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A study of a teen-age subgroup and its relationship to the group

Lydia Tate Walker

Atlanta University

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A STUDY OF A TEEN-AGE SUBGROUP
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE GROUP

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

BY
LYDIA TATE WALKER

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1957
DEDICATION

To My Mother and Father
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express sincere gratitude to Miss Claudia Grant, Director of Wharten Centre, whose contribution of material and encouragement meant so much to the completion of the study. Also to be acknowledged, are Dr. Joseph Golden and Mrs. Marjorie Johnson. Their support and helpful suggestions were invaluable to the study.

L. T. W.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

A worker's experience with a teen-age subgroup may be somewhat analogous to that of a man of medicine who must have an understanding of the various parts of the anatomy in order to see clearly the function of the total organism. A worker must also have an understanding of the smaller parts within the larger whole. Such understanding facilitates a better working relationship with the group.

Just as the physical organism functions as a unit, so does the group. The position of individual members may vary, but the group functions as a whole.¹ For this reason, the subgroup cannot be treated in a vacuum apart from the group. The group may at times be impulsive, changeable and irritable.² Its temper affects, and is affected by, its members. A study of any part of the group will necessarily include its influences.

The subgroup is defined, for purposes of this study, as a small group having common interests and/or purposes.

Subgroups reflect not only the interests of individuals but the interaction of established group relationships in the organization and in the milieu.³

Using Cartwright's definition of a small group, the subgroup studied was seen as a narrow circle of individuals engaged in interaction with one another. According to Cartwright, each person within this nucleus must prove, through applied techniques, to be aware of the presence of the others. That is, each must recognize or remember each of the others.

It must be pointed out that the results from this study's choice tests did not give, in all cases, discernible evidence that each of the five persons studied fell within this definition of the subgroup. However, the writer feels that there was sufficient record material to safely include these persons. The fact that some members within the subgroup did not choose other members within the subgroup is significant to the study.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose was to study a subgroup and its relationship to the group. The other purposes were as follows: (1) To study the choices of members within the subgroup. (2) To study the choices of members of the group as a whole. (3) To study the possible significance of the choices made.

Method of Procedure

The subgroup studied was within a teen-age group having an active membership of twenty (20). Their ages ranged from 14 to 16 years. The subgroup selected for this study was composed of five (5) girls. Each girl had regular attendance to club meetings; that is, each had no more than two (2) consecutive absences.

\footnote{Dorwin Cartwright, \textit{Group Dynamics: Research and Theory} (Evanston, 1953), p. 30.}
The following facts attest to the commonalities of the five individuals who compose this subgroup.

1. All were Negroes.
2. Their ages ranged from 14 to 16 years.
3. All lived within the four block radius served by the agency.
4. All attended the same high school and used the same mode of transportation—the elevated trolley.

Their shared experiences seemed to give clearer indications of the factors which made them a subgroup. Some can be seen in group records.

The following is an excerpt from a group meeting in which four members of the subgroup were involved in a discussion around drinking.

Wanda said "I know what we should call this club—Old Crow or Seagrams Seven." Worker asked why they would name the club after whiskey brands. Wanda said "'Cause everybody in here drinks it." . . . Mae said "Teach, do you know why Wanda goes to New York every summer?—Wine is 29¢ a pint there." Wanda quickly defended herself saying she didn't drink cheap wine. "I pay $2.50 for what I drink." She proceeded to describe the corked bottles, etc. Rose came into the meeting and there was a loud chorus "She's the one!" Rose grinned and said "What's happening, Daddy?" Candy said "We was talking about who drinks."

Observations made by worker also give evidence of the subgroup.

They came together, usually in two's and three's, to club meetings. They also came together to parties given by the Centre and often left before the affairs were over to attend parties at other places. All were good friends of the Victors, a boys' club in the Centre. Rose and Sue's boyfriends were members of this club. Coincidental as it may seem, Rose's boyfriend was president of the Victors, while Rose was president of the girls' club.

