retarded his educational
development. On the other hand, scholastic retardation could be attributed
to the mental or physical condition of a child. For example, Mildred, aged
six, was referred by her teachers to the school social worker because of
her "queer" behavior. However, Mildred had been suffering from encephalitic
attacks since she was two years old.

Health and Recreational Activities

Baker states that "health is primarily important in diagnosing behavior
difficulties of a child." The results may indicate first, "how his illness
affects his physical and personality growth, and second, how the attention
he receives during his periods of illness influences his emotional attitudes."¹

¹Baker, op. cit., pp. 121-122.
The physical health of the children studied was generally good according to their parents with possibly one or two exceptions.

However, mental health seemed greatly damaged; and fifty per cent of the children were suffering from "nervousness" in the opinion of their parents. Although, there were no gross physical defects among the ten children and no organic disturbances necessitating medical care, with the exception of Mildred, their emotional discomforts were reflected in somatic responses, such as bodily tensions, anxiety, and hyperactive reactions. James was an illustration of the emotional state affecting the health development of a child. He was nine years old, and considered augmentative, stubborn and resistive in his actions. As a result, he was referred to the school social worker. His mother felt that he was extremely nervous and had been for a considerable period of time, and in addition, James suffered from enuresis. His habit disturbances could be attributed to the emotional climate and home conditions under which he lived. Moreover, his relationship to his mother, who seemingly was an emotionally disturbed person, further agitated his ability to develop a wholesome and healthy response to what he was experiencing. After a series of traumatic experiences which have been referred to as "emotional habits," Sidney appeared to have developed very disturbed emotional reactions. This child was conditioned to a number of similar situations and his response became a habit.

A revitalizing affect upon the physical, mental, and emotional energies of an individual is recreation. Pleasure time activities of the family is a necessary item in the development of children. But, unfortunately

2Ibid., p. 67.
few recreational activities of a planned nature were engaged in by the parents of the children studied. Thus, these children failed to receive wholesome and adequate play time experience including what the home, the school, and the neighborhood provided.

Under its physical education program, however, the public school did offer some mode of recreation. But this was limited both as to time, supervision, and space. The family on the whole provided meager play time activities. Nevertheless, several of the homes included a radio, television set, or an automobile for family entertainments. These facilities helped to bring relief from the tensions of work and daily living, not only for the parents, but also for the entire family group.

The children residing in public housing projects had access to one or two recreational facilities, such as swings and sliding boards which served the purpose for outdoor use only. Indoor recreation equipment was not provided for the children anywhere in the immediate neighborhood. In spite of the lack of adequate play time facilities, there was a very low incidence of group association activity among the children studied.

The ten children studied had social and personal difficulties which some form of social life could have helped to alleviate.\(^1\)

Outlets for recreational activities named by the parents and children in this study, more times than not, included the movies, athletic games, such as baseball and football, playing cowboy, or "cops and robbers," bicycle and horseback riding, attending birthday parties, listening to the radio and viewing televised programs. Only three parents took their children out for recreational activities of any sort.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS PRESENTED IN THE HOME

It is generally agreed that the home is the basis of the personality structure of an individual. His early experience usually permeates his personality throughout the remainder of his life. Therefore, some knowledge of the home is essential to the study of the child. Leo Kanner claims that:

It is only natural that the home looms first and foremost among the situational factors which contribute to the molding of the child's personality. We have pointed out that the first fundamental period of childhood, that of elementary socialization, takes place entirely in the home and that second period is essentially one of progressive domestication, ushering the child into the ultimate task of communal adjustment.¹

Baker states that the family "with high ideals practiced in a wholesome way and without artificial strain, is not likely to have behavior problem children."²

The children considered in this study felt the impact of negative influences of their homes. The majority of the children in the home presented difficulties, not unlike many of those posed for the classroom teacher. For example, if a child showed conduct disturbances in the classroom, he showed one of a similar nature in the home. James illustrated the affects of a home atmosphere conditioned by an anxious mother-person.

