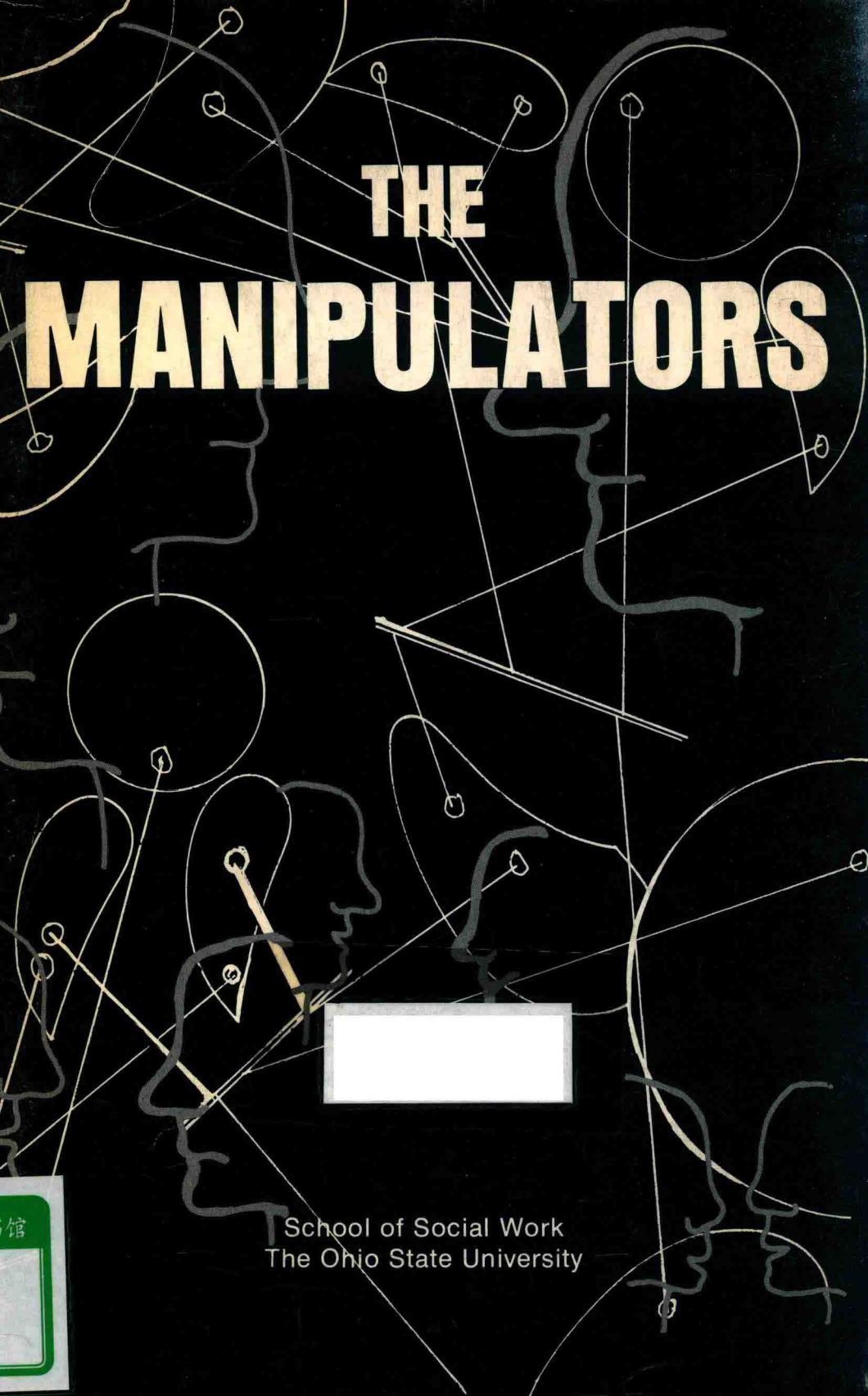
THE MANIPULATORS



School of Social Work
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THE MANIPULATORS

A Generic Model of Social Work Intervention

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Cover design by David Nateman.

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The successful completion of the first three years of research on runaway youth at The Ohio State University was facilitated with the aid of two publication grants given by The Columbus Foundation. The promise of continuing research has been realized and continues with the hope that knowledge generated will aid families affected by youth flight.

