

# ***Making Them Normal***

## Notes on Rehabilitating Emotionally Disturbed Children

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All people are processed by other people. It is only through continuous interactions with others that people become members of communities. Being a member of a community means that one can respond to oneself as the community responds to him (Mead, 1934: 265), and this involves a process of learning certain beliefs, skills, desires, and behavior. During a lifetime, people become members of many communities. That is to say they occupy many positions, and each one has a somewhat different set of beliefs, desires, and practices associated with it.

There are institutions specifically charged with processing people, evaluating their progress, and with inculcating certain beliefs, practices, and motivations into them. Some of these institutions develop people, while others are specifically designed to redevelop people (Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 68). Institutions that redevelop, or resocialize people do so because the people have some deficiency, and it is these institutions I am concerned with. Examples of such institutions are hospitals and prisons. Many of the structural characteristics of such institutions have been described previously (see for example, Brim and Wheeler, 1966; Goffman, 1961; and Sykes, 1965), and while these characteristics are important, they are not my central concern.

In this paper, I will focus on the variations in interaction in a home for "emotionally disturbed" children between members of the staff and the inmates, and how these variations are related to the broader organizational

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context. My concern is with variations in interaction between the children and the various adults at the Home, and how these variations affect the fates of the children and help or hinder the goals of the Home.

The data on which the paper is based were collected by participant observation. This method more or less involves observations made while participating in the lives of those under study as they go about their everyday activities. The participant observer questions them about what they do, how they do it, and why they do it (for a more detailed account of this method, see Junker, 1960; and McCall and Simmons, 1969). The data were gathered over a period of a year by observing, interviewing, and participating in the lives of the children, staff members, and others involved in the process of resocializing the children.

### THE HOME: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Home is a physically unimpressive structure unobtrusively located in the middle of a city of about 100,000. There are presently 21 children in residence who are served by a staff of from 26 to 30 adults. Home policies are legislated by the directors who, although they sometimes interact with the children, are largely uninvolved with the routines of group life. Next in line are the group leaders (three for each group), and under them are the advisers (one to three per group). Still accountable to the directors, but on another chain of command, are office staff, housekeeping staff, and the recreation director. Outside the formal chain of command are the teachers and therapeutic staff.

The task of actually handling the children and enforcing institutional doctrine falls to the group leaders, advisers, and teachers. The group leaders work in twelve-hour shifts and are responsible for organizing the daily activities of the children. As a matter of policy, group leaders remain with the groups to which they are assigned until they terminate their employment. The advisers usually work for eight hours during the afternoon and evening, and their function is to aid the group leader in handling the children. The teachers (half of whom function more in a counseling capacity) are in contact with the children during the school day.

The Home has had problems in retaining personnel for several years. For example, during a typical six-month period ten staff members left, resulting in a turnover rate of 38.4%. In terms of those staff directly responsible for the everyday activities of the children, the rate was 50%. In other words, half of the group leaders, advisers, and teachers during any period may be relatively new to the Home.

It is the policy of the Home that the children are to be given a completely structured environment and one on which they can rely under any circumstance. This highly structured environment is maintained with the view that these emotionally disturbed children cannot provide the necessary controls on their behavior. This policy had led to the development of an extensive system of rules applicable to most every situation. Even a casual listing of such rules would run on for several pages, from rules against wrestling (because it promotes sexual play), to rules specifying what activities the children will do at what time of the day. In addition, when new situations arise which are not immediately covered under present rules, new ad hoc rules are made up on the basis of what is conceived to be in the best interests of the children. For example, during Halloween a decision was made that the children could not trick-or-treat off the grounds of the Home. The reasoning behind this decision was that it might remind them of a time when they had to beg, and this would not be therapeutic. By and large, however, the rules are centered around making the children normal in the tradition of the middle class. The children are well-fed and clothed, and their academic progress or lack of it is taken quite seriously. Sex is frowned upon by the directors, and any activity which might provide opportunities for the children to engage in sexual play is expressly forbidden. In fact, one primary criterion of success in making them normal is whether or not the girls become pregnant. If they do, the treatment process is viewed as a failure (for boys, failure results if they are implicated in any "delinquent" activities.)