Neurotic Traits

Eight-year-old James exhibited misconduct in the classroom, he was "hard to get along with" and was considered argumentative, stubborn, and resistive. However, his mother found him to be extremely nervous, and his nervousness

¹Kanner, op. cit., p. 87.
could in part be attributed to the fact that his mother was extremely nervous and was most anxious at the time of James' birth. James was bottle fed from birth until he reached the age of one, and he had been enuretic until he was seven years old. Overcrowdedness in the home accentuated James' emotional state, and his mother felt if more commodious living quarters were secured this would alleviate his nervousness somewhat because not enough play space was available for him and his three siblings to play.

Other factors which James' mother felt had a tendency to increase his emotional response were quarrels between the parents, excessive teasing by others and any type of war picture, movies or television, which James happened to see. The mere mention of the army, war, or loud noises tended to upset James to the extent of screaming. His mother could not account for his reacting in this acute manner. No medical or psychiatric advice relative to James' behavior had been sought by the parents, but his inconsistent handling and fears about what he was experiencing seemed to be suggested by the fact that his mother considered James "wild" and to his father he was a sort of "favorite child." He seemed more confused by his mother's method of discipline, because she frequently "yelled" at him during periods of excitement or tension; and because both parents were employed, James did not receive the security and attention which he seemed to need.

Since much of James' behavior was negativistic, it is possible that a considerable part of his behavior could be directly attributed to home conditions. Overcrowdedness in the home can be a definite factor which contributes to or aggravates the response of children. Where there is lack of space and privacy in the home the child is hampered in setting his own pace.¹ Not only were James' fears and feelings intensified because of living

arrangements, but also there was the absence of psychological security so necessary for the development of a balanced personality.

In the case of Sidney a nine-year-old, he was a transfer student to his present school and in the first grade. He was referred by his principal to the school social worker. Sidney was described as being resistive and hostile in his actions, repeatedly disturbing in the classroom. When spoken to, Sidney defended himself by regressing or retreating to mutism and simply refused to talk. On other occasions, when reprimanded because of his misconduct, Sidney usually pouted, became sullen and defiant, and talked back in a hostile manner. His parents were divorced, although his father deserted the family previously. Cultural implications were involved because Sidney had been rejected by his father on the basis of color. Prior to his birth his father had even questioned paternity and often "passed." His mother attempted to justify her feelings about his paternity and claimed that Sidney looked exactly like his father in every respect except his color. She also expressed some guilt about having been the cause of Sidney's emotional discomfort and recounted that when Sidney was three months old, she accidentally permitted him to fall while carrying him wrapped in a blanket. The maternal laxity in discipline in the home was reflected in Sidney's reaction to authority, and Sidney was very resistant to any form of adult control. However, he was usually punished by being whipped by a switch or a strap.

Sibling rivalry was evident between Sidney and his sister, Faye. He often fought her and felt that his mother was extremely partial toward her in comparison with her feelings and actions toward him. In addition, the social life in the home exposed Sidney to questionable activities and profanity which became a part of his behavior and incorporated as ideals for him. Sidney was unable to obtain a normal degree of security and self-
respect which is necessary for adequate adjustment. Atmosphere in the home may be such that not much is contributed to the development of a socially acceptable ego. Traumatic experiences seemed to have been common, and total rejection by his own sex in the person of his father was most damaging to Sidney's ego-structure.

Harsh and Schrickel writing on rejection state that "extreme, active hostility leads to cruelty, desertion, or ignoring of the child."¹ Then, as Gordon Hamilton points out, what the severely disturbed child needs is "great acceptance."² Denied paternal love and acceptance in the home for what he was, Sidney was, confused by the events which engulfed him. Sidney received little acceptance in his home. Furthermore, the emotional support he needed to reassure him was not forthcoming. There was no masculine ideal with whom to identify; instead, his relationships were in the main with female persons such as his mother, grandmother, and sister. Experiences with them were more or less negative ones.

Health Deficiency

On the other hand, Mildred, previously mentioned, was referred to the school social worker by her teacher who expressed concern relative to her "queer" behavior. Mildred was incoherent in her speech, seemingly could not speak three words in sequence and was over-active. Her ability to concentrate was somewhat limited and her attention-span was extremely short. Mildred had received her first school experience in Tennessee. When she entered school in Indiana, she was placed in the first grade. Later she was demoted to kindergarten where she was registered and referred to the

¹Harsh and Schrickel, op. cit., p. 116.
school social worker because of her apparent inability to learn. Her maternal uncle and aunt, who were her guardians, were responsible for her. Mildred suffered quite frequently from encephalitic attacks which caused her considerable pain every since she was two years old. She experienced these attacks most frequently during the spring and usually at night. When these seizures occurred at night, Mildred lost control of her speech completely, many times, it was far into the following day before she was able to talk. Mildred often would be walking along at home and then, suddenly lose her balance. No medical care or attention had been given her since the age of two.