All five of the girls in this subgroup were among the most aggressive members of the club. Two of them were elected as officers; Rose was
president and Sue, vice-president. The club was virtually named by Mae; that is, the name Mae gave the club at the first meeting was eventually accepted by the group. The following was taken from the record of this first meeting. In it can also be seen examples of Mae and Sue's aggressiveness.

Ada looked disgustedly at Bobbie and said "Do you want to be in this club?" Bobbie answered "I don't know." Mae and Sue chimed, "Why don't you get out then?" Worker interrupted and told the group they had not become a club in the Centre as yet. They would have to have a regular membership of at least 15 before they could organize as a club. (They began to count heads). Coralee said "There are 11 of us all we need are 4 more." Mae said "Then we can be the Royal Dames, our colors will be beige and brown and we'll put you out!" (Pointed to Bobbi).

Other evidences of the subgroup's aggressive behavior can be seen in this record where the group was involved in a discussion about a fight which had taken place on the way from school.

Jane said "I don't care if they pull the rest of my hair out; I'll sleep better after I get them." Rose and Wanda had been arguing with Carla during this time. Rose said "Carla, you just punked out--why didn't you help Jane?" Carla tried to defend herself and said "I said let me through and tried to get to Jane, but I couldn't." Carla said "That's a lie; Rose, Wanda, Mae and me smashed about 15 white boys by ourself--you was just chicken." Mae and Wanda agreed and made Carla very angry by calling her "punk".

In the above record were also evidences of the esprit de corps which seemed to exist among them. Not only were the members in the subgroup loyal to each other, but they seemed to place a high premium on loyalty among fellow club members.

The individuals in the subgroup seemed to have positive relationships with the other club members. They were not clannish to the point of excluding the friendship of others. The group seemed to relate positively with the individuals in the subgroup. They all shared mutual interests
in dancing and boys. The more vocal club members were found in the sub-
group. They often expressed feelings of other club members.

Worker called for order and explained that they
should spend a few minutes discussing their individual
interests, hobbies or what they would like to do as a
group. Mae said "I'm interested in boys--They're my
hobby and we want two boys to every girl when we have
parties." Coralee and Ada said, "That's right!"

There have been times when a group member has come to the defense of
one of the individuals in the subgroup. In the below cited record Candy
had challenged Rose on a question around re-election of officers. Johnnie
supported Rose.

....."I wasn't here when y'all elected officers and
I think we ought to do it over since everyone wasn't here."
Worker observed that Candy was getting no support from
Wanda and Mae who had expressed similar feelings to worker
before the meeting. Worker said "Do you think there will
ever be a time when all the club members will be here?"
Johnnie said "Last week was my second meeting and I didn't
know who the officers was--but I don't think we should change
officers because some of us wasn't here."

There have been other times when a member of the subgroup has supported
a club member. This regard for one another helped make for the positive
relationship which seemed to exist among them. Rose's regard for Sally
was reflected in this record.

Sally was elected as treasurer and a discussion came up
around who would keep the money. Rose contended that Sally
should keep it inasmuch as the group had elected her and
should trust her with their money. Sue argued that worker
should keep the money inasmuch as the previous worker had
done so. Rose said "We're growing up now. That was last
year. We should be taking on responsibility."

Among the important things to be considered in a study designating
choice of individuals within a particular group are that the situation be
a real one to the group being tested and that it fit the sort of sociometric
structure being studied.1 In other words, the question used to find who is preferred by whom should be related to the purposes of the study. With this in mind, the following procedure was used:

1. Slips of paper were passed to each member in the group with the following explanation:

"As your sponsor I would like to have an idea of who each of you can best work with in the club. This will help in getting committees for our future activities."

2. On the paper were four blanks in which they were directed to list the names of the four club members in order of preference. Each wrote her own name at the top of the paper.

3. Scores were computed on the basis of the number of choices each individual received from other members of the group.

4. The slips were studied in relationship to the members of the subgroup.

"Choice position" is slow to change; therefore, sociometric measurements may be considered reliable.2 The choice test, which refers to the first and second steps in the method of procedure, was given in January and again in February.