The ultimate goal of the Home is to develop within the children sets of rules so that they can control their own actions. When the child conforms to institutional demands on his behavior, he is said to be "managing;" however, when any child engages in behavior which breaks rules, it is a symptom that the child is still emotionally disturbed. Typically, when the child cannot manage he is removed from the situation until he can handle it, and this includes all sorts of minor situations. The child—because he is sick—is not assigned any kind of chores except cleaning his room, and, in addition, the staff continually asks the child if he can manage. For now, however, let it suffice to say that the more the child manages the more the staff concludes that he is progressing toward becoming normal.

However, I want to note that the psychiatric perspective which informs and shapes the official policies of the Home are not unanimously shared by the members of the staff. For most of the staff, the defining characteristic of the child is his emotional disturbance, yet there are those who do not wholly subscribe to this ideology, and some who hold strong reservations about it. That is, there is not consensus on the children's

identity, and this variation in the conception of the children's "problem" is reflected in the group categories utilized by members of the staff in their comments and discussion of their day-to-day activities. In fact, the staff can be classified into three groups on the basis of their position in the social structure of the Home and their conception of the children's identity: the "Core party," the "Outer party," and the "Heretics."

The Core party, composed of the directors, office staff, and therapists, define and support the official doctrine as the basis for interpreting and, more importantly, judging the children's behavior. The Outer party is composed of some teachers, group leaders, and advisers, and they also define the child as essentially "sick." This group, having adopted official doctrine, implements the many rules which impose a regimen of controls on the children's activities, and records, interprets, and reports on their behavior to the Core. Finally, there are the Heretics, composed of the rest of the teachers, advisers, and group leaders. The members of this group are generally younger in age than the members of the Outer party but senior in service at the Home. The Heretics tend to treat as problematic the official view of the children as sick, and in some cases reject the diagnosis. These judgments, which subvert the prevailing psychiatric interpretations are not openly expressed except to other members of the Heretics.



## THE CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES

When a newly employed staff member begins work at the Home he is told that he will be working with emotionally disturbed children in a controlled environment. Typically, he interprets this to mean that the Home will be "surrounded by a high fence and that my duties might entail aiding some glassy-eyed youngster to string beads." Essentially, the children are conceived as incapable and harmless, and the Home as where they are kept. In the first few days, the neophyte restores capability: instead of dazed and hallucinating children, they are warm, receptive and appear to function quite well. On the other hand, the staff are orderly and quite authoritarian. In light of these experiences, the neophyte begins to doubt the emotional stability of those in charge, and in addition, decides that he can "put faith into the good nature of his charges." This stage of socialization is labeled the "honeymoon" by older staff members.

At this point, the neophyte, pregnant with authority, assumes the children will give little trouble. After all, they *are* children. What the newcomer has yet to learn is that the children do not recognize his authority, and the form the experience takes sets the stage for a radical

reversal in perspective. Typically, the honeymoon ends when the newcomer asserts authority:

Staff: All right you two, cut it out. You know you aren't . . .

Child: (aggressively) You don't know anything.

Staff: That may be true, but you had better listen. I . . .

Child: (interrupting) Ah, go fuck yourself!

In the course of the day, the new staff member will elicit with ease many such exchanges. More than once he will be told that he "is the shittiest adviser we have ever had." Temporarily confused, the new staff reacts with righteous indignation. (In a small number of cases, new staff became afraid and withdrew from interaction.) The children continue to make assaults on the new staff, sometimes in the form of physical combat. By the end of two working weeks, the neophyte, in light of the new evidence, reconstitutes the children; they are "really sick." Furthermore, they are harmful to each other, to themselves, and potentially to society.

