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THERE is a growing trend in the various aspects of human relations to exercise greater control over human experience. This is particularly noticeable as it relates to children and adolescents. The field of education is being encouraged to become more curriculum conscious and to treat students more strictly and rigidly.

Life magazine expresses this viewpoint as follows: 1

"Some 23,000 of our schools, shocked by the softness and inadequacy of our teaching methods shown up by Russia's first Sputnik, are turning away from the 'social adjustment' psychology to more rigorous curricula and methods, with special attention to 'enrichment' or 'acceleration' for gifted minds."

Similar thoughts have been expressed by a foremost leader in the Jewish Center field, Graenum Berger:²

"The heart of the modern 'Y' does not lie in social work goals but rather educational

disciplines. This implies a selected, focussed, planned curriculum for our membership."

Although the "push" toward curriculum programming is prevalent throughout the country it is symbolized in papers by Irwin Golden, George Brager, Graenum Berger, and Harry Specht.

Since Harry Specht's paper is the most complete exposition of the use of program curriculum, most of our comments will be directed toward the ideas he has expressed.

For the purposes of this paper we will limit our remarks to the voluntary adolescent friendship club and not to special interest groups or educational classes.

We assume that the goals of group workers in the YM-YWHA are to help adolescents achieve growth through providing an opportunity to meet their psycho-social needs and fostering a positive identification with Judaism and democracy and the values they represent. We believe that these goals can be constructively used as expectations and chal-

lenges, to help young people successfully achieve their developmental tasks.

The Anxiety of the Jewish Community Center—Whose Needs Must We Meet?

Let us start with one of the prevalent concerns as expressed by Specht.7 "Most community centers have been concerned about some of their clubs who seem to accomplish nothing during the season." He is right! We do become anxious when groups seem to accomplish nothing. We find it difficult to sit by patiently while a group struggles to find a creative use of itself. Like all anxious parents we may become overpermissive or too controlling. Yet, is it really true that the group is accomplishing nothing? Does a group meet for a full program season, maintain good attendance and still accomplish nothing? Or is it that we have not acquired the knowledge and means to measure what a group is accomplishing? Can we really say that no individual in the group has become more self-confident because of the development of some skill-no individual was made to feel more secure because of a sense of belonging-no individual learned to respect difference in his fellow man-no individual acquired new positive values or strengthened old ones?

Too frequently we are dissatisfied with what a group accomplishes because it has not achieved the goals that we have set for it. Sometimes these goals are expressed directly as in the curriculum method or indirectly in the expectations of the advisor. In either case we are left with a vague feeling of frustration and anxiety. This is a fairly classical situation in human relations that arises when there is a conflict in needs. We must constantly ask ourselves, "whose needs are we trying to meet, our own or the group's?"

We suspect that part of our anxiety

stems from our difficulty in interpreting to the community and board just what we are doing. It is much easier to accept the prevalent standards of our times and to point to "x" number of completed programs as illustrative of our service, than to risk the frequently frustrating task of explaining the complicated group work process. Although we reduce our anxiety in this way we also have given up the practice of group work and succumbed to the principle of expediency.

"Love of certainty is a demand for guarantees in advance of action. Ignoring the fact that truth can be bought only by the adventure of the experiment, dogmatism turns truth into an insurance company. Fixed ends . . . are props for a feeling of safety, the refuge of the timid and the means by which the bold prey upon the timid." s

One of the justifications for the curriculum method is to be found in the statement that a program has been created that reflects the needs and interests of the community.

"Our approach to program development has to be geared to the needs of the community in which we work . . . suburban, middle income neighborhoods . . . adjustments of a similar nature will have to be made every time our communities change . . . "9

George Brager ¹⁰ has noted that "the youngsters who use the Mt. Vernon "Y" take considerably greater adult direction then might ordinarily be expected of adolescents. There seems almost an assumption that, in areas of conflict, the adults are right and they are wrong."

