A description of pre-commitment group relationships of girls in the New York State Training School

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A DESCRIPTION OF PRE-COMMITMENT GROUP RELATIONSHIPS
OF GIRLS IN THE NEW YORK STATE TRAINING SCHOOL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Group experiences play an extremely significant role in the lives of all individuals. From birth until death all human beings are continuously relating and interacting with individuals and with groups, and these experiences influence their growth and development.

All individuals have common needs which they seek to satisfy in group situations. Before the era of industrialization these needs were met in the primary groups such as the family. Now to an increasing degree social agencies are needed to provide group experiences for individuals whose needs are greater as society becomes more complex.¹

Training schools are among those agencies which seek to provide a variety of constructive experiences for the children committed to these schools. This is of importance because for many of the children their pre-commitment group experiences did not provide the essentials to help them develop into socially acceptable individuals.

Each individual encounters a series of basic group experiences that tend to help in molding his personality and his method of relating to the world. At birth a child is dependent upon others for the satisfaction of his basic needs and comfort. The behavior and the attitude of those taking care of him can produce important effects on his future relations with others and his feelings about himself. *The family is his

first group experience, and one of the most important ones. The family, along with his constitutional endowment and the environmental forces acting upon the child help to determine the type of adolescent and eventually the adult he will become.

During early childhood the child becomes aware of himself and of those around him. He begins to walk and communicate with his parents. "The child's interest in the world around him is expanding and the world around him is likewise beginning to make demands upon him for conformity to certain social requirements."\(^1\) As he ventures out from the family, he becomes a part of a second group, a play group of his peers. Here he experiences his first interaction with a group his own age.

As the child progresses in age and maturity he enters his third important group experience, the school.

...During this period he begins to learn the complexities, pleasures, and difficulties of adjusting himself and his instinctual drives, both aggressive and erotic, to those of his peers; and by achieving this learning and adjustment he can begin to take his place as a member of their group, now begins his social life.\(^2\)

The parents' influence is supplemented now by the school system and his teachers. Some of the responsibility for help in solving his problems and modifying his behavior is shifted from the home to the school.

Many of the child's behavioral problems tend to come to


focus in the school. This may be due to several factors. His intelligence quotient, his ability or inability to relate to his peers, severe emotional disturbances, or simply his dislike for learning. Failure to cope with these problems may result in overt aggressive behavior. Truancy or other types of disruptive behavior may bring him to the attention of the school authorities and finally the juvenile courts.

The next stage and a very important one because of its adjustment difficulties, is adolescence. The child reaches puberty and undergoes many physical and emotional changes. He has the emotional drives and needs of an adult but because of his age, he is denied free expression of them. Because of this, he turns more to his peers who are experiencing similar feelings.

According to English and Pearson the adolescent begins to develop a group life which will be the basis for his future social life. This real group life takes place in self-organized groups and gangs for the purpose of repudiating adult influence and strengthening the individual's inner feelings and capabilities by his close association with his peers.¹

Extremely important to the adolescent is the need to 'belong' or to obtain 'status' among his peers. Thus organized group relationships play a significant role to any teenager and especially to the juvenile delinquent.²

All adolescents are rebellious, however, some because of

¹Ibid., p. 330.

their constitutional endowment, past experiences and family influence are more so. Often this rebelliousness becomes hostility and because of ego-damage, failure to adjust to society or group pressure, the adolescent becomes delinquent. The normal need of adolescents for peer status and approval becomes exaggerated in delinquents and the group becomes very important.

...Few delinquent acts are committed by a boy or girl alone. Most of them are committed in a group or 'gang'. The group is extremely important to all teenagers, but especially to the one who feels insecure and who needs support to bolster his own feelings of adequacy. The group is for the adolescent the main source of security when he begins to reject the adult.1

According to Konopka, to set suitable standards for care and treatment the training school is always seeking to know as much as possible about problems associated with delinquent behavior. They recognize delinquency as the outgrowth of a series of events both group and individual.

The writer's interest in this study was provoked through hearing discussions between the girls concerning their previous group experiences, reading records that contained material on various group experiences that influenced the placement of some of the girls in the New York State Training School for Girls and by the agency's interest in such a study. The agency hoped that such a study might point out factors that could facilitate a more thorough diagnosis and treatment plan for its clients.

