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ACCEPTANCE
IN THE
CASEWORK RELATIONSHIP

by
Sister Rose Maureen Kelly, O.P.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Social
Work of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Work

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The life process of growth, adaption, refinement and purpose that is the pattern of living things has been reflected in the development of social casework. Conceived to meet specific needs in a professional way, social casework has extended itself over the years to meet a greater variety of specific needs, has adapted its method to a variety of settings, refined its skills as it increased in knowledge and has formulated for itself a clearly defined purpose, that of a better adjustment between the individual and his environment.

As this growth process has been achieved within the profession, increasing attention has been accorded the precise formulation of underlying principles. Impetus for this was given in a statement of the Milford Conference in 1928. "Inherent in the practice of social casework is a philosophy of individual and social responsibility and of the ethical obligations of the social worker to his client and to the community."¹ Commenting on this in the same year, M. Antoinette Cannon stated that "if it . . . that we do in fact expect social workers to maintain in their practice

¹Social Casework, Generic and Specific (New York, 1928), p. 28.

certain kinds of relationships to and between community and clients, then sooner or later the philosophical thinking in regard to these relationships will find expression and we shall have a social philosophy as well as a social work sociology to discuss for us our underlying principles."²

Father Swithun Bowers, O.M.I., terms the specific skill in casework the use of the worker's self in a constructive relationship to the individual in his unique situation, and it implies acceptance of him with all his differences and uniqueness, allowing him to express freedom of choice."³ In an analysis of the casework relationship, Father Felix P. Biestek, S.J., constitutes acceptance of the client by the worker one of the seven elements of the relationship, and defines the concept of acceptance as follows:

Acceptance is the recognition by the caseworker of the innate dignity, ultimate destiny, human equality, basic rights and needs of the client regardless of his individual qualities arising from heredity, environment, behavior or any other source. Acceptance, however, does not necessarily mean approval of the client's behavior, attitudes or standards. Acceptance includes thought and feeling elements and is expressed primarily in the manner of service.⁴

Thus acceptance of the client by the worker is recognized as one of the essential qualities of the casework relationship, having certain dynamics which differentiates it from the acceptance experienced in other relationships. Various definitions of acceptance have been formulated by individual authors, in addition to the one considered above. The purpose of this study is to determine the thinking of the profession with regard to this particular aspect

²Fern Lowry, ed., Readings in Social Casework (New York, 1939), p. 20.

³Swithun Bowers, O.M.I., "The Nature and Definition of Social Casework", Principles and Techniques in Social Casework, ed. Cora Kasius (New York, 1950), p. 118, 126.

⁴Felix P. Biestek, S.J., "An Analysis of the Casework Relationship", Social Casework, XXXV (February 1954), p. 60.

of the casework relationship, and to incorporate the findings into a definition of the concept.

SOURCE AND METHOD

The source material of the study was selected literature of the social work field. This included The Family and the Journal of Social Casework, currently called Social Casework, from the year 1930 through 1954. Books were selected on the basis of generic content and application to the field as a whole.

The method used was a scanning of the literature, for which the index headings acceptance, attitude, casework, concepts, interview, philosophy and relationship were utilized to locate the material. The material was posted on cards and filed under general headings based on the above definition of acceptance.

SCOPE

The scope of this study is the nature of acceptance as one component of the casework relationship, the development and transmission of the attitude by the caseworker and its effects in the client.

As stated in the presentation of source material, the concept has been considered from a generic point of view, rather than as it applies in specific settings and areas of specialization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Acceptance is one of the essential elements of the casework relationship. As such, it is consciously used by the worker in the exercise of her profession. An understanding of what this requires of the worker in her attitudes and convictions and what it effects in the client is a necessary prelude to the wise and skillful application of the concept in the casework relationship. It is hoped that this study will achieve a greater degree of

understanding through a compilation and interpretation of the contributions that have been made toward definition of the concept.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF EIGHT DEFINITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

Proceeding from a dictionary definition of the word acceptance as meaning "favorable reception; assent; belief; also, received meaning"¹, several definitions of the concept as a professional attitude were found in the literature. The eight definitions considered contained several common elements.