In other words, the Mt. Vernon teenager, moving in the direction of conformity and submissiveness is further encouraged to have himself shaped by

^{*} Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Atlantic City, N. J., May 20, 1960.

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¹ Life magazine—10/5/59—Editorial Comment.

² Graenum Berger, "What Have Jewish Community Centers to Offer Future Generations." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Jewish Welfare Board New York Metropolitan Section, November 24, 1958 (unpublished), p. 3.

³ Irwin Golden, The Planned Approach in Group, unpublished paper Jewish Community Center of Essex County, 1955.

⁴ George Brager, Memo to Leaders, Mt. Vernon YM-YWHA (unpublished), 1955.

⁵ Graenum Berger, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶ Harry Specht, "A Program Curriculum for Social Club Groups," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 1957, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, pp. 184-193.

⁷ Specht, op. cit., p. 184.

⁸ John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct. New York, Henry Holt & Company 1938, p. 237. 9 Specht, op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁰ George Brager, "Working with Teenagers in Mt. Vernon," *Programming for Today's Teenagers*. New York, National Jewish Welfare Board, 1956, p. 15.

forces outside himself into molds of the past. On the one hand, the center is to conform to the community and on the other the teenager is to conform to the center, which is conforming to the community of which he is part. It is as though we are determined to structure the existence of our future generations so that they have no choice except that of the status quo.

We must fail in our social responsibility if we are creating dependent conformists who with us accept all aspects of their society as though it represented perfection. We cannot help teenagers to develop their unique potentials through the demand for similarity and suppression of difference. The only choices open for our teenagers will be either opportunism or timidity. Our man of tomorrow will be either an "operator" or a "yes" man.

The Anxiety of the Leader

In referring to the specific aspects of program curriculum Harry Specht 11 quotes the agency manual as follows: "the above is, nevertheless, more than a list of program suggestions. It ought to be used to indicate to clubs what is expected of them." Since the advisor is the funnel of agency service and objectives, expectations of groups are in reality expectations of advisors. When we evaluate groups in relation to achieving a given curriculum e.g. "two trips ... a planned group discussion, a community service project" 12 etc. we set the pattern for evaluating the advisor according to the same criteria. The inexperienced, untrained, or insecure advisor will become even more anxious and seek a positive evaluation through encouraging his group to conform to the curriculum. He will tend to become more controlling, dogmatic, and authoritarian. This method is carried to a further extreme in the plan suggested by Irwin Golden ¹³ in which the supervisor meets with the advisor and uses a *form* to outline the group's program for the entire

We are familiar with the use of anxiety and guilt as motivating forces in life. We also know that the best kind of giving is on the basis of free will and the best kind of discipline is self imposed. Before exposing our members and advisors to this form of motivation, shouldn't we ask whether their problem is insufficient anxiety. George Brager's description of the Mt. Vernon teenager 14 seems to indicate an overabundance of anxiety and a pattern of conformity as a defense. Specht quotes Bernice Goodman to prove the inadequate qualifications of the typical advisor.

"We must face the limitations of their life experience, their lack of program skills, their closeness in age to center members, their lack of broad philosophical views, their need for close supervision and the conflict of their values with those of center members." 15

Now there seems little doubt that advisors like this will gladly accept the use of a curriculum since it relieves them of the difficult task of using themselves with maximum skill to foster group creativity. Their anxiety regarding a lack of skill is assuaged through the crutch of a pre-planned program. Instead of being realistically anxious about their lack of skill as an advisor they can now become anxious about whether their groups will achieve their assigned tasks. Instead of constructively working on their skill as a leader they can now project on to their group this new anxiety and push the group toward

program success or berate them for failure.

