

A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE CASEWORKER IN
MEETING CLIENT HOSTILITY

DAL-MSS
SOC. WK.
B1683
1954

by

WALTER O. BAKER

An original research project submitted to the Faculty of
the Maritime School of Social Work in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work.

May 7, 1954

Halifax, N. S.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of three cases from the Halifax Welfare Bureau illustrating the psychological movement or lack of psychological movement resulting from the method by which a caseworker meets and handles client hostility, and assessing the role of the caseworker in meeting client hostility.

FOREWORD

My field work experiences at the Halifax Welfare Bureau and the Department of Child Welfare have been of inestimable value, and I wish to express my gratitude to Miss Mary Lou MacLeod and Mr. F. Robert Langin, my field work supervisors.

I am also deeply grateful to Miss Frances L. Montgomery for her inspiring guidance and assistance during my two years at the Maritime School of Social Work.

I would like to express my gratitude to Miss Katherine Dunne for her interest and encouragement, and for the hours she willingly gave in assisting the writer in editing and correcting this material.

To Mr. Lawrence Hancock, I am also very grateful for his support and assistance during my two years as a student at the Maritime School of Social Work.

I am particularly thankful to my wife for her inspiration and encouragement, and for the many hours she laboured in editing and typing this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	A STUDY OF HOSTILITY	6
	Including a discussion of hostility as an element in a concept of casework relationship.	
III.	THE CASE OF MR. A.	12
	Three interviews with Mr. A., and analysis.	
IV.	THE CASE OF MRS. L.	24
	Two family counseling interviews with Mrs. L., and analysis.	
V.	THE CASE OF MR. AND MRS. T.	34
	Two marital counseling interviews with Mrs. T., and analysis.	
VI.	CONCLUSIONS.	43
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The objects of the [Halifax Welfare] Bureau shall be: To conserve and develop family life as the foundation of human society; to assist families and individuals to develop and make use of their own capacities to meet personal and social problems through the provision of a counselling service by trained staff; to stimulate public action for improvement of social conditions.¹

This thesis is written while the writer is a student participating in a field work experience at the Halifax Welfare Bureau. The agency provides economic assistance in the form of emergency food orders, coal orders, used clothing, milk tickets, and shoes. The provision of these economic services is related to counseling services and treatment goals, as counseling is also a basic service offered by the agency. At present, a good deal of the economic assistance is provided in kind, but cash payments are provided to a limited extent. The agency provides marital and family counseling and, in addition, counseling and supplementary assistance to Old Age pensioners and a limited number of single persons. The study arises out of the experiences gained by the writer during his student placement at the Halifax Welfare Bureau, as well as from the knowledge accumulated in

¹Constitution of the Halifax Welfare Bureau, passed at the Annual Meeting, November 1, 1949.

classroom learning.

As is indicated by the title, the purpose of the thesis is to study the values involved in the methods by which a caseworker meets and handles hostility shown by a client. The study is timely and important because of the apparent lack of written material on hostility as it arises in the casework situation. The dynamic of hostile feelings is discussed in class and naturally arises in field work supervision, but the writer has been unable to find very much written to which the social work student can refer. The study also indicates some of the caseworker's problems in regard to his own feelings of and reactions to hostility.

It is the intention of the study to observe and discuss the skills involved in handling hostility in the interview situation, and to judge the amount of movement resulting, in whole or in part, from the skills that are used. Movement will be considered to be the change that occurs within the client, in a psychological sense, between the beginning and end of the interview, or, where several interviews are studied, the change that occurs between the beginning of the first and the end of the last interview. The thesis necessarily will include a definition of hostility, a study of the types of hostility found, and a discussion of hostility as an element in a concept of casework relationship.

The writer, in his role as a student at the

Halifax Welfare Bureau, worked in the agency only two and one-half days each week, and carried a very limited caseload. Consequently, this paper will cover only three cases, all from the setting of the Halifax Welfare Bureau and all from the writer's own caseload. As a result, the study will not be broad enough to create broadly applicable conclusions. Although the study is limited to one setting only, the writer feels that the dynamic of hostile feelings in the casework situation is applicable in all social work settings, and he will attempt to show that the study has a generic application, as limited by the non-conclusive nature of the study.

The research method used in this thesis is the case study method, and the main data available are the three cases from the writer's own field work caseload. The writer intends to discuss the skills and lack of skills involved in these cases, to judge the apparent movement in each interview, and to compare the results in the different interview situations. The definitions of hostility, as found in the source material available, will be combined to provide an adequate discussion of hostility, how it may be caused, and how it may be expressed, either in an overt or a repressed manner. A separate chapter will be devoted to a definition of the term "hostility" and a discussion of hostility in a casework relationship.

In preparing this study, the author attempted to formulate some method of measuring or evaluating client

movement in relation to causative factors in the worker-client interview or relationship. Two methods of measuring the amount of movement present in a worker-client contact have been attempted in the United States. One merely measures positive or negative movement during client-agency contact, with no correlation to casework factors¹, and the other is a study of the factors affecting movement in casework, with no correlation between movement and the elements of worker-client relationship.²

As there is no known means of measuring the amount of movement brought about by the elements in a casework relationship, the writer has had to judge for himself the effectiveness of casework techniques in bringing about change, and it must be left to the reader to judge further the writer's objectivity. It seems apparent that there is no ready method of measuring the effects that casework skills have on client progress or regression in the casework relationship.

The reader likely will note that the interview recordings contain a great deal of material that is not pertinent to the topic. However, it is necessary to include the complete process recording in order to observe

¹J. McV. Hunt and Leonard S. Kogan, Measuring Results in Social Casework, (New York, Family Service Association of America, 1950).

²Malcolm G. Preston, Emily H. Mudd, and Hazel B. Froscher, "Factors Affecting Movement in Casework," Social Casework, XXXIV (March, 1953), pp. 103 ff.

what other factors might be responsible for movement or might be considered as indicating movement.

All case material used in the study will be presented in a disguised form in order to protect the confidential nature of the professional relationship that has been established between the writer and the clients.

This introductory chapter will be followed by a chapter devoted to a definition of hostility, a discussion of its causes, and the ways it may be expressed. Chapter II will include also a discussion of hostility as an element in a concept of casework relationship.

CHAPTER II

A STUDY OF HOSTILITY

"Take each man's censure,
but reserve thy judgment."¹

It is evident that a study of the subject of a Worker's meeting and handling of client hostility must include a definition of hostility and a discussion of its possible causes. The dictionary gives the following comprehensive definition of the term "hostility":

1. A state of being hostile; public or private enmity; unfriendliness; animosity.
2. An act of open enmity; a hostile deed; esp. pl., acts of warfare.

Syn. - antagonism, opposition, hatred, ill-will, rancor, vindictiveness, bitterness. Hostility is (commonly open) antagonism, esp. as manifested in action. Enmity is more frequently (sometimes the state) of hatred or ill-will; it is often dormant or concealed. Animosity is active enmity, often with the implication of bitterness or vindictiveness.²

The term "hostile" is defined thus:

Belonging or appropriate to an enemy; having, or showing, the disposition of an enemy; showing ill-will and malevolence or a desire to thwart and injure; inimical; unfriendly; antagonistic.³

¹William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. by George Lyman Kittredge (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1936), p. 1153.

²"Hostility," Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed.

³Ibid., "Hostile".

It is clear from these definitions that hostility can range all the way from overt physical acts of violence to very subtle and guarded indications of unfriendliness. Generally, then, hostility can be divided into two classifications: (1) overt, and (2) repressed or concealed. Overt hostility, because of its active nature, is easily recognized, whereas repressed hostility can be so concealed as to be unconscious on the part of the hostile person. It is sometimes difficult to know when this state of hostility exists, and it is important for the caseworker, if he is to accurately evaluate the emotional climate of the client, to recognize the hostility that may be evident in a very innocent-sounding statement. For example, a simple statement such as, "I had to go without food for several days," may indicate the client's hostility toward the Worker or agency for not providing adequately for him. In the case of the client who recognizes his hostility and considers it as something that could endanger his possibility of receiving help, he may try to conceal his hostility by numerous protestations of friendliness and appreciation. The caseworker must be constantly alert for hidden meanings that indicate the client's true feelings.