We "accept" the client when we are able to understand him as he is, and to respect his integrity as a fellow human being.²

Acceptance is a term widely used to describe the caseworker's attitude toward his client. It embraces two basic ideas - one negative and one positive. (1) The caseworker must not condemn or feel hostile toward a client because of his behavior no matter how greatly it may differ from behavior of which he personally would approve. (2) In order to help a client the caseworker must feel genuine warmth, a certain "outgoingness" to the other person to form a bridge across which help may be given. He must really want to add something to the comfort and happiness of the other person, not for the satisfaction of a successful case (although this feeling may also be present) nor primarily for the benefit of society but because he really cares what happens to this particular individual.³

It social casework accepts the individual, such as he is and with all his limitations - as he is expected to learn to accept

¹New Century Dictionary

²Bertha C. Reynolds, "A Changing psychology in Social Case Work - After One Year", The Family XIII (June, 1932). 107

³Florence Hollis, Women in Marital Conflict, (New York, 1949), p. 197.

others, without prejudice. Not one of personal friendship but as a quality of life, it offers warmth, acceptance and understanding in quiet illustration of a quality in human relations that might have value everywhere,⁴

Interviewing skill rests on a fundamental professional attitude called "acceptance". This means acceptance of the other person as he is - in whatever situation, no matter how unpleasant or uncongenial to the interviewer, with whatever behavior, aggressiveness, hostility, dependency, or lack of frankness he may manifest. This attitude can come only with respect for people and a genuine desire to help anyone who is in need or trouble. It is translated through courtesy, patience, willingness to listen, and not being critical or disapproving of whatever the client may complain of, request or reveal about himself."⁵

. . . the fundamental attitude required from the therapist is one of complete understanding It means accepting the patient in the sense of not reacting against or attacking or criticizing the person as he actually is, and it means also fully accepting his real potentialities and possibilities. It means accepting what he is as a possible starting point of new growth.⁶

The "central dynamic" in this giving of help and strength is a special kind of love called "acceptance", a love which consists of warmth, concern, therapeutic understanding, interest in helping the person to get well, that is, to regain control of his own life and conduct. This "love" is further characterized by a consistent maturity and firmness which make it a sincere expression of the caseworker's willingness, consciously to enter and share in the life experience of another.⁷

Acceptance is the recognition by the caseworker of the innate dignity, ultimate destiny, human equality, basic rights and needs of the client, regardless of his individual qualities arising from heredity, environment, behavior or any other source. Acceptance, includes thought and feeling elements, and is expressed primarily in the manner of service.⁸

⁴Cora Kasius, ed., Principles and Techniques in Social Case Work, (New York, 1950), p. 139.

⁵Gordon Hamilton, Theory and Practice of Social Case Work, (New York, 1951), p. 52.

⁶Joseph Nuttin, Psychoanalysis and Personality, (New York, 1953), p. 98.

⁷Mary J. McCormich, Diagnostic Casework in the Thomistic Pattern, (New York, 1954), p. 105.

⁸Felix P. Biestek, S.J., "An Analysis of the Casework Relationship", Social Casework, XXXV (February 1954), 60.

The principle of acceptance implies that the social worker must perceive, acknowledge, receive and establish a relationship with the individual client as he actually is, not as we wish him to be or think he should be. It means that no matter how much the client may have distorted reality, no matter how much our perception of it may differ from his, we must help him The art of helping, like any other art, depends on accepting material with which we propose to work as it actually exists, with its limitations as well as its potentialities. This principle could be restated by saying that in social work one begins where the client is and at every stage in the helping process relates oneself to the client as he is at each given moment.⁹

COMMON ELEMENT

An analysis of these definitions from the point of view of their common elements reveals considerable accord as to some of the characteristics of acceptance, with others receiving emphasis in some definitions but not all. The common approach of the authors is that of enumeration of the component parts of the concept. These were found to fall into three categories:

1. Those which relate directly to the client, namely, understanding, recognition of limitations, of potentialities, of innate dignity, ultimate destiny, basic rights and needs.
2. Those which relate directly to the worker, namely, interpretations, value judgments, reactions to behavior and standards of the client.
3. Those which relate to both worker and client, namely, the effective transmission of acceptance and the resultant effect on the client.