Of the diseases known to produce changes in behavior, encephalitis has received the most attention from medical specialists because of the perplexing anti-social behavior characteristic of those persons suffering from it. Then, too, the changes in conduct characterized by exaggeration of instinctive, affectionate, or aggressive expressions, over-activity, and inability to control compulsive actions, persist long after the infections process has disappeared. This behavior may be associated with some degree of mental deterioration and retardation in development, particularly in younger children. The intellectual capacity, however, was usually not greatly affected. Mildred's inability to adjust to her classroom situation was understandable because she was suffering from a crippling organic handicap.

Conduct Disturbances

Samuel, nine years old, the oldest of four siblings, showed disturbances in conduct. He was reported by his teacher as insolent in his attitude, defensive of his actions, as well as exhibiting a total lack of

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interest in his work. He had been a transfer pupil to the school and frequently rationalized that he was unable to do the work assigned to him because it was unlike his previous assignments for which different teaching methods had been used. Samuel, however, did not adjust to his school experiences despite the help given him by his teacher. He continued to be indifferent, made no effort to conform, and when questioned about his attitude toward his school work, became protective and impudent. In the home, Samuel was considered a narcissistic and self-centered child. He had a great need to be given to and expected rewards for any service he rendered for others. When he failed to receive gratification he became hostile. His reactions were not handled with him by the adults responsible for him. He protested when denied what he wanted and could not take being refused anything. His behavior showed that he needed love, wanted infantile gratifications, and if others received more than he did, he became very angry. For the same reason, he found it hard to accept routines and discipline of any kind and tended to project blame for his misdeeds or failures on others. He was always demanding and wrangling concessions from others. This behavior seemed in many ways identical with that of his mother, who had a tendency to project on others, especially on his maternal grand-aunt, the reasons for Samuel's misconduct.

Seemingly Samuel was exposed to over-solicitousness and much attention from his mother which suggested her need to prove to herself that she really cared for him. In all probability, Samuel was sensitive to the fact that he was being "smothered" with maternal affection which was a camouflage of not being wanted by his mother. His difficulty in the home and school and the fact that he presented disturbing behavior, made it hard for his mother to accept and love him. Samuel's maladaptive ways were the result of his handling in his home and his mother's treatment of him.
CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS PRESENTED IN THE SCHOOL

To many children, school may be an altogether pleasant experience giving them sufficient knowledge, a chance to participate in group activities and to acquire social skills to assure them an adequate adjustment, personally and socially. On the other hand, it may be a breeding place for unhappiness, fears, daydreaming, resentment and behavior disorders of all sorts for some children if serious difficulties arise within the school walls or are carried into the school from the home. Some of the primary behavior disorders of the ten children studied which were expressed by them in the classroom situations were grouped into conduct and habit disturbances and neurotic traits. Children who exhibit conduct disturbances are acting out their impulses in an aggressive sometimes negativistic manner. These children are usually very troublesome. To some people they are considered "bad" more than sick children.

Conduct Disturbances

In Frank's situation, it was a problem of negativism. He was eight years old, in the second grade and had been referred to the social worker by his teacher, because of his negativistic and aggressive behavior in the classroom. He threw books and waste paper on the floor, constantly walked around in the classroom, refused to do his work and to be seated when asked. He also attempted to trip children and to strike his teacher. He frequently drew obscene pictures and passed them around to other children. At

\[1^{1}\text{Lawson G. Lowery, Psychiatry for Social Workers (New York, 1948), pp. 260-261.}\]

\[2^{2}\text{Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 45-70.}\]
home he exhibited the same kind of behavior.

Frank was the third oldest of five siblings. He was unwanted at the time of his birth, but was "accepted" after birth according to his mother. With some elements of rationalization, Frank's mother said that after his two older siblings were born and there was an equal number of boys and girls in the family, she wanted no additional children added to the family constellation.