It is during this time that the stage of Core party control gains its dominance. The Core party perspective (the party line) is that the children are ill and must be provided with controls and structure since they cannot provide their own. New staff initially encounter this orientation after the first week of employment. The neophyte begins attending conferences with one of the directors who charts out the major tenets of the perspective. He then is sent out to deal with the children who not only deny him legitimacy but know more of the standard procedures for doing things. The neophyte, still considering the constitution of the children, is constantly involved in interactions affirming the party line.

When such problems develop, the neophyte discusses them with the director, and it is during these ongoing conferences that official dogma reaches the neophyte. Whatever the newcomer thinks the problem is, the Core party puts it into perspective. A neophyte describes a typical encounter:

I was having some trouble with Jim; he would always pick on Robert, and fight with him. Besides, he was disobedient and disruptive. [The Director] said that it was due to my feelings of hostility toward Jim, and that Jim felt my dislike, he would reject me before I could reject him. The reason he abused Robert was my overprotection of the younger one, and Jim's desire to receive similar attentions.

There are other meetings as well; each week the group staff meets with the Core party at which time it is decided how each child, as well as the

group as a whole, is to be managed. Likewise, once a week, a general staff meeting occurs at which the head psychiatrist leads a discussion of some problem affecting the institution or some child. When it involves a child, the psychiatrist, the child's therapist, and staff (including neophytes) try to arrive at a common understanding of the child's problem and the best means of approaching it. Ways of handling the child's deviant behavior are charted, and (most important for new staff), for each rule applicable to the topic under consideration, therapeutic reasons are given justifying its existence. Thus, rules which first appear meaningless become meaningful given the party line. For example, a staff member should never let a child borrow anything from the staff or from other children. The reason is that when the child borrows from staff he is manipulating the staff, but furthermore, it is a desire on the part of the child to replace his character with the staff's. Thus, to borrow something from the staff was a form of self-rejection and this cannot be condoned by staff whose job is to make them normal. In addition, the new staff are rewarded by the Core party when they interpret the children's behavior using the party line.

The result of this process is that new staff *become* believers. Having already recast the child as really sick, the neophyte begins employing the party line and thus using the child's now-apprehended sickness to explain behavior. Every hostile or defiant act can now be put into place and rendered meaningful. Distant, and distrustful, the neophyte, who no longer is so new, is intent to enforce the rules and maintain control. The children, in experiencing heavy enforcement, are even more aggressive and defiant (and thus make their contributions to the building of their identities), which is interpreted by the staff as another indication of sickness. The neophyte becomes a member of the Outer party.

In so doing, he has recast himself, and those things which stand in relation to him. He becomes a collector of incidents affirming the party line, and his reports continue to ordain the children as essentially sick. And, as a matter of course, this reaffirmation, and continuing ordination is done where and when the children are not present:

At the staff meeting, the topic of how one child's psychotic behavior had been overcome by the Home's help had just been concluded. As the Staff paused, an Outer party member said, "Speaking of psychotic behavior, I saw Betty exhibit some behavior that seemed rather psychotic, and I was really surprised. I smelled something funny in the kitchen, and I went out to see what it was, and Betty was standing there. I asked her what was burning, and then I noticed that the smoke was coming from the toaster. She was trying to make a cheese sandwich, and had put the cheese on the bread before she put it in the toaster. I told her that wasn't the way it was done, and she didn't seem too

upset about it. Later though, she blew up. She and Judy wanted to see [a movie] on the television, but it lasted longer than their bedtimes, so I gave them their choice of two other programs. Judy accepted this, but Betty began yelling and finally got so angry she knocked a table over. I told her to pick it up and she screamed, "Don't threaten me" and rushed out. When she came back [into the room], she seemed to have pulled herself together. Later, I thought she might want to talk about it, but she was completely unresponsive." Then a Core Party member replied, "Yes, that sounds like it could be a psychotic break."

Among members of the Core party, distrust of the children reaches primacy. Whereas the Outer party ordained the child disturbed, the Core party *assumes* disturbance. By virtue of ending up in the Home, the child achieves, albeit unknowingly, a total identity. Removed from most everyday interactions with the child, the Core party receives reports of "what happened," and, on the basis of these accounts, adjudicates. Such a procedure, by its very nature, must be selective and abstract and need contain only the *essential* information.