There are a number of possible causes of hostility. It may be created by the client's feeling of failure as expressed by the fact that he must come to a social agency for help. The feeling of failure to handle and shape his destiny without outside help is heightened by

the North American cultural myth of "rugged individualism". In the face of such a feeling, the client may react by displacing his feelings, in the form of hostility, on the agency, the caseworker representing the agency, or some other person or part of his environment. Feelings of guilt for something he has done may likewise cause displacement, in the form of hostile feelings. Guilt, however, may have an opposite reaction. If the client is aware of his feelings of guilt, the guilt may cause him to appear to have no feelings except of friendship and appreciation for the agency, worker, environment, or people in it. This same reaction is indicated in a discussion of sibling rivalry in children:

If he seems to feel guilty about his jealous feelings he may still express them but in a disguised form. . . . If the feeling of guilt is great he may seem to have no jealousy at all. He may appear to have no feeling for the baby except one of love and adoration. . . . If his fear and guilt about his hostility are great he may deal gently, lovingly and carefully with the baby, but become a bully toward smaller children . . . (He displaces his hostility onto a different object.)¹

" . . . few people want to admit they have active hostility."²

Client hostility may arise also out of feelings of fear. On coming to the agency, the client may have many fears. He may fear, generally, the unknown and

¹O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H. J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1945), p. 105.

²Ibid., p. 368.

strange in coming to a new agency and discussing his problems with a stranger (in the person of the Worker). He may have many fears about his own personality and hopelessness for his future that may create hostility, or he may fear refusal of help by the agency. Hostility also may be created by something very real in his environment which has been, or which he imagines to be, the cause of, or contributing to his present situation.

The hostility may be a part of the client's own personality structure. Because of a frustration of pleasure needs or an indifferent environment in infancy and his early years, or because of his reaction to an over-authoritarian parent-child relationship, the client may have developed a consistent attitude of hostility toward authority, and the agency or worker may represent authority to him, particularly in those social agencies which are charged with the enforcing of social legislation.

In addition, it is worthy of consideration that hostility attitudes can be caused by organic causes.

In adults and older children it has been found that lesions of the brain often produce a change in the personality - a person with a mild, kindly disposition, becoming irritable, quarrelsome, and hostile.¹

Hostility as an Element in a Casework Relationship

Casework relationship may be defined as:

The dynamic interaction of feelings and attitudes

¹Ibid., p. 259.

between the caseworker and the client, with the purpose of helping the client achieve a better adjustment between himself and his environment.¹

The same writer who provides this definition goes on to say that:

. . . there is a pattern of basic feelings and attitudes that are common, in varying degrees of intensity, to all people who need help, however temporarily, from others.

These basic feelings and attitudes spring from seven basic human needs of people with psychosocial problems:

1. The need to express their feelings, both negative and positive. The feelings may be of fear, insecurity, resentment, hatred, injustice, and so on, or of their opposites.

2. The need for a sympathetic understanding of and response to the feelings expressed . . .²

From this, it can be seen that feelings of hostility may be an inevitable part of the casework relationship, and that there may be value in the way in which the caseworker meets and handles these feelings. The writer quoted above goes on to list seven elements of the casework relationship, of which two are quoted here because of their related nature to the topic of this study:

1. Purposeful expression of feelings is the recognition of the client's need to express his feelings freely, especially his negative feelings. The caseworker listens purposefully, neither discouraging nor condemning the expression of these

¹Felix P. Biestek, "An Analysis of Casework Relationship," Social Casework, XXXV (February, 1954), p. 58.

²Ibid., pp. 58-59.

feelings, sometimes even actively stimulating and encouraging them when they are therapeutically useful as a part of the casework service.

2. Controlled emotional involvement is the caseworker's sensitivity to the client's feelings, an understanding of their meaning, and a purposeful, appropriate use of the worker's emotions in response to the client's feelings.¹

These quotations appear to be self-explanatory, and the implications they contain will be discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of the study. With this as background, it is possible now to proceed to a presentation of three actual cases used to study the hostile feelings involved, the Worker's reaction to and handling of these feelings, and the apparent results arising from the feelings and the way in which they are met and handled. In each of these cases, it will be evident that the clients each have feelings of hostility toward someone or something in their environment or in the casework situation.

The first case to be discussed will be that of an Old Age Security beneficiary receiving supplementary assistance and counseling.

¹Ibid., p. 60.

CHAPTER III

THE CASE OF MR. A.

The case of Mr. A. is made up of a series of three interviews, the third, fourth, and fifth of the worker's contact. This case was carried by the agency as part of its policy of offering counseling and supplementary financial assistance to beneficiaries of Old Age Security.

Mr. A. and his wife, Jane, first came to the agency in 1929, and have been coming regularly ever since. During that time, they were steadily on the move from one boarding house to another. Mrs. A. died about one year ago. Mr. A. is presently about 72 years of age and in receipt of \$40.00 per month Old Age Security.

Mr. A. had two previous interviews with the Worker, beginning on October 1st. During those interviews, he seemed very resentful and discouraged. He showed much difficulty at taking help, and expressed feelings of inadequacy, and a deep loneliness over the death of his wife. Mr. A. is a very small man.

October 14th: Mr. A. seemed more cheerful today, and mentioned how lovely the weather was, but he said that he had a lot of little troubles. The Worker asked what they were. He said, "Well, my shoes are getting pretty thin and I don't think they'll last me very long, and things generally are just bad. The government only gives me a small cheque. If only they would give enough so that a person wouldn't have to bother others. Even five dollars more a month would help." The Worker said he realized how difficult it must be to get along on so little, but after all, there are some things that one just has to accept and make the best of them. Mr. A. said, "Yes, I am planning to visit the Old Age Security people."

The Worker said that as far as shoes were concerned, the agency had used up the shoe account and new shoes wouldn't be available for some time, but if a donated pair came in, the Worker would let him know. The Worker indicated that the same applied to clothing. The client said he realized that the agency had to work within limits and his main problem is that he is so small--takes all children's sizes--and finds it so hard to get anything to fit. The Worker said it presented quite a problem and must really be difficult for him. He said it was difficult. He showed the Worker his badly-worn jacket and said that a previous Worker had given him some small sweaters that he was able to use. The Worker said it was difficult for him not to have a good jacket and the Worker would let him know if any clothing came in.

The Worker said that the discussion last day had been about coal. Mr. A. said he had a lot of trouble with the stove as it smoked a good deal, and he had told the landlady. She had another small cook stove, and she was going to have it fitted for oil and put it in his room. He said they were very good people. He didn't think it would cost him any more for oil and would be more convenient.

The Worker and Mr. A. then discussed food. Mr. A. indicated that he didn't get enough to eat but got "all that he could afford." The Worker suggested that a larger food order from the agency would enable him to save some of the cash from his cheque so that he could eat more meals in restaurants, as he indicated that he was not very good at cooking for himself. Mr. A. interpreted this to mean that the Worker felt he should eat all his meals at home. The Worker interpreted again and said it was up to Mr. A. to decide whether to eat at home or in restaurants. He understood, and felt that it would be a big help to him. The Worker promised to discuss the amount of increase during the next interview.

The Worker asked about Mr. A.'s ability to get work. He indicated that he worked only in the summer-time, mowing lawns for one or two dollars per day, and only got about two or three days of work each week.

In this interview, it is apparent that the client was hostile, in a very guarded way, toward the agency, the Worker, and some other elements of his environment. He showed this feeling toward those providing his pension,

and the Worker reacted by saying that "we" should accept those things. Even though the Worker was supportive about his difficulty with this and realistic about the hope of increasing the pension, his reaction intimated that the client should "accept" the situation and not have these feelings of hostility.