The family relationships were never harmonious ones, and there was much marital friction among his parents over disciplinary procedures relative to Frank and his siblings. When Frank was only six years old his parents separated. Frank was harshly punished by his mother, and her handling of him was always considered most severe by his father who asked her to refrain from drastic punishing measures. She resented his appeals, and her justification for her discipline was based upon her desire to have him a well trained child who was a credit to his home.

In Frank's defiant and destructive behavior in the classroom he seems to have regressed to the anal-sadistic period of his development. He had failed to resolve conflicts which seemed to be a reflection of the tensions and inconsistencies in his familial situations and was still struggling to work out his identity with his own sex plus establishing and holding a relationship with the opposite sex. His need to be destructive showed lack of respect for the property of other people and for authority. His reaction to other children and to his peers suggested characteristics of the anal-sadistic period, or the desire to hurt and strike back. In addition, his interest in securing pleasure from "tabooed" obscene materials seemed indicative of a need to shock or to harm. His desire to rebel against the

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1 Sigmund Freud, "Infantile Sexuality," The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. A. A. Brill (New York, 1938), p. 596.
authority of the school and his attempt to strike his teacher represented 
his lack of respect for adult authority. Frank's conflicts not only seem 
to be the result of his feelings of rejection by parental people, but the 
absence of a masculine ideal in the person of his father did not help him 
establish his identity as a male person by the time he had reached his la-
tency.¹

Relative to parental discipline, Frank experienced what some author-
ities refer to as "parental dissensions"² and "inconsistency."³ Both are 
considered as potent factors in stimulating disobedience in a child. Kanner 
considers this as divided authority on the part of the parents and "divided 
authority, is of course, no authority."⁴ In school, Frank's hostility to-
ward his mother was transferred to his teacher who was a substitute maternal 
figure.

In the school situation, Frank was expressing the fact that he had 
never inculcated or accepted controls. He continued to gain gratification 
for his instinctual desires and when he realized that he would not be pun-
ished and he did not meet opposition in the school, he used the same method 
which his parents had used on him.

Donald presented a problem in conduct disturbances very similar to 
the behavior responses of Frank. Donald, eight years old, was in the first 
grade when brought to the attention of the school social worker by his teacher because he lagged in his social maturation and was academically retarded.

⁴Kanner, *op. cit.*, p. 370.
He was also somewhat destructive in his behavior and exhibited no particular interest in his studies. Although he had been in school for three years he did not know his alphabets and could not read. He had little knowledge of figuring and counting and could not learn to write his own name. Donald was able to print his name which seemed related to the fact that he could do this on his own without any help from his mother who tried to teach him to write. He showed some mechanical aptitude which could be attributed to his feelings about his step-father who was also mechanically inclined.

Donald was the product of a family situation that showed marital strife between his own parents which resulted in separation for his parents. When he was two, his mother remarried. He seemed to have no difficulties in accepting his step-father as an ideal male figure and identified with him readily. However, his mother seemed to have been the person who handled his discipline. And, as in the case of Frank, there was inconsistency in his handling and disciplinary measures used on him. Donald was overindulged to some extent by his step-father which constituted a threat to his mother.

The inconsistent handling of Donald by his parents did not aid him in attaining a sense of security. Because the roots of insecurity resulted in inadequate emotional development. Donald, who was insecure in his relationships with his parents, did not feel at ease in the school situation. Donald's failure to do his school work and his resistance to learning seemed to be an overt reaction of his resistance toward his mother. Furthermore, when she tried to force him to learn, emotional blocking was perhaps set up. Repeated failure in his studies created anxiety and lack of confidence in himself and intensified his insecurities. Therein lies perhaps another reason for his negative behavior.

Henry, an eleven-year-old boy, was causing difficulties in the classroom and similar to Frank was a disturbing influence in the classroom. His
conduct was annoying in that he insisted in talking aloud. Despite the repeated admonitions of his teacher, he misbehaved and had a disposition to show off. He was unreasonably loud and boisterous. He wanted all tasks assigned, and if they were not, he pouted and became indifferent to other requests of his teacher.