Essence, the unfolded meaning of existence, is obtained through a distillation. The extraction is accomplished by relating the current event to other events (which are also distillations). The events in question are not the staff interactions with the children but with members of the Core party. In the discussions and analysis of the children, what happened between the staff and the child is not so important for the staff as what is happening between staff and Core party. Given the total identity of the child, and given present definition ("What problems are you having with the children?"), the recounting of what went on is put into perspective. The Core party, having set the conditions of interaction, has encouraged the construction of negative accounts of the children's behavior. Abstracted and objectified, the behavior-account can be apprehended with the general perspective that the child is first, last, and always emotionally disturbed. Because the child is essentially disturbed, all of his behavior must be questioned and distrusted. The following account will, perhaps, aid the reader's understanding.

One of the children believed she saw a man climbing on the roof of the building as she looked out her window. The staff members on duty immediately responded by calling the police. Although the police did not catch anyone, they said they knew who he was and where he lived. Prior to this event, there had been another incident of a strange man at the Home. The next day, at the weekly meeting between the group staff and the Core party the following occurred:

**One of the Staff** who was on duty last night and the director were setting up chairs for the meeting, and the Director inquired about the event. The Staff

recounted what had taken place. Then, the Director said, "You see, she is likely to see something like that, whether the man is there or not. She was the only one to see him, wasn't she?" The Staff replied in a stunned and disbelieving way [and later said that such an idea had never occurred to her]. The Director then replied, "It's not that she was lying. She really thought she saw him, but the man could have been one of the other children passing by her window or something like that." Then, the rest of the unit Staff and Core party arrived and the meeting began. [About five minutes into the meeting, the event was brought up again]. "As to that incident last night," the Director turned to the other Staff who was working then, "was she the only one to see the man?"

Staff: "Yes. She had moved her bed near the window and was lying on it looking outside. All of a sudden, she came running in yelling, 'He's climbing on the roof.' I didn't want to take a chance, and she seemed sincere, so I called the Police."

Director: "Oh, I have no doubt she was sincere. Judging from her history, she's prone to do this though."

Staff: "She seemed perfectly sure about it. I had her describe what he was wearing and all, and she answered without hesitation."

Director: "He would have to be a very bold man to climb on the roof when it was still light. Well, we have the Police alerted, and if anyone notices anything suspicious, [they] will be ready to move in."

It is the "history" of the child's disturbance that provides the pattern by which events are understood. A temporal, abstracted account of the child, the history is selectively constructed by the very events it explains. The history is built by utilizing recurrence (i.e., whether an activity is repeated—see Matza, 1969: 168-173). When a child manifests behavior that is odd or rule-breaking, the history of the child is used as the explanation. The event explained becomes a recurrence and evidence that the child is still disturbed. The history includes accounts of normal behavior, gathered in a similar manner, but not utilized in the same fashion. Normal behavior indicates that the child is managing, directing his emotions productively, and this behavior is the result of the treatment process. As behavior resulting from the treatment process, it indicates that the child is currently managing, but the history indicates that in the past he has not. However, the psychiatric ideology of the Core party goes a step further. Because the children are quite disturbed, they are not responsible for their rule-breaking or otherwise deviant behavior. Whenever any deviant behavior occurs, whether by one or all of the children, it is because the structure and control provided by the staff have broken down. Thus, whenever disruptions occur, the staff is held responsible.

Believing the child is really sick, the new staff member continues to report behavior to the Core party. But, in addition, he becomes an



enforcer who doubts every move of the children. Enforcement is necessary for two related reasons: the children are ill and need controls, and, if control breaks down and disruptive behavior ensues, the staff will be guilty. The circle is now complete: in reporting the deviant behavior of the child, the staff member is also reporting his own failures. At this point, the staff begins to make a distinction between the rule-breaking behavior of the children and those actions arising out of the child's mental state. The child takes on a dual identity.