When it is considered that for years Mr. A. got much of his clothing from the agency, his statements about his shoes and jacket take on added significance. In indicating that his shoes were pretty thin, he was hostile to the agency for not providing something better. His statement that, "a previous Worker had given him some small sweaters", was a rebuke to the Worker for not providing these for him. In each case, the Worker overlooked the concealed hostility and interpreted agency limitations, again intimating that these things must be accepted, and implying that his hostile feelings were inappropriate.

In this interview, it is plain that the discussion remained very close to the concrete elements in the client's environment. This may be due to the Worker's lack of security and skill at this stage of training, and it also may be attributed, at least partly, to the fact that the Worker has not reacted understandingly to Mr. A.'s hostile feelings. Because the Worker has not understood and recognized these feelings and Mr. A.'s right to feel this way, Mr. A. cannot yet have enough

confidence in the Worker to discuss his more intimate feelings.

It may be that, because the Worker has failed to recognize these feelings, they are still dominant in Mr. A.'s mind and are blocking him from expressing other feelings (or are so strong as to crowd other feelings out of his mind).

October 28th: Mr. A. in office. He said that he had many troubles, and was really discouraged. The Worker asked what kind of troubles he had. Mr. A. said it was all trouble. He said that he was upset about his room. He had had an old coal stove in his room, and even though it smoked quite a bit he wouldn't mind it too much as it was much better than the oil stove he now has. He said that they (the landlord and his wife) had rigged up the oil burner themselves, and it was a very amateur job. The fumes it gave off were enough to kill anyone. He said it would cost him quite a bit of money--at least fifty cents a day--to keep his room warm. He hadn't had heat in the room for about five days. The Worker said that this must make him quite angry, and he said, "Yes, I haven't had anything to eat since last week, and I had to practically starve over the weekend, too. I don't eat enough solid food anyway."

The Worker mentioned that Mr. A. had dropped in to the office last week. He said, "Yes." The Worker asked why he hadn't made an appointment with the Worker so he could tell him he was almost out of food. He said he didn't like to, and the Worker asked him why not. He said he didn't like to bother people. The Worker said, "You really think you're quite a bother and a nuisance, Mr. A." He said, "Yes." The Worker said he knew it wasn't easy for him to come in for help, but the Worker was there to help and was very interested in him. He said he wouldn't have to come if they would give him a larger pension. The Worker said, "It's pretty hard getting along on such a small cheque, and you must get pretty angry about it at times." He said, "Yes, I do." "In fact," the Worker said, "there must be times that you really hate them for giving you so little?" He said, "Yes." The Worker pointed out that this agency wasn't always able to give him everything that he wanted. He said that this agency had always been very good to him.

The Worker said, "But we don't always give you all that you would like to have, do we?" He said, "No, not all that I would like to have." The Worker said, "There must be times when you get quite angry with us, then." He said, "Sometimes I do."

The Worker said, "But you never tell me when you're angry with me, Mr. A." He said, "No." The Worker said it must be pretty hard for him to like social workers. He said, "No, I like all the Workers." The Worker wondered if he was afraid to tell when he was angry for fear the Worker might not like him. He said, "No, it isn't that, but I know there are other people coming here, and you are busy and can't do everything. I don't like to complain, but things are pretty hard for me. My rent is high, and people are nice at first, but then you don't know what to expect from them. I imagine that I will have to move to another room."

The Worker asked if Mr. A. had told the landlady about his trouble with the stove. He said he had, and she said that it would be all right after he used it a while. He became quite hostile here and said, "I'll burn my hot-plate all the time if I have to in order to keep warm." The Worker said this must make him pretty angry, and he said, "It certainly does. I pay \$7.00 a week, and they won't even give me decent bedding. I have just one sheet and it's so thin you can see through it, and one pillow slip. Do you know, they haven't been washed once since I've been there. I washed the pillow slip a couple of times myself, and I could wash the sheet, but I'm not going to. I had to take some of my money last week to get food and oil, and now I'm almost a week behind in my rent, and my cheque won't be here until Saturday."

The Worker asked if another food order would help him to catch up on his rent when his cheque came. He said, "Yes, that would be fine." The Worker said that the agency would try to help him to the extent of providing two five dollar orders a month. He stood up and said he didn't like complaining this way and taking up the Worker's time. The Worker said, "You still think you're being quite a nuisance, Mr. A.", and he said, "Yes."

He sat down again and said, "There's something else." The Worker asked what it was. Mr. A. sat silently for almost two minutes. As he sat, his eyes began to water until finally he was crying. He said that he was awfully lonely since Jane (his wife) died, and he missed her so much. The Worker said it must be

difficult for him to be left alone after so many years with her. He said he missed her cooking for him and looking after him. He said that since she had gone, it seemed that everyone was down on him. The Worker wondered if there weren't some people who were good to him. He said, "Oh yes, even if only for a half a dollar." By this time he had stopped crying and stood up to leave. The Worker told him that he would be able to pick up a five dollar order at Johnson's when he left. He said that things were pretty hard. The Worker said that he realized that life was not easy for him. He said, "I couldn't just come in and say right out that I was behind in my rent." The Worker asked why, and he said it was hard. The Worker wondered what he thought would happen if he came in and said outright what he needed. He said he didn't know what the Worker would think of him. The Worker asked if he thought that the Worker wouldn't like it and wouldn't give him anything. He said he didn't know. The Worker said that if he just asked for what he needed, it would be decided on the basis of what could be done. If the Worker could possibly help, he would. If unable to help, the Worker would discuss it with him, but would not think poorly of him or get angry with him for asking.

The Worker asked if the additional food order would enable him to use his cash for rent, and he said, "Yes, that will be fine, as I will get my cheque on Saturday." Once again he said that he was taking up the Worker's time. The Worker said that it was pretty hard for Mr. A. to get over the idea that he was a nuisance, and he said, "Yes." The Worker said that there was some clothing downstairs that might fit him and they might go down and look at it. First the Worker showed him two short-sleeved shirts, and he said they were good, but not as good as with long sleeves. The other shirt had long sleeves, which suited him better, but had a rip in one sleeve which he said he would fix. He then tried on a raincoat and a light overcoat. He was especially pleased with the overcoat, as it was in excellent condition, and he said, "Lovely--lovely--lovely." He said he took such small sizes, as he was so little. The Worker asked how he felt about being so little. He said, "Not so good. I've always been that way, and as I grow older I seem to shrivel up." The Worker said that he must feel pretty insignificant. He said, "Yes, I would like to be a real big man--a real giant of a man--so I could do things for myself." The Worker said that small people could be just as capable and worthwhile as large people, and that size was not the important thing. He looked closely at the Worker

and said, "You must think I'm a funny little man." The Worker replied, "No, I don't Mr. A. Perhaps you're the one who thinks that." He didn't reply, except to remark again how lovely the coat was. The Worker recalled that he had needed boots and showed him a pair of fleece-lined snow boots that might fit. Mr. A. thought they were very nice but quickly noted several patches on one. He tried them on and found they were a good fit. He said he thought they would be excellent for rainy and snowy weather.

Once again he said that he was taking the Worker's time. The Worker laughed and explained to him that this time was scheduled for him, and he wasn't causing extra work. He then began to tell the Worker about the time he worked as a bell-hop in a hotel, and had to cart very heavy trunks upstairs on a hand-barrow for salesmen carrying samples. He told about one jewellery salesman who had a trunk of samples that must have weighed two hundred pounds, and he always had to take it up to the fellow's room, as he wouldn't chance leaving it in the sample room. He said again that he was very pleased with the clothing. An interview was arranged for the following week.

In this interview, the Worker was beginning to recognize, verbally, that certain things made Mr. A. angry, with the implication that, although he might not be right, it was understandable that these things aroused anger in him. Mr. A. began by expressing a great deal of hostility toward his landlady. In the previous interview, he expressed a very positive attitude toward her.