The content of this book in no way reflects the views of The Columbus Foundation or the Faculty of Social Work. Opinions and judgments expressed are those of the author based on three years of intensive research activity in the central Ohio area. This work could not have been achieved without the continued support of Dr. Richard R. Medhurst. Acknowledgements are due to Lucinda Gandert for exceptional typing services and rare patience. The author also wishes to express his grateful appreciation to his wife, Evelyn D'Angelo, for providing much needed assistance in proofreading. Any errors of commission or omission that may be discovered in this printed volume should be attributed exclusively to the author.

PREFACE

This volume deals with a social action process. It describes activities which took place under the aegis of the School of Social Work of The Ohio State University starting in the Summer of 1972 and ending thirty-six months later in 1975. The activity known as the Teenage Flight Project focused on the goal of facilitating change in prevailing social policies affecting runaway youth. Some aspects of this project became controversial because of competition between community groups and forces activated by the intervention process. The purpose of this volume is to examine selective components of this social action process, and to learn from these experiences.

With the completion of this third volume of writing on the Teenage Flight Project, a three-year span of contracts for research and social work intervention services comes to a close. The need to fix starting and termination points in demonstration projects is necessitated by contractual arrangements which provide funds to conduct research and programming. Hopefully, the processes initiated by this effort will not stop.

Originally, this case-study was planned as part of the project's first-year research mission. As progress was made in the project timetable, it became evident that writing a case study on top of an ambitious research project would force some curtailment of activities, weakening the overall project. Consequently, the task was postponed until the third year of the project when activities were supposed to subside.

Since the purpose of this volume is critical analysis, it was felt that the use of conceptual tools would aid the descriptive process. Frames of reference are utilized in the form of role descriptions of individual and group participants. In discussing the interactions of specific units, there is no intention of depreciating efforts of participating individuals and groups. Critical analysis involves qualitative judgments about what people do and why they do them. If the analysis reflects any bias, it is professional rather than personally motivated. In order to protect participating individuals and organizations from the effects of subjective commentary, names have been fictionalized--with a few obvious exceptions. In a further attempt to frustrate inquisitors, the investigator has exercised discretion in obscuring certain highly visible positions. Furthermore, he has transposed personalities and rearranged the timing of certain events for additional security--without sacrificing factual integrity. Therefore, maximum effort has been expended to avoid any possible disclosure of identity except for that of the principal investigator. No defensible purpose would be served by violating the sensitivities of individuals who assumed roles in this important project.

There are a number of questions which it is hoped this volume will help to answer in part: What are some of the environmental obstacles that interfere with the social worker's attempts to facilitate change? To what extent is the social worker in a position to deal with environmental constraints in the pursuit of professionally sanctioned goals? The professional in

practice situations has many clients--but to whom does the social worker owe primary allegiance? Can a social worker take sides in political conflict in the interest of achieving a personalized goal? What is the social cost of partisan action? How effectively can social workers manipulate social conditions which affect the target population they are committed to serve? Lastly, how well does the generic model in question do the professional job?

The investigator's reporting of events and interpretations has been supplemented by the inclusion of several working-stage conceptual models. The subject of this volume does not represent a standard model of practice and teaching in the School of Social Work. It has been neither approved nor disapproved by the Social Work Faculty of The Ohio State University. Although the faculty have endorsed the principles of generic social work education, there are a number of varieties in practice here and in other schools of social work, for there exists no single accepted standard. The model described in this book represents one version. It is not intended to be prescriptive. Finally, it is hoped that this volume will stimulate discussion of contemporary issues in social work education and practice as a service to the profession.

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To my students,

Past, present and future,

I offer these rudiments

Of our profession.

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HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL WORK

At this point in the history of the social work profession, there are many reasons for uncertainty about the future. The current predicament facing the profession has been developing since the end of World War II. The subsequent demand for social work services gave birth to optimism in the new era. The prospect for growth in the vigorous profession seemed extremely favorable. New opportunities arose in the post-war period which stimulated a variety of competitive forces that were to profoundly change the social work scene. Some changes were instigated by feelings of discontent with rigid approached inherited from the past. Other innovations were necessitated by a changing social context that proved resistive to old methods. Among the experimentations which evolved in social work education was a demonstration project conducted by the School of Social Work of The Ohio State University. The project, known as the Teenage Flight Project, was established in 1972 and continued through 1975. It is described in this volume. The case study begins with an historical preview of events considered relevant to the emergence of the Teenage Flight Project.