The concept is said to include thought and feeling elements. In substance then, the definitions describe those elements which in combination constitute the concept of acceptance. They do not, however, describe specifically the combination, or the act by which these elements are

⁹Swithun Bowers, O.M.I., "Social Work and Human Problems", Social Casework, (May 1954), XXXV, 190.

integrated to form the end product of acceptance.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If "the art of helping depends on accepting the material with which we propose to work as it actually exists",¹⁰ then a development of a more essential notion of the concept than has been stated in the literature up to the present time would seem to be feasible. The following questions are as yet unanswered in unequivocal terms:

1. What is the generic classification of acceptance? It has been termed an attitude, a recognition, a quality in human relations, a dynamic and a principle. This multiplicity of terms leads to vagueness and intangibility.
2. What does the worker do when she "accepts"? In other words, what are the psychological components of the act of acceptance?
3. Precisely what is accepted in the casework relationship?

The following considerations derive from an attempt by the writer to answer these questions. The eight definitions in this chapter have been used as the point of departure.

Generic Classification

In regard to the generic classification of acceptance, several of the terms cited in the definitions are inappropriate. Quality and dynamic are too broad and indeterminate in scope to be of particular significance. Recognition is too narrow since it may refer to an intellectual perception only. The term principle, a professed rule of action or conduct, more clearly delineates a consciously assumed frame of mind which produces some action. It leaves unexpressed, however, the notion of relation to someone other than oneself, which

¹⁰Ibid.

is the essence of the casework relationship. The term attitude, a disposition in regard to a person or thing, expresses a consistent reaction in relation to another. It connotes an enduring reaction based on conviction. This term most clearly classifies the concept as relating to another, as conscious and as enduring.

Having established that acceptance is an attitude toward another, it can be assumed that contact with the other produces the attitude. But the "fundamental professional attitude"¹¹ of acceptance is offered to each of many individual clients. This raises the question as to whether such an attitude, deemed to be fundamental in the helping situation, is a natural or acquired disposition. The definitions state that warmth, outgoingness to the other person, and care for what happens to him are necessary to the attitude. These would appear to be the natural characteristics, both intellectual and emotional, that would influence one to enter the social work profession. In this sense, the attitude may be said to be natural in embryo. In addition, the attitude is said to consist of understanding of the individual client. Elsewhere this has been described as "an understanding of the individual, his capacities and his hopes, his successes and his failures in his relation to the world about him."¹² This understanding, primarily intellectual, is achieved through the study of man and his behavior. This sound knowledge of human relations is an acquired component of the attitude of acceptance.

The definitions cite another element in the attitude which suggests the need for an acquired consciousness. This is the reaction of the worker to characteristics in a particular client which are other than she would wish them

¹¹Hamilton, p. 52.

¹²Cora Kasius, p. 119.

to be. Acceptance precludes a negative reaction. "It means that no matter how much the client may have distorted reality, no matter how much our perception of it may differ from his, we must acknowledge and accept him"13 But, as has been stated:

The caseworker, like every human being, probably has to a greater or less degree, some prejudices and biases. He may have conscious or unconscious dislikes of some personality types "Liking " a client may not always be necessary for effective casework, but striving to be free from prejudice is. The caseworker, therefore, needs to recognize and control these biases within himself and to develop his capacity to see people objectively, as they are, rather subjectively, as they appear through the colored glass of his own prejudices.¹⁴

Control of bias following upon recognition of it is achieved through conscious repetition of the act of control. This then is an acquired part of the attitude of acceptance.

Generically, then, acceptance is an acquired professional attitude, developed from the natural characteristics of warmth, outgoingness, and care for the other person; from acquired understanding of the nature of man and his behavior; and from the acquired self-discipline that renders the attitude free from personal bias or prejudice.

Psychological Components of Acceptance

In addressing oneself to the psychological components of the act of acceptance in order to ascertain what is the precise activity which constitutes acceptance, and distinguishes it from other psychological activities, we must consider the nature of the relationship involved. Relationship between two persons involves thought and feeling elements. In the casework relationship

¹³Bowers, p. 190.