The necessity of imposing a regimen of structured activity for maintaining order becomes clear. The staff also learns, however, that activity must be more than a program of control; it must be therapeutic as well. Every rule that is applied must have therapeutic value, and every punishment or sanction must have therapeutic justification. The staff is caught between the necessity for total control and the absence of sanctions to enforce control. The children, at least some of them, are aware of the limitations placed on the staff and are aware of the rules. It is not infrequent for a child to tell the Core party when a staff member violates a rule, or at least threaten the staff with disclosure.<sup>1</sup>

### THE HERETICS

The control of the Core party perspective begins to decline as the staff member builds relationships with the other children and other staff members. The staff member begins to interact with the children in some structured activity and engages in conversation. The children, in the vast majority of instances, are well aware of what is going on and sometimes aid the staff by proposing rational procedures. As these relationships build, the staff begins to be more sympathetic to some children more than others; it is these children whose identities are first reconsidered. Later the other children's identities are reconsidered.

In addition, other staff members influence the process of reconsideration. Since the beginning of the newcomer's employment, experienced staff have been socializing him simply by performing their duties. He discovers which of the staff have the most success in dealing with the children and begins imitating them. Usually, it is the Heretics who befriend the new staff member.

Once in contact with the Heretics, the neophyte notices that they have greater success in dealing with the children (as well as the Core party). He also learns that they question the degree to which the children are disturbed and, in turn, reject the main tenet of the party line. The

Following is a conversation between a staff member (SM) verging on becoming part of the Heretics and a Heretics member (H):

SM: What is it that we are trying to do with these kids?

H: We just try to give them love and affection, and the security they couldn't get elsewhere.

SM: It's hard for me to see sickness as such in them.

H: Yes. As far as I'm concerned, [two of the children] would be alright in a good foster home. As a matter of fact, they all would probably be alright in a home where they were taken care of.

Furthermore, the staff member learns that they view their work less therapeutically than it is supposed they do by the Core party. At staff meetings, the Heretics speak in therapeutic jargon, but among themselves they question the necessity of the elaborate set of rules and the absurdity of the Core party. The Heretics, in dealing with the children, are less exacting with the rules not necessary to maintain order or whose therapeutic value is dubious. They are willing to let small infractions occur as long as order is not endangered:

Judy, Anne, Barbara, and Nancy were playing what appeared to be leapfrog, but because of their differences in size, I guess it wasn't very exciting. They started wrestling; I know wrestling is usually forbidden [because the children might engage in sexual play], but since the girls weren't getting mad or upset, and they were enforcing rules—no pinching, grabbing necks, biting, or scratching—I let them go ahead.

It is the Heretics that develop close relationships with the children and allow them greater freedom, relatively speaking, than the Outer party. The child, in turn, cooperates in maintaining order. In addition, the Heretics often report in staff meetings that the children are managing, and in general, report far less problems with the children. Thus, the Heretics emphasize improvement in the child which in the case of the older children results in even more freedom. It is the Heretics then, that record the normal behavior of the child, and in fact, under Heretic control, the children behave more orderly. By and large, if the staff member has not yet left the Home for better employment, he adopts the Heretic perspective. However, by this time many staff have already quit working at the Home: so the process starts all over again for the Core party, experienced staff, and the children.

There is one additional consideration before we examine the effects of the staff on and for the children. Each staff member has one or more rules

which he feels must be enforced, and there is wide variation between staff. For example, the Core party takes quite seriously the legislated ban against sexual play and has rules governing activities where this might occur. Thus, the children should not wrestle, should not be out of sight of a staff member, and contacts between the girls and boys should especially be watched. Some of the staff, most of whom are Outer party, are caught up with this potential danger and will not allow any kind of physical contact. Other staff, not so concerned, will allow such contacts. The variations in enforcement are well summarized by two staff reactions. One group leader's response to a perceived increase in sexual play was, "Well, it is spring." Another group leader, noticing what she thought was a child masturbating, called all the children in her group together and told them if they masturbated they would "get warts on their hands." Similarly, some staff members are quite severe in punishing those who use "foul language" (e.g., shit, son-of-a-bitch, motherfucker), while others are more tolerant. The result is that the children are faced with a different set of priorities with each staff member unless, of course, the staff have similar systems of enforcement.