Since all girls committed to the New York State Training School have been adjudged delinquent, it was significant to recognize that delinquent behavior stems from two major sources. According to Elliot Studt, one of these sources may be classified as the traditionally diagnosed intrapsychic disorder within the individual stemming from family experiences and resulting in super-ego defect. The other is a group response to problems resulting from a social structure which inadequately provides support for value-oriented behavior to a large number of our youth. The majority of our present day delinquents fall into the second category.¹

A delinquent as defined by the Children's Court Act of the State of New York in 1957 is:

...A child under sixteen years of age (a) who violates any law or any municipal ordinance or who commits any act which, if committed by an adult, would be a crime, except any child fifteen years of age who commits any act which if committed by an adult would be punishable by death or life imprisonment; (b) who is incorrigible, ungovernable or habitually disobedient and beyond the control of his parents, guardian or other custodian or other lawful authority; (c) who is habitually truant; (d) who, without just cause and without the consent of his parents, guardian or other custodian, repeatedly deserts his home or place of abode; (e) who engages in any occupation which is in violation of law, or associates with immoral or vicious persons; (f) who frequents any place the existence of which is a violation of law; (g) who habitually uses obscene or profane language; (h) who begs or solicits alms or money in public places under pretense; or (i) who so departs himself as to wilfully injure or endanger the morals or health of himself or others.²


In considering the group experiences and relationships girls had prior to commitment in this training school, the writer hoped that the results might describe some of common factors present in the pre-commitment group relations of the girls studied. The writer also thought that the study could be used in planning treatment or therapy for the girls concerned.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study were:

1. To describe and ascertain the types of group experiences that girls, placed in the New York State Training School, had before commitment.
2. To determine the common factors evidenced in the individual studies.

**Method of Procedure**

This study was conducted according to the case study method. The sample was obtained by using each twelfth card from the active files of all enrollees as of January 13, 1958. The case histories and court records were read and pertinent information abstracted. A personal interview was held with each subject to supplement data obtained from the records. Literature from the field was read to provide background information for the study.

**Scope and Limitations**

This study was limited to thirty girls residing in the New York State Training School for Girls as of January 13, 1958.
and to the pre-commitment group relationships and experiences they had. It was conducted during a six month period while the writer was a second year social work student in this institution.
CHAPTER II

THE SETTING OF THE STUDY

The New York State Training School for Girls is one of five institutions for juvenile offenders in the State of New York. It is a residential treatment center under the direction of the State Department of Social Welfare, designed for the reception, care, training and supervision of delinquent girls. All girls committed to this institution have been adjudged delinquent by the Children's Court of the State of New York.

The original site, the House of Refuge for Women, was built in 1887. In 1904 the function of the original site was changed, by legislative act, to provide care for female juvenile offenders between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Girls under twelve years of age may be committed to this school if their offenses would constitute a felony and those between sixteen and seventeen if they have been known previously to the juvenile courts. Once a girl is committed to this institution she remains under its jurisdiction until her twenty-first birthday, unless special discharge is granted sooner. In 1904, the institution consisted of seven three story brick buildings, each of which housed approximately twenty-one girls.

By 1913, there were twelve cottages, a chapel, a vocational building and an academic school. At the time of this
study facilities had expanded to sixteen cottages, store, bakery and a laundry. A gymnasium and a vocational school were in the process of being constructed and were expected to be ready for use by September 1958. Both of these buildings were replacements for facilities already in use at the institution which were quite inadequate. Two new cottages were also in the budget to meet the increasing demands for service.

...Due to a gradual changing of the philosophy of treatment changes occurred in training school programs. They moved their focus from custodial to educational, to case work and psychiatric to group orientation treatment emphasis.¹

Training schools became less punitive and more therapeutic. Moving from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, the program shifted toward greater emphasis on the individual girl, her needs, strengths and limitations. Still more recent and still in its embryonic stage is a movement toward the group approach in treatment.

The New York State Training School for Girls, like all training schools, is an authoritative setting. Its organizational structure consisted of a Board of Directors, a Superintendent and his Assistant, Business Manager, Director of Cottage Service and a Clinical Team composed of a Psychiatrist, a Psychologist and Social Workers.

The Superintendent enters into the care and training areas primarily as a problem solving person. His major concerns are in the areas of setting policy, communication of treatment philosophy and concepts; recognizing,

¹Letter from Mr. Abraham G. Novick (Superintendent of the New York State Training School for Girls, Hudson, New York, April 11, 1958).
identifying and helping in the solution of problems which affect the discharge of the agency's function and with development. The Assistant Superintendent acts as director of care and training and is responsible for the coordination and integration of the various care and treatment facilities. She meets regularly with the Director of Education, Cottage Service and Community Service to help them with problems in their areas.

The Business Manager is in charge of all business, payroll, maintenance, engineering, purchasing and accounting activities. He has six departments under him: maintenance, engineering, food service, housekeeping, grounds and business operation, including purchasing, accounting and payroll.1

The department of Cottage Service, was directly responsible for custodial care, casework treatment and supplying satisfaction for the needs of all of the girls. Considerable emphasis was placed upon the orientation process and the assignment of girls to specific cottages, as this can greatly effect their adjustment and growth in the institution. The clinical team had the primary responsibility for the assignment of girls.

The clinical team, as stated previously, was composed of a Psychiatrist, Psychologist and Social Workers. The psychologist tested new commitments and both psychologist and psychiatrist served as consultants to the social workers and cottage staff.

In this institution clinic and cottage life were eliminated as separate departments.