¹⁴Felix P. Biestek, S.J., "The Non-Judgmental Attitude", Social Casework, XXXIV, (June 1953), p. 239.

the client brings himself, his problem, and his feelings about the problem. In applying for help at a social agency, he brings the additional fear of being judged, of rejection, or of being misunderstood. In order to arrive at acceptance of the client, based on understanding of him, the caseworker must respond to these feelings of fear. "Because of the nature of human beings, the fear is not always a rational one. The caseworker, therefore, needs to be sensitive to the client's feelings about his shortcomings, whether real or imaginary, and must be able to respond on the feeling level. A response on a purely thought level to a problem on the feeling level is inadequate."¹⁵ Thus it can be seen that a combination of emotional sensitivity and intellectual perception initiates the act of acceptance. This combined response to the stimulus, the client, is perceived, integrated, received and related to intellectually and emotionally. The act by which the perceived stimulus is related to positively is the act of acceptance. The act itself is in the intellectual order, but has been derived from both intellectual and emotional responses of worker to client. The objective basis for the worker's relating or establishing a connection with the person with the problem, as he is, is the worker's understanding of the human person, as he can be known philosophically, psychologically and from the point of view of casework.

When both intellectual and emotional perceptions of the client are objective and positive, total acceptance occurs. When the emotional response to the client is ambivalent or negative, intellectual discernment may be distorted or rendered impossible as long as the emotional reaction remains the same. Of the worker as well as the client it may be said, "how this person feels is going to determine in considerable measure what he thinks, how he acts, and what use he

¹⁵Ibid.

makes of an agency's service."¹⁶ Distortions in intellectual discernment produce a conditioned acceptance, which in turn produces a conditioned response such as bias or prejudice. If objective discernment in a given situation is rendered impossible by the strength of the worker's negative emotional response, then an intellectually honest acceptance is also impossible.

"To accept", then, means to perceive the client emotionally and intellectually, his problem and his feelings about the problem, to integrate the emotional and intellectual perceptions, to receive and reflect upon the total impression and to relate positively to it in the light of philosophical, psychological and casework principles regarding the nature of man and his behavior. From the act of acceptance follows the effective help which "depends upon accepting the material with which we propose to work as it actually exists"¹⁷ Acceptance as a professional attitude is a "disposition toward" a person. As such it is not a series of separate acts but is a habitual positive relationship.

What is Accepted in the Casework Relationship?

The definitions emphasize that that which is accepted is the individual as he is. What precisely does this mean? When the client presents himself initially to the worker, she does not as yet know anything specific about him. But his presentation of himself and his problem adequately and without inhibition depends on the worker's initial acceptance. "A friendly, accepting, sympathetic attitude on the part of the interviewer is imperative. Otherwise the patient

¹⁶Charlotte Towle, Common Human Needs, (New York, 1952), p. 11

¹⁷Bowers, p. 190.

will protect himself from either the approval or disapproval of the interviewer and accordingly the content will be what the client thinks the interviewer wants to hear rather than an expression of what the client really thinks and feels.¹⁸ On what basis then does the worker initially accept the client? That which is initially accepted is the client as a human being, the most fundamental of his attributes. He is accepted as a human being who has "the right to be treated as a human being, who has the same innate dignity, ultimate destiny, basic rights and needs as any other human being."¹⁹

As the relationship progresses, stimulated by the initial attitude of acceptance, the client then reveals himself and his problem to the worker. The worker grows in understanding of him in the more specific aspects of his particular personality, his problem and his thoughts and feelings about it. "Focus is held to the individual who has a problem within a set of specific circumstances."²⁰ At this stage in the casework relationship, that which is accepted is the human being as an individual, as a person with a specific personality, different from any other person. "It is the right of human beings to be individuals, to be different in certain respects from other persons."²¹ As understanding of his individuating characteristics develops, there is a corresponding growth of acceptance of the client based on his right to be an individual "no matter how unpleasant or uncongenial to the interviewer, with whatever behavior, aggressiveness, hostility, dependency or lack of frankness

¹⁸Department of the Army, Military Psychiatric Social Work, (Washington, 1950), p. 24.

¹⁹Biestek, p. 239.

²⁰Hamilton, p. 25.