Data were tabulated on a sociometric matrix. It shows who was chosen by whom. The sociogram presents simply and graphically the structure of relations existing among members of the group.3 Information was supplemented

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by record material from group meetings. These records were needed to substantiate and suggest alternatives to the interpretation made from the sociograms.¹

Scope and Limitations

Time was a limiting factor inasmuch as this study was made over a period of approximately three months.

There was also the geographical limitation. This study was made at Wharton Centre, a settlement house in North Philadelphia.

Other limiting factors include race, sex, age range and the use of only one subgroup for this study. All of the members of the group were Negro girls whose ages ranged from 14 to 16 years.

CHAPTER II

THE AGENCY AND THE GROUP

The Agency

In an area where every 1,000 people had less than one fourth acre of open space for recreation was located a virtual oasis, Wharton Centre. It was a "second home" to many people born within the past two decades, serving children and adults who lived within its four-block radius.

Just as Wharton Centre was attached physically to a row of houses, it was connected in many other ways with the lives of the thousands of people it served. Since 1941, the tenth year of this settlement house's existence, Wharton Centre has placed emphasis on the individual's "use of the group for growth and development rather than on activities for activities sake."\(^1\) In other words, the general settlement function and philosophy was more far-reaching than the recreational services it provided. Basketball, art, music, handicraft, dancing and social clubs were not ends in themselves. They were parts of the recreational, educational and cultural experiences which, according to agency conviction, led toward more responsible and more "community sensitive" citizens.

Outstanding in the history of Wharton Centre were the people responsible for its origin, growth and development. Miss Susan Parrish Wharton organized the Whittier Centre which was incorporated as a charitable

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\(^1\) Claudia Grant and Fannie Allen, "The History of Wharton Centre" (Typed Report, 1957).

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institution in 1916. The study and solution of Negro city problems were its purposes. Thirteen years later Emily C. P. Longstreth made a study of recreational facilities for Negro boys and girls and was instrumental in initiating a recreational project in this North Central Philadelphia area. October 26, 1931 marks the opening of what is now known as Wharton Centre. Miss Claudia Grant became director and was largely responsible for the significant changes which have come about within the past twenty-five years to make Wharton Centre one of the pioneer group work agencies.

Recent statistics give a very accurate picture of this North Philadelphia area. Twenty per cent of the city's residential land area is in North Philadelphia. Along with the inadequate housing are the sociological effects which may be related to these sub-standard living conditions. According to police reports, the highest rate of juvenile delinquency is in North Philadelphia. There are also more infant deaths in North Philadelphia than in any other section of the city.

From this area came the nursery children, block councils and group members which were all vital parts of Wharton Centre. The nursery school, begun in 1943, provided day care for children of working parents. The block councils took advantage of Wharton's leadership in solving community problems. The group members also used the centre's leadership, as well as facilities, in fulfilling their particular needs and interests. For example: Those seeking physical outlet might belong to a basketball team, while those desiring cultural diversion were satisfied through art classes or singing groups.

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1North Philadelphia Housing Committee (Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania) (Mimeographed Report, 1957.)
2Ibid.
Still another category of group members was the one which included the numerous clubs in the center. The organizational structure for the clubs consisted of four programs. They were children's, teen-age, adult and Golden Age. It was within the children's program that the club, presently known as the Royal Dames, began.

The Group

This group of eleven and twelve year old girls came together on September 28, 1953. Their reason for coming together was simple—they wanted to be in a club. They had very few friendship ties and showed an interest in having a club experience. There were sixteen girls in this original group; all were Negroes. A student worker was their sponsor.

Subgroups have been prominent since the original club's existence.