...Social workers are assigned to supervise the activities of the children and cottage staff in one or two cottage units. They have direct authority over the cottage staff and are required to offer supervision and guidance to the

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1Ibid., p. 2.
cottage parents in handling the youngsters under their
direction. Cottage parents are looked upon as technicians
with the professional supervision supplied by trained
social workers. Social workers and cottage staff are thus
responsible for a common treatment process. The latter
share their total problems with their social worker super-
visors, who are ready to help resolve the complicated con-
flicts and decisions posed by the necessity to carry on
disciplinary and treatment activities at the same time.
The social worker as supervisors, are expected to eval-
uate the cottage parents' strengths and weaknesses and
help them develop on the job.1

Apart from her supervisory responsibility, the social
worker is involved in regular casework treatment for the
girls, cottage and individual discipline and formal and in-
formal group sessions with the girls. The residents of this
institution live in groups, therefore, it is necessary to
facilitate group living as well as individual growth and ad-
justment.

The institution was structured according to the Cottage
Plan. Between eighteen and twenty-four girls live in each
cottage with a staff of five persons working on a rotating
basis to give twenty-four hour supervision a day. Six of the
cottages had houseparents, a husband and wife combination,
while ten had only housemothers. The housemother or father
was directly responsible for the girls and the maintenance of
the cottage. They were assisted by a cook, recreation person
and a night staff person. The fifth person substituted in
each of the other positions during the staffs' regular va-
cation days.

1Abraham G. Novick, "Classification and Treatment,"
Girls were assigned to cottages according to their specific needs, family experiences and their problem or reason for commitment. Each cottage was structured to meet specific behavioral problems. They ranged in structure from permissive to quite rigid. Some cottages were more effective in helping girls with low intelligence quotients and others worked especially well with the physically handicapped. Personality differences between the child and the houseparents were considered also in placement.

As soon as a girl was assigned to a cottage a vocational and an academic program was planned for her. This was the responsibility of the Education Department; to test each girl, find her vocational aptitude and interest and to place her academically according to her grade level, reading ability and intelligence quotient. The vocation assignments consisted of Cosmotology, Business Administration, laundry, bakery, homemaking, sewing, waitressing and cooking. The philosophy behind vocational assignments was that a girl should be prepared for gainful employment when she returned to the community.

Almost all of the girls have a half-day in the academic school. The school is organized to meet the needs of our youngsters according to where they stand academically. This might be primarily remedial in nature, but considerable emphasis is placed on school. Actually, groups one through six might be termed remedial; groups seven through eighteen are not remedial but consist of regularly scheduled junior and high school subjects.¹

Periodic formal evaluations were made of each girl's

¹Abraham Novick, op. cit., p. 2.
progress, the first being at the termination of five months commitment. On an average, girls remained in the institution between five and twelve months depending upon their adjustment, emotional growth and their community plans. Community plans consisted of arrangements for a child to return to her family, a foster home or a wage home. The Department of Community Services assumes the responsibility for making community plans and for supervision of the girls on parole from the institution. The headquarters for this department is located at the training school, however, there were four field offices throughout the state, three in upstate New York, and one in New York City.

Two other services concerned directly with the rehabilitation of the girls were the Department of Religion and Recreation. The Department of Religion was headed by a full time Chaplain with representatives from all other major religious faiths participating. This was considered an important phase of the rehabilitation program because many of these girls needed to be value orientated and this department along with other treatment services sought to aid in this orientation.

The Recreation Service, which theoretically was not a separate department but was under the supervision of the Director of Cottage Service, provided various types of activities for the girls. Each cottage had a worker from this department who visited bi-weekly to aid the recreational cottage staff person in planning and initiating projects. She also directed a variety of activities for the girls, took them
to the gymnasium once a week for active games and planned periodic parties. This department also sponsored weekly and holiday movies and all special event activities including a dance twice a month with the boys from one of the surrounding training schools. Small interest groups were also conducted by these persons with reports of outstanding behavior being made to the social worker in charge for analysis and treatment.

This agency setting was significant to the study of pre-commitment group relationships in that the sample used in the study was chosen from its residents. For clarity, the writer felt it necessary to state that this was not a study of the group activities of adolescent girls but of adolescent girls who had been adjudged delinquent and committed to a training school. Therefore any conclusions or generalizations drawn from the study should be beneficial for training schools or persons working with delinquents.
CHAPTER III

PRE-COMMITMENT GROUP ACTIVITIES

The writer considered it necessary to explain in some detail the reasons for the study and why the items included in the schedule were significant in a descriptive study of pre-commitment relationships of girls placed in the New York State Training School.

Though individuals are continuously participating in groups and a general knowledge of the term may be understood, a specific definition seemed necessary in this study.

A group is the framework within which personalities develop and mature, or also become disorganized, a number of persons who have some common loyalty, and who participate in common activities and who are stimulating to each other.¹

As stated previously group experiences are significant to all human beings but especially to the adolescent. This study was concerned with girls who were between the ages of twelve and sixteen and who were encountering the many problems that accompany adolescent adjustment.