The Effect on the Group

Curriculum in the Specht paper is conceived as a "method" which Webster 16 defines as "an orderly procedure or process; hence a set form of procedure . . ." There is little in the Specht paper that discusses specific methodology but there is a list of program expectations, some of which are quoted below:

"For senior high members: a cultural program (discussion, trip, concert, etc.), an inter-city program (overnight trip as house guests), socials (several "closed"), an open fund raising affair, responsibility to the teenage council, a community service project, a parent-member program." 17

As can be seen from this list of activities, it consists of certain fixed program goals which groups are more or less expected to achieve. Specht defines 18 curriculum as "a technique, a method by which we can organize group experience." As we have seen, "method" according to Webster is defined as an orderly or set form of procedure. We find it confusing, therefore, when Specht refers to curriculum as a method. The only methodology in the use of a curriculum is implied in the expectation of related group achievement. This is not discussed in the Specht paper. It appears, however, that Specht is suggesting the use of program goals as a means of "organizing group experience" and not a particular methodology. It is on this basis that a further look at the implications in this approach is necessary.

Fixed program goals, even if called methods, are in effect ends. Like all ends, they are best achieved by some particular course of action suited to the situation. Having a "parent-member program'' 19 is not a course of action—it is an end to action.

"When ends are regarded as literally ends to action rather than as directive stimuli to present choice they are frozen and isolated." 20

This limitation on present choice inhibits the satisfaction of the psychological needs of the group and teaches as a value the imposition of decisions from outside. The curriculum adherents fail to recognize that "Ends are, in fact, literally endless . . . forever coming into existence as new activities occasioning new consequences." 21 Today's present is yesterday's future. The only reality for the individual in the particular group is in the present. To set all our sights on a fixed future is to deprive ourselves of the values of the present. We are continually creating the future when we most fully explore the present. In effect, to capture and control "the movement of the moving present"22 is to exercise the greatest degree of control over the future.

The failure to exploit the potential of the present is a rejection of the needs of the group in the present and the uniqueness of the particular situation in which it exists. The burden of fixed goals drags like an anchor and prevents the search for truth that can only be theirs when they have been free to search and find it for themselves. The anchor chain, as we have seen, is also attached to the advisor and restricts his freedom to help the group engage in the exploration for truth.

When many groups strive to reach the same end, a competitive situation is established that results in the attainment of maximum skill (within the limits of potential) in achieving the particular goal. If the goal is learning to ride a

¹¹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹² Loo. oit.

¹⁸ Irwin Golden, op. cit.

¹⁴ George Brager, Working with Teenagers in Mount Vernon, N. Y. Report of a Consultation. New York National Jewish Welfare Board, 1956, pp. 15-23.

¹⁵ Specht, op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁶ Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., 1941.

¹⁷ Specht, op. cit., p. 189.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

²⁰ Dewey, op. cit.

²¹ Ibid., p. 232.

²² Ibid., p. 283.

bicycle, in time a pattern of behavior is established requiring a minimum of motion and emotion. The more complex the goal, the more time will be required, but eventually a pattern will be developed that becomes fixed and rigid. When social approval from a primary group is associated with the achievement of the particular end it strengthens the rigidity and dogmatic nature of both the goal and the method.

As noted previously, one of the arguments in favor of the curriculum method is the readiness of Mt. Vernon teenagers to accept "a good deal of adult direction." 23 Our concern is with the effect of this approach on particular teenagers. One of the fundamental growth tasks of teenagers in our society is to achieve a resolution of their conflicting feelings about dependence vs. independence. Have the Mt. Vernon teenagers resolved this conflict? If they have not, what will an increase in the amount of adult direction do to their feelings about themselves in this regard? At some point in life the individual must find his own direction. One measure of maturity is the capacity to be self directing and to make decisions in accord with the situation. This is best achieved by the individual in facing situations in which he is called upon to find self purpose. The challenge of the center is to afford opportunities of this nature in accord with the ability of the individual. Too much "adult direction" or too "little" is an implied rejection of the person in terms of his ability. If our goal is to foster dependency and conformity then we should increase the emphasis on preplanned programs. If, however, our objective is the development of reality directed, mature individuals, then outer direction must dove-tail with the needs and capacities of the person.