When Mr. A. said that he hadn't had anything to eat, and "had to practically starve" over the weekend, he was expressing his hostility toward the Worker for not providing enough for him. The Worker's reaction to this, unconscious at the time, was to blame Mr. A. for his failure to come to the agency for help. In a sense, the Worker was reacting to hostility with hostility. "It is

much more important to understand him [the client] and to seek the causes of his behaviour, even when it is anti-social, than it is to grow indignant about it."¹ This reaction may have damaged or retarded Mr. A.'s sense of worth, for he next indicated that he felt he was a bother to the Worker, and, later, that he wouldn't have to come to the agency if he got more money. The writer points out that his own unconscious reaction was detrimental to the worker-client relationship. This emphasizes the need for caseworkers to be constantly aware of their own feelings and reactions. It is evident that this type of negative reaction could be a very serious deterrent to further casework.

When Mr. A. expressed hostility about the amount of his pension (a much more comfortable area of hostility for the Worker), the Worker reacted by recognizing Mr. A.'s hostility and his right to feel that way, and helped him to express that he sometimes did get angry at the agency. The Worker reacted to this with acceptance rather than hostility. This may have redeemed the Worker from his previous negative reaction, and helped Mr. A. to gain more confidence in the Worker. However, Mr. A. was still too uncomfortable to express any hostility toward the Worker.

When the Worker brought this up, Mr. A. changed

¹Annette Garrett, Interviewing, Its Principles and Methods (New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1943), p. 17.

the subject and displaced his hostility on his rent and his landlady, expressing a great deal of hostility toward the latter. The Worker again recognized his feelings and accepted them.

It is significant, in this interview, that Mr. A. was then able to summon enough confidence in the Worker to cry in front of him, and to share with the Worker some of his more personal problems. He was able to indicate how much he missed his wife, and to bring out his feelings about his abnormal size. These feelings about size would appear to be an important dynamic in Mr. A.'s relationship to the environment in which he lived, as the culture around him puts much emphasis on strength, size, and youth.

November 4th: Mr. A. in office. He said that he had "the same old song, the same old story." The Worker wondered what he meant. He avoided the question and said he was doing better with the increased food orders, and was getting more solid meals and felt better. The Worker was pleased to hear this. He insisted on showing his money to the Worker, and expressed some hostility toward the mailman for not giving him his cheque and then leaving it with his landlady. The Worker recognized that this might make him angry.

Mr. A. explained how much he had paid for rent, and said, "To tell you the truth, I had to spend money for nerve drugs." The Worker asked if he felt badly about spending money for that. He said that they always told him to go to the _____ for such things, but he expressed dissatisfaction with the _____, and had bought the drugs at a store. The Worker pointed out that it was his money to spend, and this was a legitimate expense. The Worker asked why he had shown the Worker his money. He said, "Let me tell you about the radio." He told the Worker about putting his radio in hock and asking a minister to loan him the money to get it out, as his wife liked to listen to it on Sundays. He indicated that they didn't enjoy the same programs as young people

and didn't listen to the radio too often. The minister went to the second-hand store with him, paid the proprietor, and then bawled the proprietor out for charging so much. The Worker wondered, from his tone, if this had angered him. He said it had, and he felt cheap and ashamed because of the minister bawling out the owner. The Worker asked if he was also angry because the minister didn't have enough confidence in him to give him the money. He said that this had made him angry. The Worker wondered if he felt the same way about the agency phoning in food orders and not giving him cash. He admitted that this, too, made him angry. The Worker said he could understand this, and Mr. A. said "What?" The Worker said he could understand that phone orders instead of cash might make him angry. He said, "Oh, no. I'm always satisfied with everything the agency does for me, but the minister didn't trust me."

Mr. A. said he had a feeling that he could have been better off. He told the Worker about his mother, how she had him take music lessons, but then died while he was quite young, and he had to go out to work. He worked in a hotel, and while there he began to drink some. The Worker wondered if he felt that he was a failure because he drank. He said, "Yes, and maybe my size has something to do with it. I'd sometimes like to turn a house over. Maybe I'm just getting queer." The Worker said that he didn't think that Mr. A. was queer. The Worker interpreted about size and cultural attitude toward size, and asked if perhaps, at Mr. A.'s age, it might be natural to feel a sense of failure.

The Worker again asked why Mr. A. had shown the Worker his money. He said that he was behind in his rent. The Worker discussed his reluctance to tell this at first, but Mr. A. was unable to verbalize his reasons. He then expressed more hostility toward his landlady, and the Worker was supportive and recognized his anger. Mr. A. expressed much anger about the new oil stove, which smells up his room and isn't very satisfactory.

Again Mr. A. said that he gets queer ideas. The Worker asked what he meant, and he said perhaps he was getting childish. The Worker wondered why he felt this way, and he said, "Once a man, twice a child." The Worker could understand why he was afraid of this, but asked if it wasn't just fear. He said perhaps it was, and maybe he felt that was because of being so small. The Worker agreed that this might be so. He said that his wife, Jane, used to tell him he was

childish. The Worker wondered in what ways Mr. A. felt that he was childish. He couldn't say exactly, but in the way he thinks and does things. Mr. A. said that maybe he was just afraid of it at his age. The Worker agreed, and said Mr. A. had never done anything to make the Worker think he was childish. He seemed relieved to hear this.

Mr. A. again cried briefly, and told the Worker how lonely he was for Jane. The Worker said he could understand that her loss made him lonely. Mr. A. got up to go, and an appointment was set for next week.

In this interview, the client moved even further into the areas of emotional problems. At first he could not muster enough confidence in the Worker to tell him that he had failed to make his money last and was behind in his rent. As he expressed his hostility about the various environmental elements that disturbed him, and received the Worker's support and acceptance of him and his feelings, he was able to move away from these material problems and to confide in the Worker his fears and feelings on the emotional level.

In these three interviews, it can be seen that the caseworker at first failed to recognize (for himself) the significance of Mr. A.'s hostility, and also failed to recognize (for the client), verbally or in feeling, how real his hostility was to Mr. A. It is quite plain that during this time, the client did not move on to other emotional areas, but held the discussions to very material topics such as food, rent, and clothing.

It would appear that when the client found that the Worker accepted his hostile feelings as a natural

reaction, he was able to let them slip into his sub-conscious, or at least they no longer occupied a position of dominance in his thoughts, and he was able to bring forth other material of emotional significance. Before, his thoughts appeared to have been solely concerned with his imminent feelings of hostility, or, in other words, his hostile feelings were so dominant as to block the expression of any of his other emotional conflicts. Once the force of his hostility had been dissipated by the caseworker's handling of it, other problems of emotional significance were free to come to the fore in his mind and to be expressed.

The next Chapter will be concerned with a family counseling situation in which the client, a mother, has overt hostility toward her husband, and concealed hostility toward one of her children.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE OF MRS. L.

The presentation of this case contains two interviews, one early in the contact and the other over two months later. Several interviews took place between these two example interviews. The case was carried by the agency on a family counseling basis, with provision of milk tickets and second-hand clothing, but no financial assistance was involved.

Mr. and Mrs. L. have had ten children. Five of these children have been placed with relatives in the same locality and the five youngest, four boys and one girl, are being cared for by Mr. and Mrs. L. This couple were receiving casework services for some time from Agency X, a child-protection agency. When it was evident that neglect no longer existed in the L. home, they were referred by Agency X to the Welfare Bureau. The referral was made a year before the writer's first contact with the family. At the time of this first interview, Mrs. L. is again pregnant.

November 17th: The Worker at the L. home. The Worker mentioned that the weather was pretty wet. Mrs. L. agreed and said it was so bad that she had to keep the children in. The Worker said it must be quite a handful to have them in all day. She said, "Yes," and told the Worker how bad it was in the rest of the house, with the rain leaking in through the roof. She mentioned that the landlord had been in as he was on his way to condemn a house in the East End. He is a member of the Board of Health, and Mrs. L. could not understand why he didn't look after his own buildings before condemning someone else's. The Worker agreed that it must be difficult living in such an old building.