There were many problems which I did not recognize in the beginning, that this group had. One was the many subgroups, which caused little conflicts between the members, and which was due to the girls not being friendly or friends, and some, in many instances, not even acquaintances with each other until this club experience.¹

The following observation was made by the worker during the succeeding year: "Their organization is based on the combination of three subgroups."² These excerpts point out the fact that this group, though changing in terms of substantial membership, had retained a fairly constant pattern. The Checkerettes, as the club was originally called, had characteristics very similar to the present Royal Dames. The Royal Dames had officers but functioned in a loosely organized way. They were an extremely impetuous, excitement-seeking and emotionally charged group with

¹Group Record, Summary, 1953-1954.
aggressiveness far outweighing inhibition. They had little patience with activity which deferred immediate pleasure and showed limited initiative in carrying out responsibility.

According to the worker's summary of the Checkerettes for 1954-55, a parallel can be seen between the present and original group.

The Checkerettes are an exciting, vital, impulsive, loosely organized group.... They have a great deal of difficulty in carrying through responsibilities unless held to their plans. Part of their inability is based on their lack of communication among themselves outside the agency. Even though most of them attend the same school, they stay within their own groups.

Of the sixteen "charter members" of the Checkerettes, only one was a member of the Royal Dames. The club continued as the Checkerettes during the program year, 1954-55. Three of these club members were members of the Royal Dames.

By 1955, the Checkerettes had reached adolescence and became a part of the teen-age program. Along with this change came a different name—the Olivettes. Of the twenty-two members of the Olivettes, nine were members of the Royal Dames.

Membership into the Royal Dames was on a purely voluntary basis. Worker used the previous year's club roster as a point of departure in contacting the prospective members about resuming their club activity at the beginning of the 1956-57 program year. However, no demands were placed on their continuing as Centre members.

It is interesting to note that three of the individuals in the subgroup studied were members of the Olivettes. The other two individuals joined the 1956-57 club, Royal Dames.

Over half of the membership of the Royal Dames was "new" to the Centre.
As a result of the wane in interest of former members, emphasis was placed on the building of membership. The minimum club capacity was fifteen and worker encouraged the recruitment of additional members.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS FROM CHOICE TEST

Concentration of Choices in Subgroup

The response to workers request for them to name four people with whom they would like to work proved to be both interesting and significant. It became evident that, while individuals in the subgroup did not limit their choices to other individuals in the subgroup, there was a tendency for them to select each other. The sociometric matrix (Chart 1, p. 11) would lead one to conclude that Marj was a member of the subgroup. However, the definition of the subgroup upon which this study was based, necessarily excluded Marj. There was insufficient information to indicate any like experiences or interaction, beyond the obvious, which may have existed between Marj and the subgroup.

As shown on the sociogram (Chart 3, page 21), all but one of the four choices made by each of the individual subgroup members fell within the subgroup. Each member of the subgroup made only one choice from the other group members. This finding seems to support the fact that interaction existed among them and gives some indication of the close band of intimacy, sense of belonging and group loyalty by which subgroups are characterized.  

Range in Number of Choices

The number of times members of the subgroup were chosen by other members

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*Absent
Names: Underlined are members of subgroup.
of the subgroup ranged from one (1) to four (4). This can be seen on the sociometric matrix which shows that: (1) Rose was chosen by only one (1) in the subgroup. (2) Mae was chosen by all (4) in the subgroup. (3) Sue was chosen by three (3) in the subgroup. (4) Wanda was chosen by all (4) in the subgroup.

Rose, the president of the Royal Dames, had the lowest choice score among the members within the subgroup; that is, she was chosen by only one person in the subgroup. Sue, vice-president of the club, chose Rose. This may have definite significance inasmuch as there had been instances in club meetings previous to the choice test when Rose gave Sue support. This is particularly evident in the meeting of November 14 when Candy proposed re-election of officers.