The degree to which the staff have similar enforcement patterns is largely a function of how long they have worked together. Those staff who have worked together longest are usually in the Heretic wing and, thus, provide the most stable enforcement structure. Likewise, they also provide the children with the most freedom. However, even the Heretics enforce most of the rules, for they are accountable to the Core party.

### NEGOTIATING "NORMALITY"

When the child enters the Home he is usually unaware of the official reasons for why he is there, and in addition the child is not aware that in "acting out," he is bearing witness against himself. However, the child does have his own conception about why he is at the Home, and as one child succinctly explained, "this is a place where they take care of you when your family can't." In general, these types of notions accompany acting out, and this correlation is, at least in part, the staff's doing. (It is reasoned that until the child has expressed his hostilities he cannot develop insight into his problem.)

While the idea the child has about why he is in his current state does not change, he does begin to grasp the workings of the Home. When he begins to understand *what* is going on is partially a function of how old he is and how long he has lived at the Home. In general, by the time the child

has lived at the Home a year, he can verbalize the major institutional goal: managing. He encounters this idea of behavior in his everyday interactions with the staff, and usually not managing is linked with negative attention and sometimes resultant punishment (e.g., being sent to one's room for one hour). For the purposes of accounting, the child is about ten years old at this stage. Another way of stating this relationship is that the child is unaware of the *ends* the Home has in mind, but he is aware of behavior desired (see Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 25-28).

By the time the child is eleven or twelve years old, not only does he have a sense of the workings of the Home, but also he has a sense of what managing means to the staff and *for* him. Here is a critical connection between child, staff, and institutional goal. For the child, the *meaning* of "managing" is revealed through his interactions with the staff, and the nature of such interaction depends greatly on the staff's conception of the child. The degree to which positive rewards are attached to managing depends on the degree to which the staff views the child as essentially sick. As previously discussed, there is a strain among the staff to adopt a perspective which grants the child some measure of "wellness." However, this strain exists only as long as the Heretics exist, and thus, the crucial variable is not just the rate of staff turnover but the degree to which the turnover involves members of the Heretics.

At the present time, however, there is a strain to associate positive reward with managing. Typically, the staff will state that if the child (and the other children) manages during the current activity (e.g., supper), there will be some reward. The older children who already understand what this means, frequently enforce management on those not yet equipped with understanding. (For the staff, managing does not mean "being in command of one's actions, or current Self" but simply behaving as the staff desires.) The child grasps the relation: if I behave as the staff wants, I will be rewarded. In the following example, a twelve-year-old explains his current exemplary behavior on the basis of future rewards over a month away:

I [the observer] was talking with Sam about how sometimes there was nothing to do around the Home, and he said, "I can't wait to get out of here this summer." I asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "[a group leader] said that if I manage, I can go on these summer camping trips they have at the Y [M.C.A.]. You go for two or three days, and you camp, and swim, and go water-skiing. That's why I've been managing lately. I don't want to get stuck here; it's so boring."

Usually the child's first outside activity away from the Home and the other children is supervised. For example, a child is allowed to take

dancing lessons and is accompanied by a staff member who waits at the studio until the lessons are over. Then, the staff member takes the child back to the Home. However, once the child is allowed into the outside world, the influence of the Home begins to decline, and gradually the influence of the children and adults outside the Home increases. If the child is successful in managing these first activities, he then is allowed more outside activity. The critical period, in terms of the goals of the Home, begins when the child begins school outside the Home. This period usually begins when the child is fourteen, or about the time for Junior High School. To remain in school outside the Home, the child must manage. In this instance, to manage means that the child must make passing grades and stay out of trouble. The latter is more important than the former unless the child fails to pass most of his courses. In this case, or if the child does get into trouble, he is believed to still be quite ill and is brought back into the structure of the Home.