The curriculum approach is presumably designed to provide a structure whereby clubs will have a multiplicity of experiences in accord with their interests. The experience of the Mt. Vernon "Y" and the Newark "Y" are referred to as proof of the success of this method in producing "better" programs. Granted, that the particular experiences are valid and desirable, (this may not be so since it is based on interest and not need) we must, however, further assume that members without a curriculum would not have selected the same or other equally desirable goals.

Writing in 1937, S. R. Slavson ²⁴ reports that "In one center, for example, the 14 to 16 year old group, consisting of about 250 boys was selected for a special experiment in progressive group education. The council of this section, stimulated by the staff, evolved no less than 22 distinct individual and group activities." Slavson concludes by stating "All that is necessary to stimulate this activity is to release native drives for . . . expression in accordance with the needs of the individual."

Writing in 1949 Wilson & Ryland were cautious on the use of interest norms in program planning. "Program planning may therefore be tentatively based on these assumed interests. But because there is always the danger that program content planned on this basis may be superimposed by the worker, rather than evolved from the group, the social group worker uses the norms of interest only in relation to the decision-making process within the group If, however, they are used as a fixed program which the members must follow, they limit the operation of the decision-making process and narrow the extent to which the members may use the group for personal and social development." A program curriculum by its very nature limits not only the choices available to the group but participation in the planning process. "The discussions that grow out of program planning.... hold important values for the members.... Frequently the discussion stimulated by an activity is of more value to the members than the activity itself." 25

Let us add up the positives and negatives of the program curriculum approach in terms of its effect on the group. On the positive side it would appear to produce a greater variety of programs with a higher level of attendance, (although as we have seen this is also subject to question). On the negative side it limits creativity, curtails choices, inhibits the decision making process, relates to interests and not needs and finally it stresses the prevalent values of the community and not basic Jewish or social work values.

Even if it were true that the curriculum method produced a greater variety of programs, the more important concern is the effect on the individual. Slavson was also worried about this. He said, "the educational process now in vogue is a leveling process; it tends to make all persons uniform by exposing them to a very limited range of influence and to very simple stimuli. This limitation of influences, coupled with the collective and imitative tendencies, tends to produce a uniform population—a population that thinks alike and feels alike, whose conduct conforms to one pattern and whose interests are few and relatively uniform."26

Curriculum and Values

Specht reports 27 a study conducted at Mt. Vernon on the effectiveness of the curriculum method and concludes "that the research that was done was inconclusive because the number of groups was too small and too short a time was involved." There were indications however that the curriculum method groups as compared to non-curriculum groups had a larger variety of programs and a higher average attendance. Even if we assume that this is scientifically valid, we must still be concerned with other criteria of success. Entertainment or free gifts can also produce high attendance. Quantity of different programs may not be as important as the quality of the experience. It is true, however, as we have seen that an overemphasis on ends can prevent the fullest exploitation of the present. We have also seen that when the club and advisor are evaluated according to fixed ends, means that are often anti-social or expedient are created which become ends in themselves. These ends may be the very same values that we oppose on a verbal level such as "payola" or "cheating" or "self interest at any cost."

This raises the whole question of "values" for consideration. At Mt. Vernon they are currently engaged in a study to "evaluate and examine the kinds of values that we would like to impart to our teen age groups." ²⁹ Values are underlying standards for behavior that reflect an adaptation to life in accord with the particular experience of the individual. When verbal ability exists the individual is frequently able to conceptualize a value in which he believes. Values are not really possessed theoretically unless they are practiced. Although it is possible to conceptualize

²³ Brager, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁴ S. R. Slavson, Creative Group Education. New York Association Press, 1948, p. 9.