.....Sue came into the room and said "What's going on?" Candy said, "None of your business -- we was just talking about changing officers." Sue said "I decline" and took a seat. Worker observed that Sue was hurt by Candy's remark and explained that the group was discussing a point which one of the members raised and no decisions had been made. Rose said, "Yeah, Sue; you're still vice-president". Candy started some bull about having a re-election just cause she wasn't at the meeting." Sue said "That's okay; I decline." Candy said "I wasn't talking about you, Sue--I didn't know you was an officer." Sue said "Well, why did you try to talk so smart when I came in? All of you can go to hell." Candy seemed to be unable to hold her point for re-election and became angry. She and Sue had a battle of words while Rose tried to intervene. Rose said "Okay; all of y'all cut it out." Jane said to Sue "Why don't you get out then?" Sue said "Put me out." Candy said "Damn it--ain't nobody scared of you." Rose turned to Candy and said "Nobody's going to bother Sue--Nobody--and I'll see to that!" Candy stormed back "I ain't bothering Sue--she's my friend too!" Rose said "Then, get off her."

This disagreement among Sue, Rose and Candy seemed to affect the other group members. They did not reach any decision concerning a possible re-election and, with a few exceptions, were silent. It appears that
competition for leadership among members of the subgroup kept the group from reaching an agreement.

Greater group or organizational productivity may be expected when the members or subunits are cooperative rather than competitive in their inter-relationships.¹

There is also the possibility that the competition among those members of the subgroup disrupted the "communication of ideas, coordination of efforts, friendliness, and pride" in the group.²

Competitiveness tends to produce greater personal insecurity through expectations of hostility from others than does cooperation.³

Candy was the only member of the subgroup to verbalize her feelings about a change of officers, but there were others in the subgroup who expressed similar feelings to the worker preceding this meeting.

Mae laughed and said, "See, the reason I didn't come to club meeting last week is that we decided we wasn't going to come because we didn't like the officers." Worker said the club would like to hear all about the things they disliked and asked who "we" were. Mae said "Wanda, Candy, Jane and me said we wasn't coming."

Worker observed that Mae and Wanda did not support Candy at the meeting. It is possible that they feared challenging their friends. Candy's hostile reactions may indicate the threat she felt in taking this insecure, competitive position.

The fact that the subgroup did not give Rose support is of equal significance. Rose was elected as president of the club at a meeting from

¹Dorwin Cartwright, op. cit., p. 352.
²Ibid., p. 352.
³Ibid.
which Mae, Wanda and Candy happened to be absent. There is no evidence to prove that their presence would have made a difference. However, it is safe to assume that the presence of these three aggressive members might have made competition keener for Rose and Sue.

Another example of the vying for leadership can be seen in the following record when Wanda attempts to ridicule Rose's suggestion.

Worker asked if any had decided who their guests would be. Rose said "Let's invite the Victors." (Rose's boyfriend is president of the club). Wanda said "Those squares?" The group laughed.

Worker observed that Rose showed some initiative and real concern for the well-being of the club during the meeting in which officers were elected. This may help explain her status among other members of the club. The following is an excerpt from this meeting. A discussion around the possibilities of having a talent show was taking place; the club members' response was apathetic.

Rose said "I hope this won't be a jive club like those other clubs are" "Why don't y'all speak up? I think we need to do something."

Mae and Wanda had the highest choice scores within the subgroup. According to Cartwright the power to influence is highly correlated with prestige.\(^1\) This statement may be applied to Mae and Wanda inasmuch as their influence could be observed in group meetings. The following excerpts illustrate this point. The group was planning a party.

Sue said, "We want to use red and black paper."
Wanda said "That's right--and everybody wear red and black."

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 384.
CHART 2
CHOICES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE SUBGROUP
JANUARY 9, 1957

Key:

Mutual choice
A chooses B
B chooses A

A chooses B
B ignores A
At a subsequent meeting the following took place:

Dot said "Is it true that we all have to wear red and black?" Mae and Wanda said "Solid! --Those are the Royal Dames' colors."

The entire group accepted this idea and wore red and black to their club party as well as to agency sponsored affairs.