The Worker asked how things had been going. Mrs. L. replied that things were fine, and explained that she had been unable to see the Worker last week

as a friend had died, or rather had been killed, and she went to the funeral. The Worker said he understood this. The Worker asked how Judy was getting along. She said, "Oh, about the same. She is fine for a few days and then is as bad as ever. I can't understand why she soils herself that way. I think it must be her fear of worms. She once had worms and saw them when she went to the toilet. I think that scared her from going when she should. I saw them too and it was enough to curl my hair." The Worker asked if Judy had been seen by a doctor, and Mrs. L. said that she had about a year ago, but he said that there was nothing physically wrong with her. Mrs. L. said she couldn't understand it, as Judy takes pride in her dresses but soils them, nevertheless. Her other children never did that. The Worker wondered if she had tried charts or stars. She said, "Yes," but it hadn't done any good. She has tried everything but beating Judy. She felt that maybe Judy feels left out, but the children all get the same attention. Mrs. L. said that Judy had asked her if she loved her. Mrs. L. assured her of this but it hadn't helped. She didn't feel this was important, as all the children had asked her this at one time or another. She said, "It isn't Judy's intelligence either, as her teacher feels she is exceptionally bright."

The Worker asked if the soiling made Mrs. L. angry and she said, "Yes, but not at Judy." The Worker recognized that this was quite a problem for her. She indicated that it is a lot of work to clean for four of them, without having to clean Judy's clothes every night. She said that Mr. L. wouldn't help her with the washing, but then, it wasn't his job. She finds it pretty hard to get out for an evening, as she always has a washing to do. The Worker realized this was a problem for her.

The Worker asked how Mrs. L. was feeling in relation to being pregnant. She said that she was very tired, and went on to complain that, with only two rooms, one of her big problems was lack of space. She said it was pretty difficult having all of them crowded in such a small space. The Worker agreed that this must be distressing, and asked if it had made her angry when she discovered she was pregnant again. She said, "Yes, it did. But what's the use of getting angry?" The Worker wondered how Mr. L. felt about it. She said that he wasn't having the baby, and it was all right with him as long as she didn't have twins again. The Worker said that having another set of twins would be hard for them. She said it certainly would, but if that happened they

wouldn't have much choice. Mrs. L. said she had thought of placing this child for adoption, but she couldn't do it now. They have five other children placed, but none for adoption. She said that one of these was a girl whom she would like to have at home, as it might help Judy, but she has no room for her. She indicated that they would need a new place soon, though, as there would be no room for the new baby.

The Worker discussed the need for and possibility of the agency making plans for baby clothes for the new baby. An appointment was arranged for November 24th.

In this interview, Mrs. L. has shown much hostility toward her environmental pressures, her husband, and Judy. She expressed hostility toward the landlord for the condition of the house, and, although she was unable to admit it, it was evident that she was angry with Judy for soiling her clothing and thus causing her so much extra work. She was angry because she was unable to "get away from it all" for an evening. She also expressed her dislike of the methods that had been previously suggested to her in order to help her overcome Judy's soiling. Mr. L. received his share of her anger for neglecting to help with the wash, and, apparently, because she, and not he, had to have the babies. Her hostility over the crowded conditions in the home and because she was pregnant again were quite evident, but by this point in the interview, her anger had brought her to the point of almost utter futility, as she said, "Yes, it makes me angry, but what's the use?"

What is perhaps even more evident, from a casework point of view, is the Worker's failure, throughout this

interview, to handle Mrs. L.'s feelings of hostility. The Worker's reaction was to listen and say nothing. It may be significant to point out here that the Worker was reacting to Mrs. L.'s hostility with fear. The Worker was afraid that he might be subjected to Mrs. L.'s hostility. This may have arisen out of the Worker's fear of physical hurt. The fear was not this evident at that time, and quite some time was required for this to be worked through before the Worker could be prepared to handle painful material with Mrs. L.

The second interview to be discussed took place two months later, and the Worker had seen Mrs. L. several times during the interval. In the course of the intervening contacts, it had been decided that the Worker would see Judy each week in the office to try to help her, as the family was not considered eligible for Child Guidance service. Judy had been to the office for one interview prior to the following home visit, but had resisted any further visits to the office. Throughout this period, the interviews were very similar to the one already discussed, with no appreciable involvement in any emotionally charged areas, except in one interview where Mrs. L. was so depressed that she confided in the Worker her fear of death in childbirth. During these interviews, she continued to express hostility, but the feelings were no more intense than in the interview above, and were not handled by the Worker.

January 16th: The Worker at the L. home. Mrs. L. expressed that it was pretty hard now as the kids had been inside most of the time for two weeks, and it was so crowded and she was not feeling well. She thought it was all the fault of the two rooms, for it was so crowded and would be worse when the new baby came. The Worker agreed that it must be very hard for her and must make her quite upset and angry at times. She said that it did. The Worker said that he had called at the house for the last appointment but had received no answer to his knock, although someone was evidently home. Mrs. L. said her brother had been at home keeping house, for she had to go to court with her sister as the non-support charge against her sister's husband was being heard. She said her brother was very shy and never answered the door. The Worker wondered why she hadn't let him know that she would be out. She said she hadn't planned to go until the last minute and expected to be back before the Worker got there, but as the hearing was held up over an hour, she hadn't.

Mrs. L. went on to say that she was not feeling too well lately. It was pretty difficult with all the children in and they had been so bad lately. She has been keeping Judy home from school for a week as she was soiling herself and had soiled the leg of her leggings. She couldn't be washing Judy's clothes every night in order to get her to school. Mrs. L. didn't know what she was going to do, but thought she should go to see the teacher about it. She said she planned to send Judy back to school soon. She talked further about Judy's problem and said she was so bad. Jimmy (3 years old) also is a problem. He wets himself and Judy is saucy and has Jimmy and Billy that way too. Mrs. L. felt that it wouldn't be so bad if they had a better place to live. She mentioned that she was never able to keep the place clean. The Worker felt that the rooms were always neat and clean, and gave her support around this. She said it was a mess early in the morning, as they were up late at night and awake early mornings, and it takes two hours to get the kids dressed, washed, and fed. The Worker said that perhaps any home with children could be upset early in the morning.

Mrs. L. said that she would like a new place. Mr. L. promised last September he would get a bigger and better place, but he hasn't. He is always like that and never does anything till the last moment. The Worker felt, from her tone of voice, that this made her quite angry and she said, "It certainly does." She said she had known what it would be like if they

stayed here another winter, but he doesn't really know what it's like to be here all day long. "He's only here for a few hours at night, but I'm cooped up here for twenty-four hours a day." The Worker could realize that this was quite difficult for her and could understand why it angered her.

The Worker asked how she meant that she was not feeling well. Mrs. L. replied, "Oh, I'm just tired and fed up. I have so much trouble with Judy and the kids." The Worker said, "You don't hold out too much hope for help from me for Judy?" She said everyone had tried and it was no good. It has been this way for two years. The nurses had tried, but with no success. She said that it made her awfully angry and upset. The Worker said he felt that Judy could be helped. He could realize that it wasn't easy for her, and anyone might get angry and upset, but asked if the crowded conditions at home might not cause Judy to be upset and anxious too, and if this might not contribute to her behaviour. At this, Mrs. L. became very hostile and said, "Maybe you people know something I don't, but there is no reason for Judy to be that way. She knows it's not right. She's been told a good many times, and she's seven years old now and not stupid." The Worker said he knew she wasn't stupid and, in fact, seemed quite bright. Mrs. L. said, "She certainly is bright." The Worker said that even so, "children don't always realize the things we feel they should realize." She said that might be so.

The Worker recalled that Mrs. L. said that she was not well and asked if she had seen the doctor. She said that, because of her pregnancy, she didn't have any decent clothes to wear to go to the doctor's. The Worker could realize that this meant a great deal to her. Mrs. L. said she couldn't afford to pay for an oversized dress for such a short time. The Worker said that it is pretty hard not to have something nice to wear. She said she gets so discouraged. The kids have been so bad lately, and she has so little space, but maybe she won't have to put up with it too much longer. Her tone was quite fatalistic, and the Worker said, "You are still afraid that you're not going to live through childbirth?" Mrs. L. said, "No, I'm not afraid, because the way things have been lately, I don't know but what I would be better off. Life doesn't seem worth living, and I sometimes feel I'm going to go crazy." The Worker said it felt as if she was worried about that too.