²⁵ Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, Social Group Work Practice, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949, p. 162.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸ Specht, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 188.

values just as it is possible to know about baseball from reading a book, like baseball you do not really own a value unless you perform it on the playing field of life. Ideally there should be a synthesis of theory and practice and there should be the rejection of those values that experience proves unsound and identification with those values which serve the needs of the individual. This is similar to the relationship generally between self-understanding and behavior. The more mature individual is able to know himself and to learn from his experience and then act accordingly. In time he develops a set of principles which are verbal, intellectual abstractions of practice. For instance, the best way to learn cooperation might be by attempting to carry a heavy load by oneself without success, but finding it fairly simple with the cooperation of three others. Unfortunately, values are not always taught in this way. One of the problems for religious institutions generally, has been their difficulty in teaching values intellectually. This is reflected in the saving, "words are learned in the synagogue, behavior is learned in the group." The child up until the time of puberty is most strongly influenced by parental approval and disapproval. We are familiar with one of the indices of immaturity being the degree to which behavior is influenced by the pleasure-pain principle. Pleasurable experience for the child is tied up with the various forms of parental approval e.g. love. acceptance, rewards, recognition, etc. Painful experiences are manifested in relation to parental disapproval and include punishment, anxiety, rejection, hostility, etc.

The adolescent in contrast to the younger child is more influenced by pleasure-pain experiences in his peer group. By now he has learned to some degree to postpone immediate gratification and to withstand some measure of

pain. He is, however, still strongly influenced by approval and disapproval but his primary group allegiance is divided between his fellow teen agers and his parents. It is often the approval of his friends that provides greater control of his behavior than his parents disapproval. Toward the conclusion of adolescence we have a person whose behavior, dress, values, etc. have been primarily determined by his pleasure-pain experiences in his primary groups e.g. family, friends, synagogue, school. As the child becomes older and according to his intellectual ability he is able to verbalize what he believes. What he believes, however, is frequently a reflection of his experiences in approval or disapproval in his primary group experiences. It is during adolescence and young adulthood that discrepancies between the professed values of parents and their practice are increasingly noted. It is also during this period that he is starting to mediate his behavior on the basis of the reality principle and less on pleasure-pain. With less need for approval he can start rejecting those values which are inconsistent with experience.

Our discussion of values and how they are learned is of importance if we are to appraise correctly the curriculum approach. As we have seen, fixed program goals are in effect ends, which create particular means, most often on the basis of expediency. We have also seen that values are learned not as ends in themselves but as means of satisfying social relationships. In other words, the means that a group employs to achieve its ends, are in effect the experiences through which they are acquiring values.

In the curriculum approach, the achievement of pre-determined agency program goals brings status and approval for the group members. Motivation is thus externally conditioned on the pleasure-pain principle. The emo-

tional reward for the group is acceptance and recognition for their success. The primary value that is learned is the achievement of success. The group work approach, in contrast, emphasizes helping members to know what they want and need. The group becomes involved in the process of clarification, evaluation and decision making. Since it is their decision they are helped to take appropriate action in accord with their self-determined goal. Success in the achievement of this goal brings the emotional reward of self-respect and confidence. The primary values that are learned are self-direction and not outer direction, responsibility and not conformity and belief in democratic process as opposed to opportunism.

If we were asked to describe the type of teen agers who would profit the least from the curriculum method we would do so in the following manner: They are adolescents who are strongly motivated by "highly coded status determinants in the community." They assume that, "adults are right and they are wrong ... parents are considerably more involved in their lives." They are, "more verbal, more mannered, more polite place a high value on succeeding at school are highly scheduled." These are the words of George Brager describing the Mt. Vernon teen ager. Are these the teen agers who need a curriculum approach? In our discussion of values and the community we have seen how the curriculum approach encourages the development of teen-age behavior that coincides with the attitudes of the Mt. Vernon adolescent. The group work approach stresses inner direction rather than outer direction, self discipline as opposed to external discipline, flexibility in behavior and not rigidity, principles instead of dogma and