The adolescent is a great "joiner" and with the increased pressures of our society and the changing of community values, he turns more and more toward his peers and his groups for acceptance, security and a feeling of belonging. This joining may take the form of organized group activities, unorganized clique or gang groups, formal or informal school groups. It

may be loosely structured with peer leadership or it may have rigid adult authority. The group may be affiliated with a church, community agency or it may be a branch of a national organization. Its structure, organization or affiliation means little to the adolescent as long as his needs are being met and "he belongs". The need to belong to a group of his peers is quite normal and healthy, however, it is when the behavior exhibited by the group becomes rebellious, aggressive or hostile and when the members fight, steal, destroy property and break laws that juvenile delinquency occurs.

This study was made to describe the types of group experiences adolescent delinquent girls had prior to their commitment to the New York State Training School. Of the thirty girls studied twelve were fifteen, seven were sixteen, seven were fourteen, two were thirteen and two girls were twelve years of age. The groups considered in this study were the family, the school, organized and unorganized groups. The unorganized groups, with which the writer dealt, were cliques and gang affiliations.

The Family

The family, along with the inherent qualities the child possesses, has much of the responsibility for the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of a child. His method of relating and coping with situations is reflected by the degree of acceptance, security, love and affection that he receives from the family group.
In studying pre-commitment group relationships it was necessary to get a general impression of the types of family groups in which the subjects had grown up and by which they had been influenced. There are certain basic factors which the family can provide which facilitate normal growth and development of a child. Some of these factors are: satisfaction of basic emotional and physical needs, adequate living circumstances, presence of both parents in the home, good family relationships and group cohesion.

The developmental and early history of delinquents shows many more anomalies than are found among non-delinquents. The large number of unfavorable conditions during and after the mother's pregnancy, and during the child's first years of life, shows that the delinquent more often gets off to an early bad start in life...Judging from the home surroundings in which he is brought up much of the delinquent's difficulty can be traced to this environment.

The terms adequate and inadequate were used to describe the physical aspects of the homes in which the subjects lived. "Adequate" referred to facilities sufficient to supply the family with the bare necessities: bathroom, kitchen facilities and relatively comfortable sleeping conditions. "Inadequate" referred to over-crowded sleeping arrangements, communal bathroom and the lack of kitchen facilities, especially refrigeration. Slum and blighted areas were also considered.

More delinquents than non-delinquents live in slum areas that are deteriorating socially and economically. Another characteristic of the delinquent neighborhood is a mixture of business and residence buildings which are

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generally racially mixed, overpopulated and sub-standard areas.

More delinquents than non-delinquents come from physically inadequate, poorly furnished and ill-kept homes. They live under more overcrowded conditions and are likely to be sharing a bedroom with several siblings or sleeping in the kitchen or living room.1

Economic factors also play a significant role in delinquency. Poverty and deprivation are likely to be factors associated with delinquency. Statistics have shown that many delinquents come from homes which have inadequate incomes, long histories of receiving public assistance and with mothers employed outside of the home.

Methods of supervision and discipline are extremely important to the adolescent during this period of development as he is in the process of testing and evaluating previously accepted values. Who executes this authority and how it is done has a great influence upon his acceptance of the values.

Family recreation plays a major function in establishing group cohesion in the family life. Parents and children should spend some time together having fun and enjoying themselves as a family unit. Families lacking in this cohesiveness will find that their members spend much of their time outside the home with groups and associates.

From the thirty family groups studied the writer received a very broad picture of the types of families represented by the subjects. They ranged from almost ideal, in type, to those that had little semblance of a family group at all. Of

1Ibid., p. 99.
the subjects, eleven lived with both parents, eight lived with only the mother, two with the father, four with a guardian, four with a mother and stepfather and one with foster parents.

From the afore mentioned criteria, it was determined that twelve of the subjects lived in homes classified as adequate, while eighteen of them were inadequate. Among these eighteen were subjects living in slums, ghettos and one family of eight lived in a two-room cold water flat.

Another factor in the family group which had effect upon the relationships was finance. Because of the low family income, sixteen of the mothers worked outside of the home, leaving little or no supervision for the subjects. Two of the employed mothers worked at night. Of the fourteen mothers who did not work, six received assistance from the Public Welfare Department as their only means of support.

In the study, the authority figure in fifteen families was the mother, in six the father, in two a sister, in five there was no recognized authority figure and in two others the subject, being the oldest sibling, assumed this position. Of the five that lacked any semblance of an authority figure, the mother was in the home, however, each individual considered herself her "own-boss".

Family control was another significant area in this study. From the responses of the girls it was ascertained that eight, of the thirty subjects characterized the family control as rigid and twelve as indulgent. Fourteen of the
parents were considered punitive and one was over-protective. Five of the subjects classified their parents as being both punitive and rigid. The subject from an over-protective home environment was a migrant from the South whose parents, she said, were "afraid of big city living". Of the subjects falling into the punitive category two had scars inflicted by their parents, they stated.

Only three of the subjects were only children. The others had at least one, and not over eight siblings. Their relationships with these siblings ranged from excellent to poor, however, most of them related incidents that made the writer suspect that the majority of the relationships could be classified as fair with occasional fighting and arguing.