Mrs. L. said that a person could only take so much.

People have been known to blow up and do unusual things like killing their children or something. (This was undoubtedly stimulated by a newspaper article several days before.) Her friends say they would go foolish in her situation and don't know how she can stand it. She felt they wouldn't say this if they didn't believe it. The Worker could understand her being so worried in her situation, but didn't think she was going to go crazy. The Worker wondered if she felt that life was worthless all the time or just when she wasn't feeling well. She guessed it was only because she was down in the dumps and usually feels brighter about things. The Worker said it was easy to get down in the dumps with so many problems to face.

Mrs. L. said she guessed she should have got Mr. L. to put Judy in an institution. She said, "I shouldn't have waited at first. I should have had him put her in, but I suppose they wouldn't take her anyway." The Worker was unable to clarify this for her. She didn't know what they would do with another baby, as there wasn't even room to put one more. She didn't know, either, how she could handle it, because all of the kids except Billy soil themselves, and it will be quite a job to keep them and the baby all clean. The Worker asked if they had considered placement or adoption for the baby. She said they didn't approve of adoption. The Worker said he wasn't specifically suggesting adoption, but was wondering if they had considered any alternative plan. She said they hadn't but would just have to find another place with three or four rooms, and it would be easier if that came about. The Worker agreed that that would likely relieve some of the pressure. An appointment was arranged for January 23rd.

This was the Worker's first interview with Mrs. L. in which he was comfortable enough to face her hostility realistically and without fear. It is significant that it is also the first interview in which Mrs. L. has been able to express her feelings of hostility so openly and with such intensity. The difference in intensity between this interview and the first interview is definitely marked.

Mrs. L. expressed with great depth of feeling her anger and upset about crowded conditions, the children at home because of the weather, Judy's problem of soiling, the behaviour of all the children, Mr. L.'s lack of initiative, and the Worker's failure to help Judy improve. The Worker was free, at this point, to recognize her feelings and to encourage, by his acceptance, a further expression of them, and this apparently freed Mrs. L. from withholding her feelings. When the Worker could accept the inevitability of these conditions creating hostility in Mrs. L. and could transmit this acceptance to her, Mrs. L. no longer needed to fear that the Worker would condemn her for having these "bad" feelings.

Sometimes the client expresses covertly or openly negative feelings which are disturbing to the young worker until he comes to realize that the expression of feeling is essential to treatment, and the problem is not only to recognize the client's reactions, but also to manage one's own.¹

However, it can be noted that even with the Worker's acceptance, it took Mrs. L. much longer to enter into other emotionally charged areas than it did for Mr. A. (Chapter III). This would seem to be because of the fact that Mrs. L., unlike Mr. A., was being constantly pressured by an extremely over-taxing environment, from which she had no apparent means of escape. In addition, her physical condition, due to the pregnancy, was below

¹Gordon Hamilton, Theory and Practise of Social Case Work, Second Edition, Revised (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 42-43.

normal and she did not feel well. The pressure of the environment was so great and so constant that Mrs. L.'s upset and conflict required much more expression and acceptance before it became dissipated enough to allow other emotional problems to rise to the fore. Once the hostility had been liberated, Mrs. L. was able to enter with much feeling into a discussion of her fear of death and her fear of going "crazy".

It might be pointed out that, at this point, Mrs. L. was so upset and depressed that it would be difficult for her to hold her feelings back. This is probably true, but it is likely that, if the Worker's reaction to her hostility had been negative, she would have expressed it, not to the Worker, but to her friends or neighbors, or have taken it out, through displacement of feelings, on her husband and children. This obviously would have created further problems for the children, especially Judy, and, in turn, for Mrs. L. As it was, by expressing these feelings to the Worker, Mrs. L. apparently dissipated her feelings enough so that she would have no need to displace them on the children, and was able to go into other emotional problems and gain the Worker's understanding and support of them. If Mrs. L. had displaced her hostility elsewhere, other than on the Worker, it is likely that her deeper feelings of fear would have gone unmet and unhandled.

The following Chapter will deal with a marital counseling situation in which the wife has hostile feelings toward her husband and some elements of her environment.

CHAPTER V

THE CASE OF MR. AND MRS. T.

This case presentation consists of two interviews, one early in the contact and the other three weeks later. There were no interviews during the three week interval. The case was carried by the agency on a marital counseling basis, with the provision, for a trial period of six weeks, of supplementary financial assistance.

Mr. and Mrs. T. have been married for seven years. Mrs. T. was previously married but her husband was killed overseas during World War II. During this marriage, Mrs. T. had had her left leg amputated because of cancer. The only child by her first marriage, John, is a ward of a Children's Aid Society. Shortly after the death of her first husband, she married Mr. T., also an army veteran, who had received three shrapnel wounds in his head while overseas. Mr. and Mrs. T. have three children. At one time they took Mrs. T.'s son, John, to live with them, but this plan had failed and John was returned to the care of the Children's Aid Society. When Mr. T. became unemployed in July, Mrs. T. went to Agency Y (a protective and child care agency) for help. When it became evident that it was not a matter of neglect, the family was referred to the Welfare Bureau. Prior to the following interview, the Worker had seen Mr. T. briefly and Mr. T. had subsequently missed one appointment and had failed to respond to two letters from the Worker. During the first interview, Mr. T. felt that the main problem was Mrs. T.'s health. Mrs. T. neither confirmed nor denied this. The Worker had seen Mrs. T. on two occasions prior to this visit.

November 5th: The Worker at the T. home. Mrs. T. said that she was leaving home and wanted the Worker's advice. The Worker wondered what she meant. She said that Mr. T. was going to get his parents to come to look after the children and she was going to leave

him. She said Mr. T. told her that he wouldn't have to support her when she left and she wondered if this were so. The Worker wasn't clear on the situation and wondered if she was leaving of her own accord or did Mr. T. insist that she leave. She said, "Well, in a sense he is making me go. He told me yesterday morning to be out by supper time." The Worker asked if she had ever threatened to leave before. Mrs. T. said she did leave last Easter and Mr. T. had to go get her. The Worker said he meant since their contact with the Bureau. She said, "No."

The Worker asked what was the cause of this, and Mrs. T. said they quarreled and couldn't get along. The Worker wondered what Mr. T. said when he came home last night and found her still there. She said he had, as usual, received the two free theatre tickets from his employer and he threw one on the table for her and went out to the show alone. Mrs. T. spoke with a sense of hopelessness as she explained that they always went everywhere together, except to Home and School. The Worker wondered if it had made her angry when Mr. T. told her to leave. She said, "I certainly was angry. That's why I wanted to see you yesterday." The Worker could recognize with her that this situation would upset her and make her angry.

Mrs. T. indicated that perhaps Mr. T. would be willing to see the Worker, but she wasn't sure. The Worker asked if she felt there was any value in her postponing her departure until he attempted again to contact Mr. T. and see if he would be willing to try counseling. She said she would be willing to wait but warned the Worker that Mr. T. is a hard man to talk to and is extremely stubborn. Mr. T. bought furniture on the instalment plan at \$5.00 per month and received a notice two weeks ago. He has since received two more notices, but doesn't go to pay them, although he works next door to their store. He keeps putting things off, such as going to the Veterans' Hospital for a check-up. She indicated several other letters of importance that he should answer, but he puts it off. The Worker asked if this made her angry (as her tone implied it), and she said, "Yes." Since most of these had to do with bills, the Worker could understand that it upset her. She indicated that the financial problems bother her and if these were solved it would help things a lot. Mrs. T. said, again angry, that they can't get back on their feet because of the time that he was unemployed.