Post-War Pressures on the Profession

After the close of World War II, the demand for mental health specialists and trained social workers

grew; specialists were needed to care for returning veterans and families upset by the war. Social problems associated with converting the war economy to a peacetime operation involved more than money, and social workers were employed to help meet the challenge. Contributions by professional social workers were channelled through three major approaches to practice: social casework, group work and community organization. These traditional approaches to helping people became the profession's "workhorses" in the early post-war period. But as the issues concerning society changed, and questions were raised about the nature of the social order, more and more doubts were raised about the efficacy of traditional approaches in dealing with new strains on our social system.

By the nineteen-sixties, it was obvious that the profession was saddled with a first-rate crisis. The political spotlight had shifted from economic and social recovery to elimination of poverty. Social workers were expected to provide answers and alternatives to such problems as poverty, racism and the declining prestige of Americans. The challenge was too much for the young profession. Traditional social work approaches became suspect for promising more than they could deliver. Schools of social work were prevailed upon to educate social workers for roles that seemed different from traditional practice roles. The burden of responsibility during the crisis, therefore, was shared by the professional training centers.

Schools of social work seemed no better equipped to deal with society's problems than were professional practice centers. The puck was shifted between prac-

titioner and professor, but never did it reach its goal. The game plan was often modified to meet new pressures. Social demands in the sixties caused the community action worker to displace the psychiatric social worker in the high ranks of practice. Many community "activists" employed by social agencies didn't have the benefit of graduate credentials. It didn't seem to matter--so long as they were not traditionalists. There was an increased emphasis on heroic volunteerism in this period. Child welfare services, medical social work and public assistance work--the customary "fields" of social work practice--were upstaged by activists in urban redevelopment, civil rights, consumer advocacy and welfare reform. In addition to these popular movements the seeds had been sown for the emergence of the "liberation movement"--the newest of these being youth rights. The new movements forced the social work profession to reexamine basic assumptions in relation to professional methods and values. Social workers became self-conscious about the use of professional titles such as "caseworker" and "group worker". Consequently, the eruption of new designations--viz., family therapist, social actionist and social planner--was a defensive maneuver by practitioners.

The impact of new community demands on the social work profession stimulated a search for ways to switch the focus of practice from narrow specialization to an orientation that was more versatile and potent. Proof that results from employing new approaches were an improvement over the past was not essential. The emphasis seemed to be on developing forms of practice that placated the objections to traditional forms of inter-

vention. This reaction stemmed partly from the frustration that the profession itself felt over its decline in status and impotence in coping with crusty post-war issues. Part of the reaction also resulted from the subtle revision of social work ideals that corresponded with the profession's growth and upward social mobility.

The social work profession responded to pressures for change by adding to rather than eliminating old practices. There is an ample pool of evidence to show that the new challenges produced an increase in the variety of practice offerings, including: casework, group work, community organization, social planning, generic social work, micro-methods, macro-methods, administration and management, social problems, research and social action. Schools of social work which have long been associated with traditional methods did not have to yield everything to outside pressures. One of the "effects" manifested included an hierarchical expansion in social work programs. Complementing the growth in practice orientations, social work degree programs were stretched to four levels: the Associate Arts degree, the Bachelor's degree, the Master's degree, and the Doctor's degree. It was apparent that the growth in social work curriculum offerings was a response to pressures from the environment rather than growth from nurturance derived from practice experience.

Federal-Social Work Partnership

The federal government's friendship with the social work establishment during this period was not a whimsical affair. The resources of the social work profession had been drawn upon during the pre-war

depression era. The resurgence of friendship between the federal government and the social work profession was accompanied by increases in public funds expended in support of social work education. Beginning with the passage of the National Mental Health Act of 1946, funds began to flow in support of educational programs in social work. Schools of social work prospered from the generosity of such agencies as the National Institute of Mental Health, the Children's Bureau, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the Veterans Administration. Social work as well as other academic disciplines received another post-war booster shot when Russia successfully launched *Sputnik* in 1957. United States expenditures in aid to education grew as a result of the "cold war".

Federal dollar investments in social work education produced some noticeable effects. One area in which the results of the financial transfusion became visible was in surging enrollments. As funds for students became more accessible between 1950 and 1970, social work post-baccalaureate enrollments increased fourfold. In the same period the number of schools of social work began to rise significantly. At the Master's degree level, between 1950 and 1960, the number of social work scholarships doubled; they doubled again between 1960 and 1970.[1] Dramatic structural changes also were noted in the more competitive doctoral programs, making possible an upward leap in enrollments. In 1950, less than one hundred students were registered in social work doctoral programs; in 1975 more than 600 students aspired to the Doctor's degree. Changes had been so profound that even the Nixon Administration's deliberate efforts to phase out program supports