Henry and his three siblings lived with maternal grandparents, who had assumed responsibility for them after the death of their mother and the desertion of their father which occurred when Henry was only four years old. In this home, there were three other children besides Henry and his siblings. The grandparents seemingly were alcoholically inclined. He was the "favorite" of his grandfather and thereby received some compensation, for the absence of his father, from this relationship. However, there were occasions when his grandfather was ambivalent in his actions toward him. He refused to permit Henry's grandmother to discipline him, yet, he abused Henry extremely, whenever he was under the influence of intoxicants.

Henry attended school very often without food, sometimes during the winter months without shoes or adequate clothing. Frequently, the school principal or some of the teachers furnished him with necessary articles. Moreover, they saw to it that he was fed at the school. His behavior in school suggested that his most essential needs, those of attention, love, and recognition as related to a mother-person were not met. Because he did not receive this attention at home, he sought it in school through negativistic measures and non-conforming conduct. Physical neglect accentuated his feelings of being deprived and not being wanted. Consequently, he resorted to exhibitionist behavior in the classroom which not only attracted the attention of his teachers, but of his grandparents. This behavior suggested that Henry had regressed to an infantile, aggressive emotional level similar to Frank who also showed anal-sadistic behavior. In addition, the
emotional climate prevalent in his home was not conducive to personality development which made for integration.

Acting out impulses on the instinctual level was the kind of neurotic response Roland exhibited which necessitated his handling by the school social worker. His problem reflected much anxiety, and he was defiant, impudent, boisterous, and lacking consideration for others. Roland, twelve years old and the younger of two children, failed to receive the attention he sought from his parents. He tried to dominate other children, and the particular situation in which he found himself. During gym activities, if Roland were not selected as a group leader he refused to participate. On several occasions, it was necessary for the principal to request that Roland's parents visit the school to discuss his behavior.

At home, Roland was exposed to a strict, punitive mother-person and in contrast to a father-person who was passive. A sibling one year his senior was in the home and his early handling indicated very limited maternal concern. When Roland was seven years of age he became enuretic and this symptom continued until he was about nine.

Roland's need for parental attention not only caused him to regress to an oral psycho-sexual level, or inferred a need to express some hostility against parent persons who had failed to meet his libidinal needs. Although his enuretic symptoms discontinued after much punishment by his mother, it did seem that his conduct disturbance in school showed some displacement of what possibly was causing his conflict.¹

Some of the elements of behavior common in the situation of Frank, Roland, and Henry were quarrelsomeness, hostility, destructiveness, cruelty

and disobedience. Their aggression was always directed toward others.¹ They had identified with parents and parent substitutes in negative ways which handicapped them in moving forward on an acceptable level toward others.

Similar to the reactive behavior disorders of the three children discussed were the impulsive behavior of John, aged ten, who was helped by the school social worker in his attempt to make some kind of social adjustment. He manifested his discomfort to those around him by being quarrelsome and disobedient and was considered a very disturbing influence in the classroom. John's behavior in the classroom seemingly was his attempt to compensate for his inadequacy in the home situation.

From birth, there was evidence that his father had rejected him. All during his formative years there was friction between his parents culminating in sporadic or periodic separations. John had six siblings, two of whom were older than he. John was exposed to some conditions in the home which did not seem wholesome for his growth in that his father was a most dependent person who had a great need to indulge in drinking.

The ordinal position of John in the family apparently affected his feelings toward his mother. Because of her frequent pregnancies, her attention had to be focused on his younger siblings which deprived him of his needed infantile satisfactions by a maternal person. In all probability, the fluctuating and infrequent contacts John had with his own father, were not conducive to acquiring an adequate ego-ideal as a masculine person for him. His negative behavior in the school situation perhaps was an attention-getting mechanism designed to secure libidinal gratifications.

¹ Hamilton, op. cit., p. 47.
Neurotic Traits

The neurotic child may either be overtly anxious or have deeply disguised anxiety. Whether constitutional factors or traumatic birth experiences or both predispose some children to greater anxiety than others is not known. But certainly not all children outgrow childish fears as parents like to think they will, and some children seem to suffer excessively from anxiety tendencies. This seemingly was true in the case of Dorothy who presented a behavior disorder with neurotic symptoms.