By this time, the child understands the ideological base of the Home and how it is run. What he does in light of this knowledge is critical to his progress in being made normal. A successful strategy is to begin producing evidence that one is managing. Typically, when talking with each other the older children view therapy in a downgrading fashion. However, once in therapy, the child produces the necessary information that indicates he is managing. A fifteen-year-old in a conversation with a twelve-year-old described it this way: "The [Core party] doesn't play by your rules; you have to play by their rules." Whether the child adopts this course of action or some other depends, of course, on his assessment of the data, and the data include among other things the influence of his peers outside the Home and the degree to which living at the Home stigmatizes him. That is, besides the influence of the Home, one must consider the socializing influence of the external society (see Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 103). Similarly, it is quite difficult to assess whether the changes in the child and the subsequent course of action taken is due to the influence of the Home or to maturational shifts (Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 103). However, one perspective of the child's actions remains relatively stable. Throughout the process, the Core party continues to predict the child's ultimate failure. During a staff meeting, one of the Core party predicted that a sixteen-year-old "will be pregnant within a year."<sup>2</sup>

## DISCUSSION

We have considered some of the processes that create change and stability at the Home, and how these processes affect both staff and

children. Specifically, we have examined how interactions between the staff and children are variously interpreted and then "accounted" by the staff, and how these variations are linked to structural features of the Home. The high turnover rate among the staff allows the children a degree of power to negotiate social order and socialize new staff members. Because the turnover rate is quite high, the children have largely formalized the ways in which new staff are socialized. These mechanisms are not expected by new staff, and many have a great deal of difficulty adjusting. This difficulty is heightened by the Core party which fails to inform the new staff of what to expect, and thus allows the neophyte to sustain highly idealized conceptions of the children and the functions of the Home (for a similar account of organizational effects of recruits see Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 83-85).

The turnover rate among staff members has other consequences that affect the lives of the children. Because of the turnover, many staff members are unacquainted with the child's history and accept at first the formal pronouncements. In addition, the staff member is held responsible for any disruptions of routine activity, and each disruption is accounted for by the children's pathology. The result is a tendency for the staff to adopt a custodial approach rather than a therapeutic one. The staff member continues to interpret the children's actions as indicating illness until he develops friendships with them. However, by the time this occurs, many staff have already left, and so the process continues.

For the children, when old staff members leave the Home, it can be quite traumatic. This is especially true for the younger children because they establish much closer relationships with the staff. For many of the children so involved, the departure is a loss of stability and intimate friendship. It is the loss of someone who cared and trusted the child. For the new staff coming in to fill the position, the job is all the harder. The reaction of the older children is one of increasing indifference and refusal to become involved with the staff who are supposed to be some of their most intimate contacts. One child, in commenting on the coming and going of the staff, said, "I don't care. If I got upset about everybody's leaving, I'd be upset all the time."

The children remain to socialize new staff and continue to negotiate the social order. Their continuing power to do so rests, ironically, on the Core party premise that they are not responsible. Thus, they have the power to influence the evaluations of the staff members. In addition, the children develop friendships with those staff who remain any length of time. These staff typically interpret the children's actions in terms of their progress and report improvement to the Core party, which in many instances means

greater freedom for the children. Thus, through these friendships and because they can affect the evaluations of the staff, the children can exert some control over their lives (for a different perspective on a similar process, see Sykes, 1956: 257-262, and 1965: 40-62).