²¹Biestek, p. 239.

he may manifest."²²

Acceptance of the client as an individual includes acceptance of his feelings. The feelings of the person with a problem are related to the problem in one or both of the following ways. First, they may constitute the problem itself. It has been written that ". . . the faulty reasoning of the unconscious may obscure a person's vision of reality . . . , feelings may be carried over from one person, toward whom they may at one time have been appropriate to other times and persons where they are altogether inappropriate".²³ Acceptance by the worker "enables the client to talk freely Often the very bringing of irrational notions into the clear light of day enables the client to recognize their inappropriateness."²⁴ Secondly, the feelings of the client may stem from a problem which is mainly environmental. "There is an interplay between the force of inner pressures and the extent of external deprivation. Whenever an individual is placed under unusual external pressures, frustration of natural impulses takes place."²⁵ This frustration produces anxiety and often times feelings of inadequacy and defeat. The worker's real interest and desire to help is "proof to the client of his own worth and of the friendliness of at least a part of the world of which the anxious person is so afraid."²⁶

²²Hamilton, p. 52.

²³Florence Hollis, Social Case Work in Practice, (New York, 1939), p. 304.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid. p. 302.

²⁶Ibid. p. 303.

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It can be seen that feelings, in both of these aspects, are intimately related to the problem of the individual. Acceptance of feelings, then, is essential to acceptance of the individual.

In addition to the individuality of the client, the worker's attitude of acceptance extends to him as an individual who has the right to make his own choices and decisions. This acceptance is based upon the right of the client to self-determination, that is "to regain control of his own life and conduct."²⁷ Client self-determination has been defined as "the recognition that the client has a right and a need to be free in making his own decisions and choices."²⁸ It is further stated in the same source that "the caseworker has a corresponding duty to respect that right, in theory and in practice, by refraining from any direct or indirect interference with it, and by positively helping the client to exercise that right."²⁹

The client is accepted as an individual with his own feelings and attitudes, free to make his own choices and decisions within certain limitations of morality, legality and social responsibility, and additionally, as an individual who has a right not to be judged as a person on the basis of guilt or innocence by the worker. The acceptance of the client in this last aspect derives from his right "to be judged guilty or innocent only by a duly constituted legitimate authority."³⁰ Acceptance is achieved by a recognition of this right, and the knowledge of the worker that she does not have the

²⁷McCormick, p. 105.

²⁸Biestek, p. 239.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

required authority to judge the client.

Does this acceptance of the client's right not to be judged mean that the worker must personally accept the client's behavior or standards? No, it does not. Regarding this, it has been stated that "the caseworker does not relinquish his own sense of values, his personal and social ethics. He cannot remain interiorly indifferent to standards contrary to his own if he is to maintain the integrity of his own personality. He must remain true to himself. He does not become moralistic, but he has a right to his own sense of social, moral and spiritual values, personally and professionally."³¹ Furthermore, though the caseworker's acceptance of the client's right not to be judged precludes criticism, blame or condemnation of his behavior, "because of his social responsibility, the caseworker cannot be indifferent to social, legal or moral wrong; the caseworker must favor the good."³² The statement of the Milford Conference declares: "Social case treatment has to do with the way in which the social worker counsels with human beings; at every step it ties up with his understanding of those requiring service, with his concepts of social relationships, and with his philosophy of normal standards of social life."³³ In another place it is stated; "We have learned that the caseworker must not criticize, blame or condemn the behavior of the individual whom she would help. This does not mean that all behavior is to be approved or condoned, but, interested in the total family group, the family caseworker has learned . . .

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Social Casework, Generic and Specific (New York, 1928), p. 30.

that if human behavior is to be changed, it must be understood."³⁴

Acceptance of the client as a person not to be judged, then, does not necessarily mean personal acceptance of his behavior, nor does it mean that the casework relationship itself is unfounded on a philosophy of normal standards of social life.