It may seem that our approach is only negative. This is not our intention. As we have pointed out, we believe in the group work method. We further believe that groups need to be confronted with agency objectives in the concrete form of expectations. Expectation, however, must be related to the psycho-social developmental tasks of the individual and the group. These tasks if developed clearly can and are being used quite constructively by many centers. We believe that groups require some motivation but we recognize that the most desirable motivation should be self stimulated. We believe that certain specific content in the group experience is more valuable than that which is left to chance but that content must be related to group needs and agency objectives, and should not be imposed. Our main concern about the curriculum approach is not with the "what" of the curriculum, but with the "how." This was expressed by an educator in these words, "how do we best train the mind to make intelligent choices? By presenting it with verbal formulations or by helping young people through trial and error in the rough and tumble of their experience to sharpen observation and refine judgment." 33

The subject of this paper is not an intellectual or academic exercise, nor is it a new problem. It has been with us since the dawn of civilization when man was confronted with the task of assuming responsibility for what he could transmit to the younger generation. It is the problem of how to transmit the valuable experience of the past without authoritarian dogma and in the atmosphere of

finally the freedom to grow in accord with one's potential and not according to the dictates of the particular Jewish center or community.

³⁰ Brager, op. cit., p. 16.

³¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸² Ibid., p. 16.

³³ T. Thayer, The Authoritarian Attempt to Capture Education. New York, Kings Crown Press, 1945, p. 83.

freedom, to the younger generation of the present so that they can create the better future of tomorrow. We agree with the world famous social psychiatrist, G. Brock Chisolm, that this is our most important challenge and that the future peace and survival of the world may hinge on its outcome. "Man's freedom to observe and think freely is as essential to his survival as are the specific methods of survival of the other species to them. Birds must fly, fish must swim . . . and man must observe and think freely. That freedom present in all children . . . has been destroyed or crippled

by local certainties, by gods of local moralities. . . . ''34

The problem before our profession and all mankind is both complicated and of great consequence. How can we best prepare the future generations for a peaceful and better world? Shall it be with prescribed truths and predetermined means or will it be with the sensitivity of a gentle guiding hand that permits maximum freedom in the search for truth?

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS—CASEWORK OFF THE BEATEN PATH*

by RUTH FIZDALE

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Introduction

THE Arthur Lehman Counseling Service began some six years ago as a pilot project for the field of social work. Its mission was to offer family counseling services to the middle and upper income groups exclusively, and to determine from its experience what was important for other social agencies to know should they wish to extend or expand their services to these groups. A pilot project has the obligation to make its experience known for others to use and to present its experience for the critical appraisal of colleagues.

Casework agencies have always had the policy of an "open door." Anyone desiring the help of a social agency could and would be certain of a willingness on the part of the caseworker and the agency to serve him insofar as possible. Certainly in the area of family counseling, a client from any walk of life can be sure of assistance from any family-oriented setting. Therefore, most casework counseling agencies have served some persons from the middle and upper income groups.

With these clients, nothing is so different in the problems they present, and understandably so. The same basic

causes of emotional problems, mental illness, family disruption exist, regardless of economic strata of a family. A child suffers from the absence of a father. whether it is caused by economic failure and desertion, or by great personal ambition for financial success. A mother who neglects her children because she has no capacity to love creates similar effects on the children whether she lets them roam the streets, sends them off to a boarding school, or leaves them in the care of a governess. Illness, physical or emotional, creates shifts in family patterns and often carries with it strains in the intra-familial relationships. Similarly, the treatment needs of these clients are identical with those of our former clients, despite the often greater articulateness of this group and its greater seeming sophistication with psychological terms and concepts.

One of the theses of this paper, however, is that an "open door" policy is not enough to attract or offer service to the majority of potential clients of the middle and upper income groups. The fact remains that the number of clients from these economic groups who do use the services of social agencies does not reflect their proportion in the community. Although all agencies are aware of this fact, they seem to believe that a good public relations program will be the remedy. The experience that we have

³⁴ G. Brock Chisolm, "The Reestablishment of Peacetime Society," Psychiatry, Vol. IX, No. 1. Feb. 1946.

^{*} Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Atlantic City, May 24, 1960.