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BOYS IN GENERAL, COUNTRY BOYS IN PARTICULAR.  
THE COUNTY YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

A THESIS PREPARED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF HENRY  
D. SHELDON, Ph. D., FOR A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE.

BY

HARVEY ARNOLD WHEELER

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Contents

Introduction

Chapter I.

How the Instincts of Boys, Individual and Social, Manifest Themselves in Childhood and Early Adolescence, Showing the needs of Their Natures. a. Play; b. Organization of Gangs. Page 1.

Chapter II.

How the Natural Instincts of Boys May Be Utilized and Directed into Channels Which will Make for Their Own Development. a. Problem stated; b. Training the feelings and the will. c. Place of Religion in the Club. Page 5.

Chapter III.

Work with the Boys of the Country and Small Towns. The County Young Men's Christian Association. a. The boy problem stated; b, Difference in problem of country boy and city boy; c. County Y.M.C.A. seeks to do what is most needed; d. Its success depends upon expert supervision and volunteer effort; e. Primary object to develop character. Page 12.

Bibliography

Page 18.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, consisting of three parts, we shall seek to discover (1) the needs of boys in early adolescence by studying their natural instincts as manifested in their play and other activities in which they take part; (2) with this better understanding of the boy in mind we shall see how these natural instincts social and individual may be directed, and are being directed into channels which make for the development of the boys; (3) We next deal with the country boy, observing what his needs are and what is being done for him by the County Young Men's Christian Association.

BOYS IN GENERAL, COUNTRY BOYS IN PARTICULAR

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

I. How the instincts of boys, individual and social, manifest themselves in childhood and early adolescence, showing the needs of their nature.

The instinctive desire of boys to do things coupled with a surplus amount of physical energy which must be liberated, leads the boys into all sorts of activities suggested by adults, by environment and by books.

<sup>1</sup>  
Play is the natural expression of the inward force which seeks to liberate itself through the activities of childhood. It is often indulged in with a seriousness which is almost tragic in its reality; play is to the boy what real life is to us. He likes to exercise his inventive ingenuity by getting the better of an enemy whether the enemy be imaginary or real. If he be real the boy often loses all sense of justice and honesty, and the unfortunate enemy becomes the victim of outrages by no means inspired by ingenuity alone but by personal hatred also.

<sup>2</sup>  
Riis says he saw a boy shot down by a policeman for kicking a foot-ball in the street on Thanksgiving Day

1. The Place of the Club in Relation to Play in  
General, Chapter I of Boy's Self-Governing Clubs.  
Buck.
2. Battle with the slum, P. 233-34. The Genesis of  
the Gangs.

"A boy who can not kick a ball around has no chance of growing up a decent and orderly citizen. He must have his childhood, so that he may be fitted to give to the community his manhood"

"The average boy is just like a little steam-engine with steam always up. The play is the safety-valve with the landlord in the yard and the police-man on the street sitting on his safety-valve and holding it down, he is bound to explode. When he does, when he throws mud and stones, and shows us the side of him which the gutter has developed, we are shocked, and marvel much at what our boys are coming to, as if we had any right to expect better treatment of them.

1

Winifred Buck says: "The chief function of animal play is apparently to give the brain a needed opportunity for rest, while the body works off its superfluous energy, the result being a gradual return of a normal balance between mental and bodily activity."

In an earlier paragraph it is stated that some kinds of play are indulged in seriously and even with real anxiety. Nature impels him to be active in this way, restraint would make him wretched. But because he may be unhappy without such play it does not necessarily follow that with it he is happy. Intense interest comes

2

1. Boys' Self-Governing Clubs, P. 18.

2. Buck, Self-Governing Clubs, P. 20-21.

to man or child with anything that absorbs the attention, but even intense interest can not be mistaken for happiness. Happiness for children ( and for grown people also) is largely a matter of animal spirits, and it is with the aimless, brainless, foolish noise and antics of animal play that animal spirits rise.