Mrs. T. expressed disappointment that Mr. T. had

not kept his appointment with the Worker as she wanted him to go. The Worker wondered if it might not be pretty difficult for him to discuss his personal problems with a strange person. She said, "Yes, that may be. He told me he didn't want to tell everything to you and I told him he didn't have to. I don't if I don't want to." The Worker said it was hard for her to tell her problems to him and maybe it was the same way for Mr. T. She felt that it probably was, and the Worker indicated that Mr. T. was not compelled to see him.

Again Mrs. T. said, "What worries me is the financial situation. We can't get our feet on the ground because of him being laid off. Before, he was in the Reserve Army, too, and got regular pay, but now, when we need it most, he has given it up, and the Army is one thing that he really enjoyed." The Worker realized this was difficult and asked why Mr. T. stopped going. She said that his new job was harder. He gets home later evenings, and is usually quite tired. When he was in the Reserve Army, he was out two nights a week until twelve or one o'clock. They always played cards and had a pint of beer. Mrs. T. always had his uniform pressed and ready for him, and she never went out at all nights. Now Mr. T. says that when she goes out for an evening, it should be all right for him to go out for the next night. He does this whenever she goes out to Home and School Association, and she doesn't feel it's fair, as she so enjoys going to Home and School. This makes her pretty angry. She described to the Worker the watch she had given Mr. T. and how he had sold it. Mrs. T. commented that they had different values, as she wouldn't think of parting with the watch Mr. T. gave her.

The Worker wondered from her previous descriptions if Mr. T. was quite nervous. She said that he was as a result of his war experiences. She warned that the Worker would have to be careful with him in an interview, as he is "quite a liar." The Worker interpreted his impartial role in a marital counseling situation and how counseling would require willingness on their part to change attitudes.

The Worker wondered how she felt about staying in the home, and she said she would until the Worker tried to contact Mr. T.

The significant thing about this interview is that, in spite of the fact that the Worker recognized and

accepted Mrs. T.'s feelings of hostility toward her husband and their financial situation, the interview produced very little in the way of movement by the client. There are several possible explanations of this. In the first place, Mrs. T. had built up so much hostility in this situation, that in one interview she had been unable to dissipate it. Secondly, the present situation, in which Mr. T. was apparently telling her to leave, was so threatening to her that she was blocked from venturing into other areas of conflict. In the third place, and probably the most important for this analysis, while the Worker understood and accepted Mrs. T.'s hostility, he did nothing to interpret the reality of the situation to her. At this point in the relationship, Mrs. T. was placing all the blame for their misunderstandings on Mr. T. The Worker, by failing to help Mrs. T. to see her place in the total picture, was encouraging her to continue to project the blame on Mr. T., to keep as far as possible from any scrutiny of her own marital role, and to avoid the discomfort that would result for her. This quite significantly points out that, in some instances at least, understanding, recognition, and acceptance of hostile feelings is not enough. In addition, in those cases in which it is necessary and advisable, the caseworker must also interpret reality to the client and to hold the client to the reality situation if he is to be helped.

Mrs. T. moved in the interview in the sense that she first told the Worker that she was leaving home, and then moved to the point where she would remain in the home while the Worker tried to contact Mr. T. However, it is likely that Mrs. T. didn't want to leave home, when she asked the Worker to come to see her, and the movement does not appear to be significant for the purposes of this discussion.

November 24th: The Worker at the T. home. The Worker asked Mrs. T. how she was and she replied, "Not too bad." She then began, with much feeling, to say, "I don't think there is much point in you coming here and wasting your time, as my husband wouldn't answer your letter and obviously isn't going to." The Worker said he guessed she didn't have too much hope for things and she agreed that was right. The Worker asked if she felt there was any value in him visiting every week or two and doing what he could to help, even though the situation might be limited by the fact that Mr. T. would not be involved.

She replied that she couldn't see that it would help any, as Mr. T. was the one who needed the help. The Worker asked if she felt that Mr. T. was entirely responsible for the situation. She said, "No, I don't think he is entirely to blame, but he is pretty stubborn about things." She said Mr. T.'s mother is in the city and when she finished where she was, she was coming to look after them (the T. children). The Worker asked if this meant that Mr. T. still wanted her to leave and she said, "Yes, I guess so." The Worker asked if she was angry about this and she said, feelingly, "Yes." The Worker recognized how upset she must be about this. She said she was upset.

Mrs. T. said that her husband really needed to go to hospital, as his nerves were very bad from the war. She said he was wounded in the head. She wondered why the Veterans' Hospital hadn't called him back for a check-up. She said they had told Mr. T. that he was eligible for a pension but he wasn't bad enough yet. She said, "Wasn't that an awful thing to say?" The Worker said it seemed that this had made

her angry at them. She said, "Yes." She indicated that she and all his relatives had talked to Mr. T. but he just refused to go to hospital. She asked, "Wouldn't it do for me to call the Veterans' Hospital and have him taken in?" The Worker was unable to clarify this, but wondered if there was any value in trying to force Mr. T. to go against his will and if the Veterans' Hospital would take him if he wasn't willing to go. Mrs. T. said she didn't know. She told about Mr. T. being taken to a psychiatrist some time ago. The psychiatrist, she said, reported that Mr. T. had the intelligence of a ten-year-old boy, and she wondered how he could carry the responsibilities of marriage in view of this. She told the Worker of the time he had a bad tooth and refused to go to the dentist. She said he was just like a baby about it.

The Worker reminded Mrs. T. that she said Mr. T. was not entirely to blame and asked in what ways she felt she was responsible for the situation. She said that she was not well and should see the doctor herself. The Worker asked how long it was since she had seen the doctor. Mrs. T. said she had been to him last April. The Worker asked what he said. She said she had trouble inside and would require an operation. The Worker asked why she hadn't had it. She felt that they couldn't afford it since Mr. T. was unemployed, and she hadn't yet paid the doctor for her last visit. The Worker wondered if she had considered going to _____. She said, "No, it's a butcher shop. I went there to have my last baby. There are too many internes around and I wouldn't go there for any money." The Worker asked if she couldn't go to _____. She replied that it isn't operating now. She read in the paper that they were cutting that service out. The Worker said he didn't think so. Mrs. T. said that she liked it there all right. The Worker said he felt they had very good doctors and asked if money was the only reason she didn't want to go. She said there was the matter of care for the children. The Worker felt that that wouldn't be hard to arrange.

The Worker asked if Mrs. T. didn't perhaps have some fear about an operation. She said, "Yes. The Doctor said it would only take three or four days, but I think they might find something worse when they operate and I might have to stay three or four weeks." The Worker said that actually fear was her main problem. She said, "Yes." The Worker said she had already spent a great deal of time in the hospital having her leg operated on. Mrs. T. said "Yes."

The Worker could appreciate how she felt, but wondered if they would find anything worse. She felt that they might. The Worker asked what she thought they might find. Mrs. T. didn't know, but thought they might find something. The Worker asked her if there was something worse, did she feel it would get better by not going? She said, "No, it would probably get worse." The Worker asked if she could see any value then in having it looked after. She said she would be willing to go if she could go to _____. The Worker agreed to confirm for her that _____ was still operating.

Mrs. T. then complained that Mr. T. wouldn't go to the hospital. The Worker pointed out that she wasn't willing to go, either. She agreed, thoughtfully, that this was so. The Worker asked if Mrs. T. could see any value in him returning to discuss her problems with her, even if Mr. T. wasn't involved. The Worker indicated that he was interested in helping. She said that it would be all right with her. The Worker said she could say that, but did she really feel there was any value in it. She said she could talk her problems over with the Worker when they came up and it might be a big help to her.

Mrs. T. asked if the Worker could answer a question for her. The Worker asked what it was. She indicated that they were invited to Mr. T.'s home for Christmas. She likes Mr. T.'s mother but isn't struck on his father. The Worker asked her how she felt about it. She said she would like to spend Christmas in her own home. The Worker asked how Mr. T. felt about it. She said that he wanted to go and it would be easier for her with no meals to get or housework to do, but she would like to stay at home. The Worker asked how Mr. T. would react if she decided to stay. She said that he would go anyway. The Worker asked how she would enjoy Christmas if that happened. She said she wouldn't enjoy it at all and would likely end up going herself. The Worker said that he couldn't really answer her question, as it was something she would have to decide for herself after weighing all the factors involved.