Along the lines of group cohesion and good family relationships, the study showed that seventeen of the families never participated in family outings or recreation. Among the thirteen that did, such activities as visits to Coney Island, picnics, and movies were most prevalent. Only one subject mentioned church attendance.

According to the responses given in the study, most of the subjects came from broken homes that were classified as inadequate for providing the physical and emotional needs necessary for normal growth and development.

The majority of the families were matriarchal in nature and due to their low socio-economic status the mothers had to supplement or provide the family income. Supervision was
irregular and characterized by punitiveness and strictness.

The family as a unit engaged in few, if any, leisure time activities and had little cohesiveness as a group. These families when compared with ones that produce normal adolescents, left little wonder as to why these girls were in an institution for juvenile offenders.

The School

"Together with the home, the school provides the basic learning experiences for all children. Through his attendance at a good school, a child should develop into a more resourceful and acceptable being."\(^1\)

Since there was a compulsory school attendance law, all adolescents were required to attend school until they reached a certain age. Perhaps for this reason and many others much of their hostility and rebelliousness was focused at and released in the school.

The school is the adolescents' second major group experience. Here three channels of relating are open for him. He may be a leader seeking the approval and recognition of his peers and adults; this leadership may take a rebellious trend and operate solely for group status and approval; he may be a follower or he may be withdrawn and become an isolate. The child's intelligence quotient and general functioning also affect his group adjustment.\(^2\)

\(^1\)English and Pearson, op. cit., p. 269.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 270.
In gathering data to describe the school group relationships, the writer sought to find the girls' interests in school, their teacher and peer relationships, their patterns of relating and the types of sub-group relationships they may have had in school. Since it is through the school that many delinquents are brought into the juvenile court, it was important to describe the group experiences participated in during school to get a fuller picture of the subjects' pre-commitment group experiences.

The responses from the subjects concerning their general functioning in school pointed out that of the thirty subjects thirteen were of average intelligence, eleven were considered dull normal and six were exceptional students. Their general functioning ranged from a sincere interest in school with good grades to apathy to a fervent dislike for it with all failing grades.

Nineteen of the subjects were habitually truant and behavioral problems when they were forced to attend school. The majority of them were followers, extremely rebellious and had poor relationships with the teachers.

Six of the subjects were leaders and seven were classified as isolates. Of the six leaders four had exceptionally good academic averages and had received awards in English, homemaking, citizenship and essay writing. This group had received the recognition of their peers and adult approval and were considered outstanding students by both.

Eighteen of the subjects belonged to school sub-groups,
ranging in size from one to four members. They gave a list of some fifteen activities in which they participated. Among the more positive activities were: studying together, eating lunch together and dressing alike. The negative activities consisted of being truant, cutting classes, disrupting class, destroying school property and fighting.

The school, one of the institutions for developing responsible behavior, seemed to be failing some of these youth in supplying guidance and satisfaction of their needs. They, in planning for the masses seemed to overlook or failed to handle the problems the rebellious and delinquent adolescent presented.

Organized Group Activities

Society, in trying to meet the needs of the adolescent to become a part of groups, offers many group experiences through the school, community agencies and churches. According to Grace Coyle these groups are usually structured with a purpose and specific function and have adult leadership. They may be special interest groups or branches of national organizations. Their primary function is to help the adolescent in establishing and integrating acceptable values. Among these values would be included good citizenship, responsible behavior, honesty, respect for authority and religious ideals.¹

Many of the adolescents avoid this type of group

affiliation because of its adult leadership. They are in a stage in development when they are rejecting of authority and supervision and since in the family and in school they must accept a certain degree of supervision, they shun groups that make more acceptance of adults necessary. This is especially true of the delinquent adolescent.

In gathering the data the writer focused on the type of group, its affiliation, structure, supervision, rules, values, activities and the acceptance and approval of the group by subject, peer, family and the community. The writer hoped that this material would not only describe the organized group activities of the subjects but also present strengths and weaknesses of this type group. In the writer's opinion, organized group activities, with modifications could play a significant role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Only thirteen of the thirty subjects belonged to any organized group. Of the thirteen, three belonged to several different groups. The groups were placed in three categories: church, community agency and school.

Of the church groups, two girls belonged to choirs, one to a youth board group and one to a group connected with a Catholic Youth Organization. They gave as their reasons for joining these groups; family influence, interest in church activities and interest in singing. The size of the groups ranged from ten to thirty members. All group meetings were held in the church and each had its own officers. Requirements for membership varied only slightly, the primary ones
being; member of the specific church, singing ability and good behavior. All of these groups were rated, by the subject, as being average in comparison with others like it. The group activities consisted of singing, talent shows, religious instruction and parties.

The groups held in centers and affiliated with community agencies were: Youth Fellowship groups, groups connected with the Police Athletic League and one was a social group. Those held in the school and operated under its jurisdiction were the Girl Scouts. "To have fun" and "because friends belonged" were the major reasons for membership. Their primary requirements for membership were: interest, residence in the immediate neighborhood and neat appearance. The activities of these groups consisted of dances, parties, participation in active sports, camping and learning material connected with the organization.