Selectiveness in Choice

It is interesting to note that smaller groupings may exist within the subgroup. These groupings are (1) isolate, (2) mutual pairs, and (3) triangles.¹ The isolate refers to the individual receiving no choices; the mutual pair refers to the reciprocal relationship between two individuals. The triangle refers to the three-way relationship. It is called exclusive when no choices are made outside the triangle.²

Mae, Wanda and Candy form a triangle. However, it is not a closed one because all three chose an additional person, Marj. A triangle can also be seen in the relationship formed by Sue, Mae and Wanda.

The former triangle (Mae, Wanda, and Candy) to which reference was made is significant in that neither person chose Rose. This triangle consisted of the three club members who wanted a change of officers. It seemed as though Rose's popularity among fellow subgroup members waned as she became more popular among the other members of the club.

Another triangle was also formed. It was a closed one composed of Carla, Jane and Sally.

²Ibid., p. 390.
Influence of New Person

Marj came to the meeting for the first time on the day the choice test was being given. Marj was already known by several members of the club and was given a hearty welcome.

There were two new faces and worker asked if they were visiting the club .... Worker asked them into the room. Wanda said "Hi, Marj! --Teach, she wants to join; put her name down." Mae shouted "Yeah, Marj; you're in--solid!" Marj took the chair Mae and Sue pulled up for her.

Worker observed that all the members in the subgroup, except Sue, chose Marj. Marj chose all the members of the subgroup except Sue. Marj had a choice test score of 4 which placed her in the high status position among members of the group. According to Cartwright, individuals of high status will want to be liked by others of high status. Candy, Rose, Mae, Sue and Wanda had high status as indicated by their choice scores.

Marj appeared to be an aggressive person and showed little reticence in expressing herself.

Marj said "This is a rowdy club-- Ya'll need a sargeant at arms." Rose said "We got one." Marj answered "You must need two then."

Worker observed that the group members did not show any overt resentment of Marj, but noticed that outside the subgroup members, she received no choices. It might have been possible that Marj sensed the lack of attention from other club members. Marj did not attend any more of the club meetings.

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1Dorwin Cartwright, op. cit., 491.
CHART 3
CHOICES OF ENTIRE CLUB GROUP
JANUARY 9, 1957

KEY:
•• Mutual Choice
• ➔ A chooses B
Position of Subgroup as Related to Choices of Other Members

Group members occupying low status positions will perceive and behave toward high status members in an essentially egodefensive manner, i.e., in ways calculated to reduce the feeling of uneasiness experienced in their relations with high.¹

Rose was chosen by Vea and Edna in addition to one subgroup member and Marj. These two persons have identical scores of 1 (Chart 1, page 17). The form of relationship may be classified as mutual paired. Vea and Edna seemed to identify with Rose why may have represented to them the closest and most powerful individual.²

Edna also chose Sue which may give further evidence that identification with symbols of power was important for Edna. Vea may have fulfilled this same need in her choice of Gandy, who, though not an officer, had definite leadership qualities.

Vea and Edna may be referred to as peripheral members inasmuch as they both had choice scores of 1. They showed tendencies to passivity which are indicated in the following record excerpts.

Worker asked what they thought about wearing slacks to the party. Both said it didn’t matter with them.

Worker asked Edna how she enjoyed the last dance. Edna said "It was all right." Worker said she thought all the girls looked very pretty and asked if Edna thought they should plan another semi-formal. Edna shrugged her shoulders.

Excluding Marj, Wanda and Mae were chosen by no one outside the subgroup.

¹Ibid.
Their own selectiveness may be related to this factor. Wanda and Mae
did not, as a rule, extend themselves to other members within the club
group. They both vied for attention through aggressive behavior. Their
behavior at one of the club's earlier meetings gives a fairly clear pic-
ture of this.

Wanda said, "Teach I though we said this club was for
kids 14 on up" .... Mae, who was sitting next to Ora,
leaned over and said "You're 13, aren't you?" Worker said
the group had set no age limit for members and each one
was just as much a part of the club as the next. Worker
continued saying only two people had begun to pay their
registration and that would determine, to a large extent,
who was really a club member. ....Wanda said, "Okay;
suppose she pays and then stays in the club--a mere child
--the next thing you know 6 and 7 year olds will be run-
ing in here." There was much laughter and confusion
after this and Wanda came to the center of the floor.