At this point Mr. T. came in. The remainder of the interview was spent in interpreting counseling to Mr. T. As this analysis is concerned with the interviews with Mrs. T., the remainder of the interview is omitted. The only thing of significance for this discussion that arose here was Mrs. T.'s statement to Mr. T. that the Worker told her that _____ was

still in operation and she was considering going for the surgery she needed.

The Worker is now secure enough in the marital counseling structure to begin interpreting to Mrs. T. her role in the marriage. This, along with the Worker's continued handling of Mrs. T.'s hostility, appeared to produce marked results when this last interview is compared with the first one. In this interview, Mrs. T. was still threatened by Mr. T. telling her to leave, but the threat was much less real than it was during the first interview. Three weeks had elapsed and Mr. T. had still not forced her to leave. With this problem no longer dominant and blocking her, and with the Worker's joint acceptance of feelings and interpretation of her role, Mrs. T. was able to express her hostility and move into other areas of conflict. Though it was more uncomfortable for her, she now was able to begin to examine an area where she might be at fault. She was able to express her fears about hospital and surgery, and was able further to move to a decision to have something done in relation to the surgery she needed.

It appears that the caseworker must distinguish between his acceptance of the client's feelings of hostility and his assessment and acceptance of whether or not the client is right or wrong. In other words, the caseworker may recognize and accept feelings of hostility, but he may reject the client's reason for having these

feelings if it is unrealistic. He may accept the fact that the client feels this way, but if the client's approach to this feeling is unrealistic, then the caseworker must also interpret reality to the client.

Two significant things come out of this case discussion. It appears that the caseworker may accept the fact that the client has feelings of hostility, but must distinguish any unrealistic basis for these feelings and interpret reality to the client. Also, although the Worker has accepted feelings of hostility and helped the client to express these feelings, the client may still be blocked from movement into other areas of conflict by something very real and threatening that exists in his environment.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

I was angry with my friend,
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe,
I told it not, my wrath did grow.¹

It is evident that no broad, conclusive deductions covering all social work cases can be drawn from the study because of the fact that only three cases from one social work setting have been studied and analyzed. However, there is enough evidence in the case studies to reach some general conclusions in regard to these cases. The conclusions are based on the writer's own point of view and on theory. They may be applicable to other cases in other settings.

The cases studied indicate the value of the method of meeting hostility with understanding, acceptance, and, when necessary, interpretation. Hostile feelings can be so great as to block the client and the caseworker from getting to and solving, or helping to improve other emotional problems. If the hostile feelings are not met and handled in the casework situation, they likely will be expressed in some other manner. Any other problems thus released may not be adequately handled, since they

¹William Blake, "A Poison Tree," The Pocket Book of Quotations, ed. by Henry Davidoff (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1952), p. 7.

receive expression outside the casework situation. It may mean that the client expresses his hostile feelings by projecting them, as anger, on someone else in his environment, or as disturbed behaviour, and this may serve only to further complicate the client's problems.

The cases studied show three ways in which hostility was met. One method, discussed above, was to meet hostility with acceptance, recognition, understanding, and interpretation. Another method was seen where the Worker assumed a passive attitude and let the client express his hostility without the Worker's either accepting or rejecting the feelings. As a feasible method of meeting hostility, this is ruled out by the evidence in the first interview with Mrs. L., in which there was no movement at all due to the Worker's passivity. A third method was seen where the Worker reacted to the client's hostility with hostility, or in a defensive manner. This reaction occurred in the second interview with Mr. A., where the Worker immediately became defensive when Mr. A. implied that the Worker was responsible because he had no food over the weekend. The Worker became hostile toward Mr. A. and told him he was to blame for not coming to the office for help. This type of reaction resulted in Mr. A. having lowered feelings of worth and feeling that he was a bother to the Worker. The evidence rules out the use of these last two methods in meeting and handling client hostility.

A worker should realize that the development of an emotional rapport, positive or negative, between the client and himself is not abnormal but inevitable, and that he should direct his attention not to eliminating this relationship but to controlling its nature and intensity.¹

It is clear, therefore, that the caseworker handles feelings of hostility in clients by recognizing, understanding, and accepting the fact that they exist. If the client's basis for these feelings is unrealistic or if the Worker's acceptance merely enables or encourages the client to move away from the purpose of the casework relationship and its discomfort, then the caseworker must interpret reality to the client. If this is the case, then the caseworker must clearly distinguish, for the client, his acceptance of the existence of the feelings and his rejection of the basis for the feelings.

The cases of Mr. A. and Mrs. L. indicate, too, the need for the caseworker to be constantly aware of his own feelings and how he reacts to the client's emotions, if he is to meet and handle hostility purposefully and constructively. Otherwise, the caseworker is likely to react, quite naturally, to the client's feelings with passivity or hostility. These reactions have been seen to be of no value, and may, in fact, be destructive to the casework purpose.

In the cases studied, it can be seen that the Worker's response to hostility was verbal. However, these

¹Garrett, op. cit., p. 20.

responses were accompanied by acceptance in feeling which is not evident in the recording. Therefore, the value of the acceptance in feeling cannot be clearly indicated from this study. Felix P. Biestek provides some authoritative comments on this topic.

The caseworker thus responds to the feelings of the client and wants the client to see that response.

This response is principally internal. It may not, perhaps, ever be put into words. If the caseworker feels that way internally, the client will sense it, at least intuitively. If the caseworker does not feel it, the client will equally sense the lack of such response, regardless of the verbal protestations of the caseworker.¹

The writer believes that it can be concluded that the clients discussed in these cases are no different from the clients who are helped in any other social work settings, allowing, of course, for those differences which create their individuality as persons. This is verified to some extent by the fact that Mrs. L. had previously received service from a child protection agency and psychiatric clinic, while Mrs. T. had also received service from a child protection agency. The writer believes that it would be safe to assume, therefore, that the conclusions reached here may be similarly reached, with regard to hostility in the client-worker relationship, in any other social work setting. In fact, it is probable that the presence of client hostility, especially as directed toward the agency and caseworker, would be even

¹Biestek, op. cit., p . 59.

more pronounced in a setting which is charged with the authority of enforcing social legislation.

The conclusions that have been reached are based mainly on theory. Insofar as the writer has had little opportunity to do basic research, aside from what he has observed in his limited practise, he would conclude that there is a need for further research of a wider range of cases, to substantiate or invalidate the findings that have come out of this thesis, and to clarify how generic these conclusions are in the field of social work. Further research might also indicate other methods by which the caseworker can meet and handle client hostility.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Aptekar, Herbert H. Basic Concepts in Social Case Work. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941.
- Davidoff, Henry (ed.). The Pocket Book of Quotations. "A Poison Tree"; New York: Pocket Books Inc., 1952.
- English, O. Spurgeon, and Pearson, Gerald H. J. Emotional Problems of Living. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1945.
- French, David G. An Approach to Measuring Results in Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.
- Garrett, Annette. Interviewing, Its Principles and Methods. New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1943.
- Hamilton, Gordon. Theory and Practise of Social Case Work. 2nd ed., revised. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.
- Hunt, J. McV., and Kogan, Leonard S. Measuring Results in Social Casework. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1950.
- Kittredge, George Lyman (ed.). The Complete Works of Shakespeare. "Hamlet"; Boston: Ginn and Company, 1936.
- Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Dissertations. Chicago: Distributed by the University of Chicago Bookstore, 1937.
- Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed. Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1946.

Articles

- Biestek, Felix P. "An Analysis of Casework Relationship," Social Casework, XXXV (February, 1954).
- Preston, Malcolm G., et. al. "Factors Affecting Movement in Casework," Social Casework, XXXIV (March, 1953).

Unpublished Material

Constitution of the Halifax Welfare Bureau. Passed at
the Annual Meeting, November 1, 1949.