Lastly, the client is accepted as a person who has a right and need to keep his personal affairs a secret. This has been termed the right and need of confidentiality, and has been referred to in the literature as follows:

Confidentiality is the preservation of secret information concerning the client which is disclosed in the professional relationship. Confidentiality is based upon a fundamental right of the client, it is an ethical obligation of the caseworker, and is necessary for effective casework service. The client's right, however, is not absolute. Moreover, the client's secret is often shared with other professional persons within the agency and in other agencies; the obligation then binds all equally.³⁵

In totality, that which is accepted in the casework relationship is the human being, with all his individuating characteristics, feelings and attitudes, with a problem that remains essentially his to be solved by the exercise of his own choices and decisions. He is accepted as an individual human being with certain fundamental rights which the worker is ethically obliged to respect: the right not to be judged by anyone other than duly constituted authority, and the right to the preservation of secret information about himself within the area of professional service.

³⁴Eleanor Neustaeder, "Along What Lines Does the Future Contribution of the Family Welfare Movement Lie?", The Family, XX (June 1939), p. 127.

³⁵Biestek, "An Analysis of the Casework Relationship", Social Casework, XXXV (February 1954), 60.

Summary

Analysis of eight definitions of the concept of acceptance formulated by various authors over a time period extending from 1932 to 1954 revealed that certain characteristics have consistently been recognized as being proper to the concept. These include warmth, outgoingness, concern, understanding, recognition of limitations, potentialities, dignity, destiny, basic rights and needs of the client. Also regarded as characteristics of the attitude and standards by the worker, and transmission of the attitude to the client.

These definitions were seen by the writer as describing the concept in terms of its parts but not as a whole. A more adequate concept of the whole required that three questions be answered in terms as unequivocal as could be arrived at on the basis of what has already been said. These questions were:

1. What is the generic classification of acceptance?
2. What are the psychological components of the act of acceptance?
3. What is accepted in the casework relationship?

Generically, acceptance has been conceived of as an attitude, that is an enduring disposition toward another, which is based on natural characteristics and refined through the acquired characteristics of understanding and control.

The psychological components of the act of acceptance were determined to be emotional and intellectual perception of the person with the problem, integration and reception into the mind of this perception, reflection on it in the light of philosophical, psychological and casework principals as to the nature of man and his behavior, followed by a positive intellectual and emotional relationship to the person as he is. The act of relating positively is the actual act of acceptance. Acceptance as a professional attitude is a habitual disposition toward the client rather than a series of single acts.

That which is accepted in the casework relationship is the client as a

human being who has the same dignity, ultimate destiny, basic rights and needs as any other human being. He is accepted as this particular human being, with his own feelings and attitudes, as knowledge and understanding of his personality and his problem grow. He is accepted as an individual person possessed of the right to make his own choices and decisions, the right not to be judged by the caseworker, and the right to the preservation of secret information about himself.

CHAPTER III

BASES OF ACCEPTANCE

The bases of acceptance in the casework relationship are three: philosophical truth as to man's nature and destiny; psychological truth as to his methods of operation; and casework truth as to the person with the psychosocial problem. Integration of the principles of these three conceptions of the client forms a core of understanding upon which acceptance is based. These principles are the criteria against which the worker's intellectual and emotional response to the client are measured and held to be valid in the act of acceptance. Knowledge of these principles is essential to the acquisition of the attitude of acceptance.

Philosophical Base

Philosophical truth regarding the nature of man treats of him in regard to his innate dignity, and the source from which he derives this, his ultimate destiny, and the rights which accrue to him because of his origin and destiny.

Man's innate dignity derives from the fact that he was created by God, with an immortal soul which has within it a capacity for God-likeness. He is "a rational being endowed with the capacity to recognize, to desire, and to seek the things that will assure his ultimate and lasting happiness."¹ His ultimate

¹Mary J. McCormick, Diagnostic Casework in the Thomistic Pattern, (New York, 1954), p. 77.

destiny is union with God, and this is the final goal toward which his life activities are directed. Man has a capacity for both natural and supernatural life, having "the ability to think and to move, to feel and to reason which makes it possible for him to live a natural life in a natural world!"² and "the supernatural help that is known as grace and the virtues which makes it realistically possible for man to realize his potentialities for life and action on a supernatural plane."³

A well-rounded philosophy of man sees him as attaining the end for which he has been created through both natural and supernatural means. "Demoralization and disintegration of the individual are prevented, in part, through opportunity to work, and to take one's place in the community. But spiritual needs of the individual must also be recognized, understood and respected. They must be seen as distinct needs and they must also be seen in relation to other human needs."⁴

Man, endowed by God with a capacity for self-development through natural and supernatural means, is possessed of certain inalienable rights which flow from his nature. These are the right to life, the right to freedom of choice, the right to opportunity, both spiritual and material, the right not to be judged except by duly constituted authority, and the right to inviolability of his personality. Man is "a union of body and spirit. He has a right to his bodily integrity and the normal development of his bodily powers - to food

²Ibid. p. 44

³Ibid.