The relationship formed by Tina, Dot, Fern, Pat and Nora was another
closed one. They neither chose nor were they chosen by any members of
the subgroup. Worker observed that these five girls were much more in-
hibited and less aggressive in club meetings than other club members.
They showed a tendency to conform rather than verbalize their feelings.
The following was taken from a group record which gives an example of the
feeling of some of the other group members.

Pat, Tina and Nora had explained to worker before
the meeting that they would have to leave at 5 o'clock.
When they left Rose said "I don't like them girls".

The tendency of these five girls to conform can be seen in the follow-
ing excerpt from a club meeting:

Worker said "Perhaps it would be better then, if we
let each person bring a certain amount of food, rather
than try to collect money at this late date". Candy
and Sue said "Yeah--like we did last year." Worker asked
Pat and Tina what they thought of this suggestion. Pat
said "It doesn't matter with me." Tina said "I'll bring
money or food."
Another example of this compliance is seen in the following record:

Worker asked Pat, Tina and Nora what they thought of having a committee of 5 or 6 people to see that everything was cleaned up. Pat said "That's all right with me." Tina and Nora said "I don't know."

Importance of the Subgroup to Its Members

Through membership in a group certain basic needs are satisfied. Among these are the needs for attention and acceptance. Record material gives evidence of these needs among members of the subgroup. The following record is one in which Mae described her boyfriend's beatings to worker. It seemed as though Mae was getting attention and affection through her boyfriend's punitive behavior.

Mae said "You know, teach, you should see my boyfriend. He's so damn fine! Worker said I'd like to meet him. Carla said "When was the last time he beat you up?" Mae laughed and said "It's been almost a whole week now. He beat me twice Thanksgiving. Once for talking smart to my mother and the other time because I stayed out all night with some girls." Worker said "In other words, your boyfriend punishes you when you do things." Mae said, "Not really; my mother puts me on punishment like making me stay in my room when she gets mad—but that don't work—I just climb out the window." Mae was hysterical with laughter at this point and worker could not get her attention. When Mae regained composure she said "Teach, you should see how my boyfriend knocks me in the head. He hits my head against the wall like this (she demonstrated) and then socks me under my chin like this and I just be laughing all the time." Worker said "You mean it's funny to get beat up." Mae was laughing hysterically and said "Yes, yes; it makes me love him more."

Mae's need to be beaten may stem from a basic need for attention and affection. As stated in Trecker, individuals "need the satisfactions which come from being loved, wanted, and accepted by others."¹ This closely

The following record gives indications of the subgroup members' dependency on one another.

Worker asked Wanda if she had gone to the store and priced the food for the party. Wanda said "I was going to, but I went by Candy's house, Mae's house, Rose's and all and none of them would go with me--so I didn't go to the store".

They seemed insecure and afraid without the support of the other subgroup members.

Another example of this dependency can be seen in the record which follows:

Worker called the group to attention individually and told them they would need two committees for the party--one to get the food and decorations before the party and the other to clean up after the party. Wanda said "Sue, Rose, Candy, Mae and me will do the food".

Two of the subgroup members gave very clear indications of their need for acceptance. It appears that they tried to satisfy this need through drinking.

Wanda said "I was so drunk I couldn't find my house; I got cussed out for trying to get in some lady's house." Mae and Wanda then described the details of their regurgitating in the car, ruining their clothes. Worker said "I bet you were trying to keep from being called punks when you took that Vodka on the rocks and look what happened". Mae said "That's just what we said--we ain't going to punk out." Wanda said "That's just how we started drinking, teach. We started sipping a little and to keep from being chicken we tried to drink more and the next thing we started getting drunk."