"If one believes that the possession of animal spirits constitutes happiness, and that happiness is necessary for a child's healthy growth, then character and mind building play- no matter how much it may absorb his interest - will not be enough. Animal play, disagreeable as it is to grown-up people, must be given recognition and endured for the results it promises.

"All kinds of play demand patience and intelligence from the parent and teacher. But in no way can one obtain such insight into a child's real character and needs as through the effort to understand its play.<sup>1</sup>"

Boys organize gangs, in response to the instinctive desire to do things, to be something out of the ordinary, and to have comrades. This tendency to organization is well nigh universal, as shown by following citations.

Of the 1139 boys who wrote papers for Dr. Sheldon, 934 belonged to some society and all but 257 of these of their own organization.<sup>2</sup>

1. Boys' Self-Governing Clubs, Buck P. 21.

2. Activities of Am. Children, Am. Jr. Psy. July 1895, Vol. IX P. 425-448, H. D. Sheldon.

1

In the chapter dealing with gangs in the book "City Wilderness" it says in substance, that all boys belong to a gang, ranging in size from five to forty members. Every gang has one or more leaders. In a large gang there may be the 'bully', the 'judge' and the 'councilor', or all of these offices may be filled by one boy. The average age of the boys composing these gangs is about fourteen years.

2

Jacob Riis gives the names of some of the gangs of the Slums which show the influence of environment also suggesting some of their ideals: "Hell's kitchen gang, stable gang, dead men, floaters, rock, pay, hock gang, the soup-house gang, plug uglies, back-alley men, dead-beats, cop beaters and roasters, hell binders, chain gang, sheeny skimmers, street cleaners, tough kids, slug-gers, wild Indians, cave and celler men, moonlight howlers, junk club, crook gang."

In the foregoing part of my paper I have endeavored to show how the individual and social instincts of boys manifest themselves in their own activities in childhood and early adolescence, thus helping us to understand the boy better. With this better understanding in mind, I shall try to point out in the following part of my paper, some of the more important principles which have been

1. The Roots of Political Power, Chapter VI of City Wilderness South End Boston.
2. How the Other Half Lives, P. 229, quoted in Hall's Adolescence Vol. I, P. 361.

developed in connection with the work with boys.

II. How the natural instincts of boys may be utilized and directed into channels which will make for their own development.

Dr. Sheldon writing of "Student Organizations in American Secondary Schools",<sup>1</sup> says: "The experiments show that the strong play impulse in children, which frequently takes the form of imitating adult activities, may be appealed to by a sympathetic principal and made the means of arousing a strong interest in the problems of government."

"What is the true inner purpose and ideal of social organization for youth? Left entirely to themselves they tend to disorder and triviality, and controlled too much by adults they tend to lose zest and spontaneity, thus the problem is to find the golden mean between both, so that the teaching instinct, one of the noblest and strongest in adults, shall best use its counterpart in adolescents, vis., the passion to push on to the standpoint of maturity and learn of it."<sup>2</sup>

One thing is sure as Hall says:<sup>3</sup> "Every adolescent boy ought to belong to some club or society marked by as much secrecy as is compatible with safety. Something

1. Student Life and Customs, P. 304.
2. Hall's Adolescence, Vol. II, P. 432.
3. Adolescence, Vol. II, P. 429.



esoterio, mysterious, a symbolic badge, countersign, a lodge and its equipment, and perhaps other things owned in common, give a real basis for companionship. This permits too, the abandon of freedom in its yeasty stage, which is another deep phyletic factor of the social instinct. Innocent rioting, reveling with much Saturnalian licence, vents the anarchistic instincts in ways least injurious to the community and makes docility and subordination more easy and natural in their turn." Hall says further: "Provision of time and space for barbarisms or idiotic nonsense without adult restraint helps the youth to pass naturally through this larva stage of candidacy to humanity."