⁴Charlotte Towle, Common Human Needs, (New York, 1952), p. 8.

therefore, and to shelter and to clothing and to healing; he has a right to his spiritual integrity, and the normal development of the powers of his soul. He has a right to be treated according to the moral law. He has a right to enter into relation with God, to grow in union with God here with a view to that perfect union which is to come hereafter."⁵

On the basis of an understanding on man's origin and destiny, it can be seen that he is entitled to acceptance. It is this dignity of his which Christ bade us to recognize when He said: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Psychological Base

The capacity and ability of the human person as a distinct individual is the psychological base for acceptance. Conceived of in this order, "man is the ultimate ground and agent of everything that occurs within the realm of his being."⁶ The author continues:

Whatever pertains to his being in any manner whatsoever must, in its final analysis, be referred to his person and ego and not to any particular part or power. Man is composed of matter and a spiritual soul Man assimilates food, and reproduces himself. Man has a nervous system and sense organs, he synthesises the sense data, imagines, remembers, and performs instinctive actions. Man strives for sensuous good, abhors sensuous evil and experiences various emotions. Man forms ideas, judgments and processes of reasoning. Man exercises free will and desires spiritual values. Man is conceived, lives and dies. The immediate principles of functions are powers, or faculties, but the ultimate agent is man, the person, the ego."⁷

It is the individual person, possessed of these faculties of function,

⁵F. J. Sheed, Society and Sanity (New York, 1953), p. 8.

⁶Celestine N. Bittle, The Whole Man (Milwaukee, 1945), p. 561.

⁷Ibid.

body and soul, senses, instincts, emotions, intellect, and will, and using them in his own unique way, who is the subject of acceptance in the casework relationship. His use of his faculties in intrapersonal and social relationships is what constitutes his personality. This personality can be known and understood insofar as it can be studied, as in the casework relationship. It is stated that "a philosophy that emphasizes the unique self exalts personality in and of itself without considering what kind of person the individual may really be."⁸ The author goes on to say:

I am not questioning the worth of the individual and the dignity of personality. It is not wiped out by a scientific attitude. But any idea that a personality can be unique or transcend understanding is not consistent with our experience A realistic view of the client would seem to show that he has his strengths and his weaknesses; just as he is strong, he is also weak and anxiety ridden, as he is capable of generosity, he is also selfish."⁹

The study of the human personality reveals that the psychological processes can be understood, and methods devised by which the powers of the individual may be released.

The emphasis placed on the possibility of understanding human beings is a dominant note in the social worker's philosophy. Human personality has intrinsic value for the social worker, not because it can be molded or rehabilitated, but because it is worthy of respect in its own right.¹⁰

. . . we would accept as basic to all professional relationships and professional practice, a dynamic, democratic social philosophy that pays sincere respect to individual personality, values individual differences and conceives of social unity and progress as the outcome of the progressive integration of these differences in social relationships

⁸Lucille Nickel Austin, "The Evaluation of Our Social Case Work Concepts", The Family, XX (April 1939) 49.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Fern Lowry, Readings in Social Case Work (New York, 1939), p. 48.

that release and enlist for the common good their unique creative values.¹¹

As social case work becomes more mature, with a growing understanding of the human personality and the methods by which its powers may be released, we may gradually develop a definable synthesis of the great variety of practices which now constitute the movements richest promise.¹²

Study of the human personality reveals that man uses his faculties in both spiritual and material ways.