How well individuals can satisfy their needs depends upon their positions in the group's sociometric structure. Each of the subgroup members

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1 Dorwin Cartwright, op. cit., p. 424.
had choice scores of 5. This was the highest score and outside the subgroup, no other group member had a score of 5. It appears that, through the very strong bond among subgroup members, needs for acceptance and attention were being met.

It is feasible to conjecture that similar needs were being met among members who were identified with the other forms of relationships. As shown on the sociometric matrix, page 114, the club group consisted, essentially, of two subgroups. There were several peripheral individuals, i.e., those receiving the smallest number of choices.

The matrix also gives indications of the degree to which the subgroup was accepted by the group as a whole. Only four members from the group made choices of subgroup members. This further substantiates the fact that the subgroup was a narrow circle of individuals engaged in interaction with one another.

Results from the Second Test

With only two exceptions, the results from the choice test given in February were identical with the findings from the test given in January. The two changes resulted from the fact that Marj had not attended since the meeting in January when the choice test was given. Wanda and Rose were absent from the February meeting and did not have an opportunity to take the second test.

In the place of Marj, Candy chose Sally, while Mae chose Lee. As shown on Chart 3, neither of these relationships was reciprocal.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This sociometric study of the subgroup and its relationship to the group was made through the use of choice tests. Use of this method of study made for greater clarity as well as expedition of time.

The subgroup studied was composed of five teen-age girls. They were among the most aggressive members of the club and, according to choice scores, were of high status in the group.

The tendency of youth to form closely knit groups of contemporaries between 12 and 18 years of age is normal and should be recognized by workers with teen-age groups. Recognition calls for some understanding of behavior and an awareness of the environmental factors which may influence it.

The community from which the club members came was characterized by over-commercialization, inadequate housing facilities and extremely overcrowded living conditions. A great majority of the club members lived in residences shared by several families. Along with this housing problem was the superfluity of tap rooms and the accessibility of slot machines and other money-making schemes. These made reaching the teen-ager increasingly difficult.

Wharton Centre serves the people of this community. Offering educational, recreational and cultural programs, this settlement house has done a highly commendable job of meeting human needs.

The limited nature of the study restricts the implications it may have to the field of social work. However, there are certain findings resulting from the study which may be of interest, if not value, to the field.
The following conclusions were suggested by the data studied:

1. The subgroup helped to meet certain basic needs of its members.
2. The subgroup's extreme cohesiveness limited interaction with the group as a whole.
3. Competition among subgroup members lessened its influence on the group.
4. Aggressiveness of subgroup members heightened rivalry among them.
5. The subgroup was composed of smaller groupings (Mutual pairs and triangles).
6. The subgroup remained a unit in spite of disagreements.
7. The subgroup contributed leadership to the group.
8. Group processes took place within the subgroup.
9. Peripheral members tended to identify with subgroup members.

Some consideration should be given to the possible meaning these conclusions may have in regard to the role of the group worker, for it is the group worker who is responsible for helping individuals meet their needs through the group experience. The degree to which this group process can be facilitated depends, to a large extent, upon the worker's recognition and understanding of the interaction patterns of group members.

As has been indicated by the study, the subgroup provides a place for individuals to experience group processes such as competition and identification. The subgroup also serves as a place for individuals to meet specific needs. An awareness of these factors enables the worker to see the
very vital part the subgroup plays in the lives of its members.

One of the main objectives of group work is to help individuals develop meaningful relationships with others. Development often takes place at different levels, i.e., the individual may move to a paired relationship, from there to a subgroup, and eventually be able to relate to larger groupings. Each of these levels is of equal importance inasmuch as what is learned at one level is carried on to the next.

The group worker can help the individuals within a subgroup use the experience as a base for forming more lasting ties with larger groups. The permanency of most subgroups is usually limited. This is especially true of teen-age subgroups where relationships may be severed upon completion of high school, changing of residence or, in some instances, marriage. If the subgroup can be regarded as a unit wherein individuals learn some of the basic principles of relating to others, they can perhaps be helped to adapt to the group as a whole and be better prepared to assume their roles in the community.
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