Rules for all of the groups were; regular attendance, no smoking, drinking or fighting and good behavior. The values of the groups were to develop good citizenship, good living habits and to have fun. The parents, community and subjects all agreed with these values. The results showed that though these groups had adult supervision, the groups were given much responsibility for its own decision making.

One factor was more outstanding than any other in analyzing the organized group activities, and that was the fact that only thirteen of the thirty girls in the study belonged to any such type group. This of course could be due to a
variety of reasons.

Organized group activities by nature are structured, have a purpose and adult leadership. To the adolescent these factors represent control and he has enough "trouble" with his parents and in school without seeking similar extra-curricular activities. He is rebelling against parental controls, therefore, he wants peer and group relationships that are flexible.

Organized groups affiliated with a church, community agency or school often use their groups as a means of establishing values in youth. The adolescent is in a period when he is testing and evaluating the values of society and he may not want to become a part of any group that will not permit this.

This type group can play an extremely significant role in helping to establish values and interpret them to adolescents, if they become more flexible in programming and more aware of the needs of some adolescents.

Unorganized Group Activities

The informal or unorganized group is perhaps more significant to the adolescent because it is his own. He organizes it, leads it, uses it to satisfy his own needs and pleasures, whether it be constructive or destructive.

...Spontaneous informal groupings of gangs, cliques, crowds, swarm on every corner or vacant lot. They drift down Main Street after school in shoals, like fish. They organize with sweaters, passwords and initiations. Never before or after this period does a group of one's
contemporaries have the significance in personal satisfaction and influence which seems to characterize the life of these youth.¹

Clique affiliations in this study referred to two or more individuals sharing in mutually enjoyed activities, displaying a degree of loyalty toward each other and developing a degree of intimacy one with the others.

All adolescents, unless they are isolates, have at least one friend with whom they "run-around". They are usually associated together through certain symbolisms such as dressing alike and can be found enjoying each others company at the movies, dances and on dates. Their experiences together usually include a variety of activities that they can be classified as neither constructive nor destructive type groups.

The Youth Board's report on "teenage gangs" says, the word gang can mean many things and a gang can take many forms. The term itself simply refers to a group of individuals banded together for one reason or another. It is, however, when the group indulges in activities which are directed against the community or against the principles or values on which the community is based, that society becomes concerned.²

In this particular study gangs were classified into three categories; social, bopping or fighting and a combination of both. The social gang is similar to the clique in operation, however, it is larger and not as cohesive. The social

¹Ibid., p. 118.

gangs' activities are centered around more socially acceptable types of behavior. The bopping gang is characterized by fighting, stealing and other types of anti-social behavior.

"Many gangs originate as social clubs and as they expand and accept new members their scope and variety of activities becomes broader, a leader emerges and without anyone really knowing when, a gang is born."\(^1\)

Questions were used to ascertain the types of organized group activities in which the subjects participated and a description of each. The focus here was not only to describe the groups, but to determine the values of the group and their correlation with those of the family and community; to ascertain reasons for joining these groups and to try and determine some of the needs met through this particular type group affiliation.

An attempt was made, by the writer, to word the questions in the Schedule so that they could be easily understood by the subjects and so that a minimum of interpretation was necessary. Thus, much of the subjectiveness that may result from interpretation was hopefully eliminated.

Twenty-two of the thirty subjects belonged to cliques ranging, in size, from two to ten members. They were primarily neighborhood friends who grew up together, liked the same type activities and attended the same school. Other reasons

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given by the subjects for becoming members of cliques were; loneliness, a chance to rebel against authority and in one group of homosexuals, the subject's reason was "to be with my own kind".

The responses of this group pointed out twenty-two types of activities in which the subjects participated. Those appearing in the majority of cases were; hanging around the candy store, flirting with the fellows, going to parties and movies, smoking, drinking, staying out late at night and dressing alike. Others included the smoking of marijuanna and heterosexual and homosexual sex play.

The values of the clique members appeared to follow this same trend. They placed high values on material possessions such as wearing "sharp clothes", being popular, sticking together, having fun and sex play.

According to the responses the majority of the families and communities approved of the cliques and their activities, however, several of the subjects indicated that no one really knew everything they did. Only one of the subjects disapproved of their activities and when questioned as to why she participated, her reply was "to follow the group".

The majority of the subjects rated their groups high status-wise, their reasons being that other girls wanted to join or that they were popular with the fellows. Meetings were held in the subjects' homes, in the candy store or on the street.

Rules consisted of "sticking together", no drinking or
sex play among members and "anything goes". There also were "gentlemen's agreements" around the frequenting of certain candy stores, especially those in another cliques' territory. The group made most of its own rules.

Sixteen of the subjects belonged to gangs. Four were members, and held leadership position in three of the most notorious gangs in New York City. All of the gangs were "deb groups" closely associated with a male gang.