When he enters the Home, the child is largely unaware of what is planned for him and how his actions are interpreted, while the staff is quite aware of the child and the actions planned for him. As the child grows up, however, he begins to grasp the various aspects of the Home, and his "awareness context" becomes more open (Glasser and Strauss, 1964: 669-679). That is, he becomes aware of how the staff and Core party conceive his identity, and in addition he becomes aware of the rewards for acting as they desire. The child begins producing the behavior desired and is rewarded. Becker (1964) argues quite cogently that all an organization need do to produce the desired behavior is to coerce the individual into acting the desired way and then create conditions which attach additional rewards to continuing the behavior. However, what becomes critically important is the direction of the coercion and the kind of reward (see Brim and Wheeler, 1966). At the Home, the degree to which the child recognizes the positive rewards attached to managing is intimately linked to the degree such rewards are offered, which in turn is intimately linked to the stages of staff socialization. The longer a staff member works at the Home the greater the probability such rewards will be offered. These rewards not only include more freedom but, in addition, personal relationships with the staff. Glaser (1964) found such personal relationships to be of significant importance in the successful rehabilitation of prisoners, and as we have noted such relationships are quite meaningful to the children. The high rate of staff turnover results in a majority of staff that identifies the children as essentially sick and incapable. Such staff remain distant and fail to develop relationships with the children. Furthermore, their reporting of the children's behavior tends to emphasize problems and failures which further justifies control (and negative rewards). Thus, the staff turnover and the resultant maintenance of the Core party ideology seriously affects the degree to which the children manage and become normal.

## NOTES

1. At its height, Core party control over the staff results in a "confession syndrome." The staff member who believes he has broken a rule, or performed untherapeutically, rushes to one of the Core party to tell him. In some cases, the staff

becomes afraid to sanction the children and even begins denying responsibility by assigning questionable actions to other staff.

2. Viewed from the children's perspective, their initial behavior toward new staff members is an attempt to socialize them into a social order of the children's choosing. The children seek to establish an order which grants them a greater share of the rewards than the existing order. In this context, acting out is an attempt to re-establish the initial social order of the Home for the child. However, it is not only on the basis of aggressive behavior that the children seek to re-establish (i.e., negotiate) higher rewards but other behavior as well. For example, one of the children, Lisa, used to obtain a great deal of attention from being physically sick. The old staff would not grant her attention for this behavior, and consequently, the extent to which she was physically ill diminished. However, one of the old staff was replaced by a new staff member and the following ensued:

The new Staff member sat down and lit a cigarette, and asked how Lisa was feeling since she was carrying a temperature. Another staff member replied, "I took her temperature this morning and there was nothing." The new Staff replied, "Well, she did have a temperature when I took it, and I really think we should watch her." To this the old Staff replied, "Oh, Lisa has ways of making temperatures. If you sympathize with her now, soon she'll have a temperature everyday and aches all over her body."

Later another old staff member said that Lisa had "regressed." That is, the child previously received attention through sickness and found another opportunity to reinstate the old order.

The process of negotiation is not limited to the children attempting to re-establish an old order. In one instance, invoking an extension of privileges, a child told a new group leader that he was allowed to take walks off the grounds after dark. The new staff, not knowing otherwise and having no apparent reason to doubt, allowed him to do so for several weeks until an old staff stopped it. (For the Core party, this behavior indicates that the child's emotional disturbance is still present.) Another way of stating this finding is that the greater the knowledge of the rules, the greater the power in negotiation. Moreover, knowledge of the rules depends (at this point) on how long one has been at the Home, and thus, the longer one has been at the Home, the greater the power in negotiation. (From the staff perspective, one can assert that the newer the staff, the greater the rule-breaking and testing by the children.) Furthermore, one can extend these findings to the group as a whole: thus, the greater the percentage of staff that are new, the greater the power of the children in negotiation.

If one considers that negotiation is a social process whereby the parties concerned arrive at an agreement, one can put the above findings in a slightly different perspective. Having a greater working knowledge of the routines, the children are actually socializing the staff. Lipset (1952) suggests a similar relationship between Saskatchewan civil service employees and their neophyte superiors. In this case, the civil servants possessed a much greater knowledge of everyday administrative procedure (accrued through years of service), and because such knowledge was critical, they were able to negotiate with their superiors and modify government policies (Lipset, 1952: 223-226). An analogous situation occurs in some prisons where staff turnover is equal to or exceeds inmate turnover, with the result being that the inmates control the organization (see Brim and Wheeler, 1966: 63).



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