Dorothy, a six-year-old, came to the attention of the school social worker upon the referral of her teacher which was made because of her hyperactivity. She was unable to sit still and constantly moved in and out of her seat despite repeated instructions from her teacher that she keep her seat. Dorothy was extremely nervous; her nose was constantly "running"; and her teacher wondered if she were suffering from sinus.

Dorothy and her mother lived with her maternal grandmother. Their home consisted of five rooms, and it was somewhat overcrowded. In addition to Dorothy, her mother and grandmother, there were five children living in the home with only two bedrooms. Dorothy slept with her mother, and due to the overcrowded conditions, her mother hoped to get a house in the public housing project. Dorothy's parents were separated and had been since her birth. Occasionally, she asked her mother about her father although she never knew him too well.

Dorothy's mother thought she was too aggressive and energetic and attributed this to "nervousness;" her attention-span was rather short. Of childhood diseases, she had only whooping cough and mumps. However, during infancy, she contracted pneumonia twice, when she was only six months

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1 Ibid., p. 74.
of age and again at fourteen months. In reference to her sinus ailment, her mother had not provided medical treatment for her.

It seemed that Dorothy's case was one which presented evidences of maternal rejection. Factors which conveyed this impression, were the apparent negligence toward Dorothy, permitting her to contract pneumonia within two short time intervals. In addition, Dorothy was neglected by her mother as to her health by her failure to make available to Dorothy necessary medical treatment for her sinus condition which had prevailed over an extensive period of time.

Negligence of Dorothy's welfare was an obvious indication of maternal rejection which treatment had more or less a tendency to stimulate and aggravate a state of anxiety which possibly resulted from her early developmental experiences. On the other hand, her mother sought to project the cause for Dorothy's emotional state on overcrowdedness in the home. This was done apparently to conceal the mother's feelings. Of necessity some consideration must be given to the emotional climate prevalent in the home to which Dorothy's mother contributed. Consequently, the emotional reactions experienced were at home incorporated in the personality fabric of Dorothy, and she tended to respond in a similar fashion at school as she did at home. Her feelings of anxiety were evidenced in her restlessness and over-activity at school.

Attitudes Toward the Behavior of the Children

It is rather difficult to measure attitudes because individuals are not prone to divulge their real attitudes regarding certain aspects of their innermost feelings or thoughts. An attitude expressed by an individual may often give a clue to the actual feelings of that individual. The attitudes of those persons who were directly interested in the behavior
of the children studied such as their parents, teachers, and school officials conditioned the atmosphere in which the children functioned.

Generally, the attitude of the parents toward the behavior of the children was one of concern. One or two parents expressed what possibly could be referred to as disgust because of the behavior of their children. This was evidenced when the mother of one child asserted, "I am tired of Frank acting like he does. He acts like I am trying not to raise him." Most parents were very cooperative in helping to arrive at a practicable solution to their children's behavior problems.

In the main, the teachers of the children studied displayed a genuine interest in the welfare of the children and the behavior problems which beset them. Occasionally, one or two teachers demonstrated negative attitudes. These were represented by such expressions as "that child acts as if he's crazy." "All he needs is a good strapping." "I don't have time to be bothered with him, when I have forty-odd other children to teach." Fortunately, these expressed attitudes were seemingly representative of a rather small minority of the teachers. Otherwise, the teachers concerned themselves with the whys and wherefores of a child's behavior or a child's problem.

Usually, the attitudes expressed by the school officials relative to the behavior of the children were sometimes difficult to obtain. Possible exceptions were those of the director of the Child Welfare Department of the Board of Education and the school principal. One possible factor attributable to this may be that these two officials come in direct contact with the children presenting behavior problems whereas a majority of the school officials did not. But some indication of the attitudes of the members of the Board of Education may be gathered by the liberality with which they made appropriations for assisting children who presented behavior problems.
The director of the Child Welfare Department and the principal of Lincoln School exhibited considerable understanding in handling the children included in this study who presented behavior problems. Experience and knowledge of the dynamics which motivate human behavior appeared to have been their chief forte in assisting children with emotional and conduct disturbances.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been the purpose of this study to ascertain as nearly as practicable the causative factors underlying or motivating the maladaptive behavior of children who presented problems in the Lincoln Elementary School in Gary, Indiana from September, 1950 to February, 1951. The possible factors which, perhaps accentuated the deviant behavior of these children and the etiology of their problems relative to their adjustment at home, in school, and other situations were studied. The ten children studied were referred to the school social worker by their teacher or the school principal. Referrals were made because of the symptomatic behavior of the children which was expressed in conduct or habit disturbances or neurotic traits.