The reasons for joining these gangs included: friendship ties, to gain peer approval, self protection, excitement, loneliness and neighborhood influence. Ten of these gangs were bopping, three were social and three were a combination of social and bopping.

The social gangs had no specified requirements for membership according to this study, however, the requirements for membership in a bopping gang are numerous. The major requirement for membership in the bopping gang was the individual's ability to fight; this ability was often tested in a type of initiation. Other requirements included acts of bravery such as stealing and the carrying of weapons. For membership in one gang, prospective members were initiated in a ceremony called the "wind-mill", during which the individual was whipped with a wet leather belt while in the nude. Another gang boasted of having no "virgin" members.

The activities of the gang were similar to those of the clique, however, gang wars, stealing, destruction of property
and inciting riots must be added to the clique activity list. The participation of gang members in all or almost all activities was compulsory due to the pressure exerted by the group. Only one girl in the entire study reported participating seldom.

The status of the group was determined by how well and how often it fought. Among these gangs, the bopping gangs enjoyed highest status, the combination group, second, and the social gang received lowest status. Gangs, whether bopping or social, received neither family nor community approval.

Though gangs were considered as unorganized groups, some of them were structured quite formally and similar to a national organization. The usual gang structure consisted of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and a war counselor. There were, however, exceptions to this rule. One gang was divided into sixty-eight different units scattered over the City of New York, each unit had a leader and over the entire group there was a President, Treasurer and a War Counselor. Each unit acted independently until war was declared, they then, joined forces to fight. Periodic meetings were held with unit leaders to hear reports on unit progress.

Of the sixteen gang members in the study there were six war counselors, one unit leader and three secretaries. Meetings were held in houses, school bathrooms, parks, basements and in community centers. Two of the gangs had
professional social workers working with them and helping them develop more constructive types of interests and activities. Seven of the gang members, at one time or another, had been arrested by the police for participating in gang wars, general fighting or for carrying weapons.

This study seemed to show that most of the adolescents' unorganized group relationships are characterized by disruptive behavior. This was shown in the types of activities in which they engaged. The membership rate in the group was high, possibly due to the fact that it had few controls. The controls that did exist were those established by the group and had no direct adult influence. The needs of the adolescent to reject adult authority, air adult values and gain peer acceptance and approval were all met in these groups.

Some principles and techniques for planning more constructive and positive group experiences for adolescents can be received from close observation and study of these unorganized group relationships. The Youth Board of New York City and many other such organizations have seen the influence that unorganized groups have on adolescents and are continuously studying and helping these group members to meet their needs in a more positive manner.

Significance to Field and Agency

Social workers, with their understanding of the individual and the dynamics of groups, can play an extremely
significant role in helping to facilitate changes in the family, school and other group experiences. These changes should be geared toward making the "adolescents' dilemma" less traumatic and minimizing the emotional disturbances and juvenile delinquency resulting from it.

This study evidenced one factor that should be significant to the New York State Training School. This factor is the need for material on the pre-commitment group relationships of each girl residing in the institution. Since all girls have had some type of group experience prior to commitment, knowledge concerning their roles in groups, leadership potential, types of groups in which they had membership, patterns of relating, activities in which they engaged and interests could be invaluable in determining cottage placement, vocational assignments and group therapy assignments.

New trends in training school treatment for delinquents are moving toward the group approach. With this in mind, as much data as possible will help in making meaningful group assignments for the residents.

Group pressure and the type of peer leadership exhibited by the residents in a training school play a significant role in the degree of adult control necessary for the successful operation of a training school. Since the adolescent is rejective of authority, the development and channeling of any leadership ability found in the residents would help in making adjustments easier and longer lasting.
This leadership might find constructive expression in student government associations, cottage councils, staff aids or any other such role. Knowledge of such ability or previous experience should be evidenced in a history of pre-commitment group relationships. In light of changing trends in treatment of juvenile delinquents and increased knowledge of the dynamics of group relationships, the writer felt that institutions should give more attention to the pre-commitment group experiences of their residents in planning treatment for them.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This was a study conducted to describe the pre-commitment group relationships of girls, adjudged delinquent and placed in the New York State Training School. This training school is a residential treatment center designed for the reception, care, training and supervision of delinquent girls.

Group experiences play an extremely significant role in the growth and development of all individuals. At birth the individual enters a group situation, the family, and as he progresses in age he becomes a part of other groups such as school groups, peer groups and adult sponsored groups. Each of these groups influences, in varying degrees, his personality development, adjustment to society and his method of relating to other individuals.

To obtain data for this study, the writer used a schedule to ascertain the pre-commitment group experiences of the subjects. This schedule contained questions in four group experience areas. These areas were the family, the school, organized and unorganized groups. The unorganized groups were divided into two areas, cliques and gangs, from the responses to the schedule.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. A variety of group experiences were evident. The data in the family groups showed that the subjects came from
a variety of environments ranging from ideal to foster home placements. Some of the subjects came from adequate homes while others lived in over-crowded slum areas. The family relationships were predominately poor, with only a few having the types of normal relationships that promote adequate adolescent adjustment.