<sup>2</sup>  
 Riis says that, "To boys as a class the club is the pass-key." Boys must rule themselves, but there must be some suggestion in right directions. Gangs may be changed to clubs. He illustrates this by giving an account of an incident at Wilson Mission in Franklin Square New York. The Missionary's wife went out and asked the boys to come in and have some coffee and cakes. The boys had come there to disturb the meeting but receiving this kind of a reception they were disarmed. They accepted the invitation and as a result, the gang of mudslingers became an orderly club. Riis says "the condition of

1. Adolescence, Vol. II, P. 429.
2. Children of the Poor, Chapter XIII, P. 215.
3. Children of the Poor, Ch. XIII, P. 215.

success lies in having real sympathy and interest in children, sympathy that seeks to understand their needs and to help them for their own sake."

A. F. Sanborn writing "About Boys and Boys' Clubs"<sup>1</sup> says: Boys must be guided and trained by force of rigid discipline, persuasion or affection, it matters not how, in the essential qualities of right living.

It is the consensus of opinion that the success of the boys' club depends upon the personality of the leader who must be "intimate but not familiar with the boys, companionable and sympathetic but not condescending,<sup>2</sup> firm but always gentle."

It was held once, that amusing the boys and keeping them off from the street was enough, but it has now been established that a "really successful group club is always held together by some serious interest," almost anything<sup>3</sup> the leader is interested in and can be enthusiastic about. There must be some definite objective in the mind of the leader as to the purpose of the club. "Anyone" says Stelzle "can open a reading room, and allow the boys to flock in. But this does not mean a boys club; it usually means a rabble,<sup>4</sup> and ends in a row."

"Work in a boys' club should be largely inspirational. It should have for its supreme purpose the

1. N. Am. Rev. Vol. XVI: P. 254; Aug. '98.
2. Substitutes for the Saloon, appendix Boys' Clubs. P.316
3. Ibid.
4. Boys of the Street, P. 20.

building of character. And simpler the machinery, the more effective will be the work.

"Whatever is suggestive of a sweeter and stronger home life should be here introduced, because it must not be forgotten that, after all one of the chief purposes of the club is to develop that love of home which for many reasons may have been eradicated. If this can be accomplished, the boys' club will have fulfilled a great mission."<sup>1</sup>

Hall in speaking of the training of youth says:<sup>2</sup>

"To train the youth to social service as useful members of society is primarily the education of the feelings and the will, that are both larger and older than the intellect, which is their servant, and even self-interest rightly understood ripens naturally into altruism."<sup>3</sup>

Hall says further that "the simple reading of great works such as national epics, 'will contribute more to the unfoldment of students than all the treatises of all the rhetoricians that ever wrote.' At the dawn of adolescence I am convinced that there is nothing more wholesome for the material of English study than that of the early mythic period of Western Europe."<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing paragraph at once suggests a method of training the 'feelings and the will' and with it comes the problem, of how get the boys to study. On this point

1. Boys of the Street, P. 23-24.

2. Adolescence, Vol. II, P. 447.

3. Ib., II, 442.

Stelzle gives us some good suggestions. "We should never forget that we have to do, not with the ideal boy, but with the careless, happy-go-lucky average boy, who left school, or hates it, because he had to study, sometimes under very unfavorable circumstances, when he went there. How to get him to think seriously and continuously is the problem that will confront the club manager. The boy loves power. Show him that he can obtain it through knowledge. He loves praise. Teach him how to deserve it. He has energy enough to accomplish wonders if it can be rightly directed. Now, if we can find some form of education which will engage this power, we shall have solved the problem, and the boy will be on the way towards higher and better things. Boys like to make things. Teach them the dignity of labour.....A mere suggestion, given at the right moment, will put a great new idea into the boy's mind which will completely change his career. For this occasion the manager must be always on the lookout."