It was significant that of the ten children studied, there were only two cases in which both parents were in the home. On the other hand, a majority of the children resided with at least one of their natural parents. However, most of the children came from homes which were either broken or considerably disturbed. The reasons for the absence of one or both parents from the home were either death, divorce, separation or desertion. Eight of the ten children studied had only the mother-person present in the home. However, a mother figure was present in each of these two homes. In two situations, there were stepfathers, and in two homes neither of the natural parent people was present. Siblings of the children studied appeared in all homes with the exception of three. In the remaining seven homes, three children had three siblings; two had four; and two only one. Three of the children studied were the oldest child in the family group.

Several of the homes were unwholesome or inadequate relative to the
psychological and mental development of these children. Manifestations of these deficiencies were the overcrowdedness, moral degeneracy, and emotional climate prevalent in their homes. Marital conflict was a chief factor which manifested itself in the familial relationships of nine of the ten children studied. This conflict created tensions which disturbed the children and their adequate functioning. The problems of the children were further aggravated by many of their parents' unsatisfactory family-relative relationships or an unfavorable environment.

The absence of the father or father-substitute in four homes of the ten children studied limited somewhat the economic status of these families. However, Aid to Dependent Children grants greatly alleviated the financial needs in these situations. There were six homes in which one of the parents was working, usually the father figure. There were only two homes in which both parents were working.

The ages of the children, eight boys and two girls, ranged from six to twelve. Two of the children were six years old; two were eight; two were nine; two were ten; and one each was eleven and twelve, respectively. Relative to the educational status of the ten children studied, only three were in the correct grade corresponding with the age for that grade. Seven of the children were not in the correct grade and were below the grade level commensurate with their chronological ages. The residential area in which the parents of the six of the children lived, formerly housed predominantly white residents and many of these homes were aged and somewhat dilapidated, as their upkeep apparently had not been properly maintained.

The outstanding problems of the children studied were centered around the following: conduct and habit disturbances, neurotic traits, and physical and/or intellectual handicaps. Concomitant with these problems were lack of adequate social and recreational programs of a substantial nature
to meet the social and psychological needs of the children. Also the lack of wholesome family relationships, which of course, are always tremendously important in the healthy development of the total personality of a child, contributed to these children’s non-conforming behavior.

Departmental resources along with the services of both local and out-of-town agencies were utilized in helping these children. But, it would seem that more attention might have been directed toward helping these children with apparent neurotic or emotionally disturbed behavior because their problems enhanced their frustrations in their competition with the average school child. In addition the services of a psychiatrist might have been solicited in helping to restore the emotional stability of over-protective parents whose influences prevented their children from becoming socially and emotionally adjusted.
APPENDIX
SCHEDULE A

1. Name and current address

2. Date born

3. Race

4. Date first known to CWO.

5. Domicile at time of initial contact (parental home, foster home)

A. Material Factors in the Home Environment

1. Type of neighborhood home is found: favorable__; unfavorable__.

2. General condition of house:

3. Modern__; In need of minor repairs________; Modern conveniences______; __________

4. Distance from school__________________________________

B. Personal Factors in the Home Environment

1. Head of household ___________________________________

2. Adults in home and their relationship to child_________

3. Give age, outstanding traits, conduct and habit disorders, if any.
4. Children under eighteen (relationship to child)________

5. Health of family: good_____; fair_____; poor_____.
SCHEDULE B

A. Home Adjustment

1. Who has the responsibilities of the child's care?

2. Responsibilities of the child: run errands; cleaning; washing dishes; care of younger children; others.

3. Discipline and control

4. Parent-child relationship

5. Child's relationship with other children

6. Leisure time activities of the children; games played most:

B. School Adjustment

1. At what age did the child enter school?

2. School attended

3. Child's grade

4. Subjects disliked

5. Attitude toward school

6. School attendance

7. Reasons for irregularity

8. Conduct and discipline problems
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