2. The school groups were characterized by rebellious, disruptive behavior. Only four of the subjects' behavior was motivated toward satisfying needs to gain adult and peer recognition.

3. Peer sub-groups were prevalent and their activities usually consisted of some type of disruptive or delinquent behavior.

4. Few of the subjects belonged to organized groups. However, those who did belong to such groups were members of groups affiliated with church groups, community centers and schools. These types of groups because of their structure, organization, adult leadership and tendency to establish and interpret values in the adolescent had a tendency to be shunned by the adolescent in this study.

5. Almost every subject belonged to some type of unorganized group, whether gang or clique, and in many instances both. The unorganized groups of adolescents are his "own". There are no adult controls and he often used this group to rebel against authority. The gang affiliations were classified into three categories: social, bopping or fighting and a combination of both. The social gangs are similar to clique
groups, however, the gangs are characterized by disruptive behavior often leading to clashes with police authority and finally delinquent adjudication.

6. Group experiences were present in every case in the study but there was no single factor in these experiences which could be isolated as being common to each type of experience reported.

7. This study evidenced the need of the New York State Training School to include more material in their records on the pre-commitment group relationships of residents, in light of new treatment approaches.
1. Interpretation of Project to Subjects:

I am making a study of the relationships that girls have had before they were committed to this institution and would like your help.

I will ask you some questions about your family, school and other types of group experiences that you may have had. Please feel free to discuss this information with me because it will not be included in your record, discussed with your social worker nor will it influence your parole. Your name will be omitted and only a number used when the material is written up.

The material when compiled may help in planning ways to prevent juvenile delinquency or it may be useful in planning the treatment of girls already in training schools.

Do you have any questions?

2. Subject's Case Number
   Age:

3. Family:
   a. Living with parents_____ Guardian_____ Foster Home_____
   b. Type of home: Adequate_____ Inadequate_____(described in significant)
   c. Does mother work outside the home? Yes_____ No_____
   d. Who was the boss in your family?
   e. Were your parents strict?_____ give you everything that you wanted_____ did they punish you often_____
      over protective_____
   f. Did the family ever get together to have fun? Yes_____
      No_____
   g. Number of siblings, if any?
      How did you get along with them?

4. School:
   a. I. Q. and general functioning (record)
   b. School status: leader____ follower____ isolate_____
   c. How did you get along with your teachers?
   d. How did you get along with the "kids" in school? Did you have any close friends?
      If so, did you do things together? What type things?
      Were these things approved of by your teachers?
      Did you receive any honor for doing them?
      If not, why?
5. Organized Group Activities:

a. Did you belong to any groups or clubs? If so, name them.

b. Why did you join these groups? How large was it? Was it connected with school, church or any community agency? Did it have an adult leader? Peer? Did it have officers? Did you hold an office? What? What time were the meetings held? Where? Did you pay dues? How much? Was anything special required to become a member? If so, what?

c. Did the group have any rules? Yes No If so, what were they? If not, how did they get things done? Who told members what to do?

d. How did you like this group? Did you go everytime occasionally almost never How did you rate this group compared to others?

e. What things did the group do?

f. What things were important to the group? What did they like to do most? Did your parents approve of the group? Yes No Did they approve of the things that the group did? Did you agree with the group on most things they did?

g. Were the things that the group did approved of by the community? If not, why?

6. Unorganized Group Activities:

a. Clique affiliations: Did you have any close friends? Yes No If yes, how many? Were they neighborhood School other? Why were they your friends?

b. What types of things did you do together? What did they like to do most? What things were important to the group?

c. Did your parents approve of this relationship? Yes No The things that they did? Did you agree with this group on most things? Did you participate in all or most of their activities?

d. How did this group compare with other groups like it? Did other "kids" want to become a part of it? Yes No Why?
e. Did people in the neighborhood approve of the group?  
   Yes  No  
   Things that they did?  

f. Did the group have meetings?  Where?  
   Pay dues?  

g. Have any rules?  Yes  No  
   If so, name.  
   Who made them?  

h. Who was the leader of this group?  
   Did you hold the leadership position?  If so, what?  

7. Street Clubs (gangs)  

a. Did you belong to a street club?  Yes  No  
   Why did you join this group?  
   Was anything special required for membership?  
   If so, what?  

b. What kind of gang was it?  Social  Bopping  other  
   What types of things did you do?  
   Did you agree with the things that the group did?  
   Did you participate in all of them?  Most  none  

c. Did you have meetings?  Where?  

d. How did this gang rate with the others in the community?  
   Did your parents approve of the things you did?  
   The people in the community?  

e. Did you ever get in trouble with the police?  
   If so, why?  

f. How was the gang made up?  
   Did it have councils etc.?  Name.  
   Were you a member of any of the special councils?  
   If so, which.  
   Who was the leader of the gang?  
   Did the gang have any adult leadership?  Yes  No  
   Was this person a street corner worker with the Youth Board?  
   Were you a leader? follower?  

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