Religion is the great factor in training the feelings and the will. To quote Stelzle again: It is a well known fact that boys between the ages of ten and fifteen are more interested in religious matters than they are at any other period of their lives. It seems a pity that so few workers possess the sense or the tact to give the boys the best thing that will ever come to them, at a

1. Boys of the Street, P. 38-39.
2. Ib., P. 60-61.

time when it will be most readily received. "I believe that a club or a work of any kind for the boys that stops short of religion fails at a most vital point. But it must not be forgotten that the average street boy 'needs homely virtues more than spiritual graces.' Much of the religious training of the Sunday-school is unnatural for the boy of a strong, virile nature..... He loves and worships the heroic. I believe that the reason many boys leave the Sunday-school is because the heroic and manly side of the ideal man Christ Jesus is not taught in such a way as to appeal to this side of boy-life."

It is the business of the worker with boys to give them what they need.

"When I go fishing for trout, 'said Amos R. Wells, 'I do not consider what I liked for breakfast nor what I want for dinner; I consider what the trout's mouth is watering for. When the average teacher goes fishing for a boy, however, I fear she bases her campaign entirely on her own likes and dislikes. She is interested in pretty little stories with lovely morals, and she takes it for granted that the boys will be interested in the same thing. She is fascinated with a volume of Mr. Meyer's noble expositions, and she jumps to the conclusion that the boys will be glad to have her read a chapter to them. She is delighted to discover the hidden symbolism of the

1. Boys of the Street, P. 62.

Bible, as that Goliath typifies worldliness and David the quiet power of Christian faith, and she is entirely oblivious to the boys' concentration of interest on Goliath's armour and David's sling.<sup>1</sup>"

"Old Testament stories may be made intensely vivid to the street boy, and when he learns to admire and enjoy the Bible as literature,..... a long step will have been taken towards the goal of arousing a genuine and hearty interest in religion."<sup>2</sup>

A boy recovering from a severe burn, "began to read the Bible,-for want of something else. He became interested in the stories of David, and for weeks that boy read nothing but the old testament.....and he did not do it for show, either. He read because those unfamiliar characters had suddenly become real to him - just as real as the heroes of the dime novel - and that is saying a good deal for that particular boy."<sup>3</sup>

For summarizing the second part of my paper the following may be of value:-

To do effective work with boys the leader must know boys in general, and boys in particular. Must study the boy as a unit, his makeup, environment and needs.<sup>4</sup>

1. The boy must have playmates or co-workers.

1. Boys of the Street, P. 64.

2. Ib., P. 65.

3. Ib., P. 65.

4. The Brooklyn Church Athletic League, Geo. J. Fisher, M.D.

Proceedings Rel. Ed. Ass'n. 1905, P. 449.

2. Boys must rule themselves, though they need suggestions in right direction.

3. The boy must have some way to spend his surplus<sup>1</sup> energy and this in right channels.

4. Boys can be interested in Religion when it is presented in a manly natural way.

III. Work with the boys of the country and small towns. Is the County Young Men's Christian Association meeting their needs?

"The boy was compounded out of dust and electricity; this electricity in him constitutes the boy problem."<sup>2</sup>

In the first two parts of my paper I have been dealing with the boy problem in general, although considerable of the literature that I have used, applies more especially to the city boy, however a boy is a boy wherever you find him.

We now turn to the boys of the country, smaller cities and towns in order that we may examine their needs, and also to see if these needs are being met by the County Young Men's Christian Association. This is a great field for more than one half of the boys and young men live in the country and towns of less than five

1. Federating Church Work for Boys in Large Cities,

Prof. E. J. Houston, Record of Rel. Ed. Ass'n. Con. 1905. P. 445.

2. Rev. H.A. Jump, The Problem of the Country Boy, Rel.

Ed. Con. 1905. P. 429.

1  
thousand inhabitants.

2  
Rev. Jump says: "You redeem the city boy by damming up the sluices into which his life-currents ought not to flow; but to save the country boy, you dig new channels into which his surging strength can be directed."

The County Work Department of the Young Men's Christian Association has worked out the general plan by which the problem of the country boy is being solved. It is to do in each community that which ought to be done, and that for which a leader can be provided for in the doing.

The success of this movement depends upon two in-  
3  
dispensable factors: Voluntary effort on the part of the laymen and careful supervision by the County Secretary, the State Secretary and the International Secretary.  
4

The Young Men's Christian Association is an organization of young men working for young men. Its declaration as adopted by the World's Conference in Paris in 1855 is now generally accepted, it reads as follows:

"The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men, who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their doctrine and in their life,

1. Rev. H.A. Jump, Country Boy, Rel. Ed. Con., 1905. Association Men, January 1908.

2. Problem of Country Boy, Rel. Ed. Con. 1905.

3. Voluntary Effort, Robt. Weidensall.

4. Local Organizations, pamphlet by Robert Weidensall, Page 8.



and to associate their efforts for the extention of His  
kingdom among young men."<sup>1</sup>

The county work is an adoption of the Association  
ideals to the young men and boys of the country districts  
and small towns.<sup>2</sup>

The County Secretary is a leader of leaders, and  
is essential to the county work in every particular. The  
county committee with the various voluntary workers how-  
ever efficient, would sooner or later absolutely fail  
without this continuous, faithful and expert agency.  
The county secretary is continuous because he is employed  
for this purpose by the county committee, not only to  
devote all his time to the county work, but to study and  
continuously qualify himself to better the work from time  
to time as opportunity affords. Humanly speaking more  
depends upon the county secretary than any other agency.<sup>3</sup>  
Like the man who harnesses the water fall or any other  
force of nature and making it serve a good purpose, so  
the county secretary discovers and trains leaders and  
sets them to work solving the problem of the young men  
and boys of their own community. What can be done in a  
particular community for the boys and young men depends  
(1) upon their needs, (2) upon the personality and talents  
of the leader, and (3) upon the resources at hand.

1. Volunteer Effort, Weidensall, quoted on P. 12.
2. Legitimate Agencies, Robt. Weidensall, quoted on  
P. 6.
3. Ib., P. 8.

The county secretary being in touch not only with his own county but also with all the County Work of the whole country, through correspondence, printed matter, and personal conference with the county, state and international secretaries, he is able to give expert advice to the volunteer worker on any problem that arises.

The primary object of the Young Men's Christian Association is to train and to win young men for the service of Jesus Christ, anything therefore that helps in the formation of character, - developing the body, mind and spirit, - is a legitimate agency of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Some of the agencies which are being used in the County Y.M.C.A. are:

1. Bible Study classes:
  - a. For training men for the service of Christ.
  - b. For leading men to Christ.
2. Young men's meetings.
3. Summer camps and conferences.
4. Practical talks and lectures.
5. Socials and entertainments.
6. Educational work, especially study of social economics.
7. Athletic sports.

1. Legitimate Agencies, Robt. Weidensall, P. 9-10.

The foregoing are some of the channels into which the 'surging strength' of the country young men and boys, is being directed.

The following, Mr. Weidensall<sup>1</sup> cites as results of a successful County Work:-

"1. It stands for a strong visible bond of union between the evangelical churches of the county.

"2. A definite Christian work for young men and boys is constantly maintained in the whole county.

"3. It will afford every locality in the county, sooner or later, a local organization suitable to its own special needs and condition.

"4. It will multiply Bible training classes for young men and boys all over the county and raise up a strong corps of volunteer Bible workers, to benefit and save their fellow young men and boys in the county.

"This will strengthen the churches, the Christian home, and be of incalculable help to the ministry; will furnish the Sunday-schools with soul-winning young men as teachers; the young people's societies with strong, spiritual leaders trained in the knowledge and use of the Bible; will aid the County Bible society in the circulation of the Bible by creating a demand for it."

Considering the needs of boys in general and country boys in particular, the County Young Men's Christian

1. Legitimate Agencies, Robt. W.P. 11-12.

Association provides the solution of the problem, for it not only discovers what ought to be done in each community, but it knows how to do it, and straightway sets in motion the forces that will do it.

The County Y.M.C.A. meets the needs of the country boys and young men.

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SATISFACTORY

(Signed)

H. D. SHELDON