Release of personal energy through favorable social environment and liberating human relationships must be accompanied by the development of power which comes from co-ordination of effort to achieve the general ends of the social group, and the attainment of inner stability and endurance which proceed from apprehension of eternal realities.¹³

. . . understanding and appreciation of spiritual values must complement knowledge and recognition of psychological processes. This is true because . . . it is in the orderly development of the spiritual side of his nature that man finds the stimulus and the motivation which bring him eventually, into the position of being able and free to direct his own life toward the goal of happiness that he has chosen for himself.¹⁴

The psychological base for acceptance is man's ability to be understood through the study of his personality. His personality manifests itself in both spiritual and material activities, and is capable of growth and development.

Casework Base

Social casework theory professes the concept of acceptance of the person and the individual personality. It has been said, "Any ability to help others effectively rests on respect for the human personality - on the person's right to make his own life, to enjoy personal and civil liberties, and to pursue

¹¹Kenneth L. M. Pray, "A Restatement of the Generic Principles of Social Casework Practice", Journal of Social Casework, XXVIII (October 1947) 285.

¹²Linton B. Swift, "Social Work and the Family", The Family Suppl. XIII (October 1932).

¹³Lowry, p. 58.

¹⁴McCormick, p. 74, 75.

happiness and spiritual goals in his own way."¹⁵

This acceptance is an ethical responsibility of the caseworker. "According to professional ethics, the worker must learn to accept others as distinct personalities with their own rights of self-realization and self-determination."¹⁶

It is further stated that:

Casework responsibility includes respect and acceptance of the client as a personality and a human being. This implies, for example, that the client is not a "problem" but a person with a problem. He may never be exploited, nor may his social situation be exploited for personal gain, and plans for and with the client must be carried out only on the basis of a considered professional judgment. Guidance should never be casual, impulsive or hurried, but the emphasis should fall on release of the client's capacity for responsible actions and decisions."¹⁷

The three processes in social casework, namely, study, diagnosis and treatment, exercised by the worker are rendered effective by the attitude of acceptance

Study

The process of study is aimed at the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the client and his problem.

The casework point of view aspires to the acceptance of the individual as he is, viewing his behavior in the light of its value or meaning to him and without criticism or moral judgment The casework method seeks to free the worker as much as possible from individual bias or prejudice and enables him to see the individual in the light of the influences which have shaped his development and consequently his behavior."¹⁸

¹⁵Gordon Hamilton, "Helping People, the Growth of a Profession", Journal of Social Casework, XXIX (October 1948), 295.

¹⁶Gordon Hamilton, Theory and Practice of Social Case Work, (New York, 1951) p. 40.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Fern Lowry, "Objectives in Social Case Work", The Family, XVIII (December 1937), 264.

Diagnosis

The process of diagnosis is aimed at ascertaining the limitations and potentialities within the client and his situation. It includes evaluation of these potentialities in regard to possible treatment.

Diagnosis of the client's specific problem, its causation and his specific response to its impact can be conveyed to the client within a relationship in which he feels accepted.

The single most important factor in helping is the ability to transmit to the client not merely an intellectual understanding of him as he was, as he is, as he is becoming, but a growing feeling of acceptance. Only the diagnostic observation that carries with it this kind of acceptance adds to the helping relationship and is useful to the client.¹⁹

Treatment

The process of treatment is geared to the needs and capacities of the individual client.

Casework attempts to meet those needs which are derived from the interaction of the individual and his social environment and which precipitate breakdown in the individual's capacity for self-maintenance and social contribution. Ill health, legal entanglements, personality difficulties become of significance to the caseworker . . . as they limit the individual's ability to function independently or affect his contribution to the social group of which he is a part.²⁰

The caseworker's objective is individual, not defined by external standards but determined by the individual's capacities for self-maintenance and social contribution. The caseworker's objective is to assist the individual to realize his maximum capacities, without regard to the extent of these capacities.²¹

¹⁹Robert M. Gomberg, Diagnosis and Process in Family Counselling, (New York, 1951), p. 49.

²⁰Lowry, The Family, XVIII, 264.

²¹Ibid.

The processes of study, diagnosis and treatment predicate an individual in a set of specific circumstances, temporarily in need of help because of external or internal pressures, who has the capacity for self-development and self-determination.

Summary

Understanding of the human person as he is known philosophically, psychologically and from the point of view of casework forms the triple base of the attitude of acceptance. Philosophically the client is conceived of as a being created by God, destined for union with God and possessed of certain inalienable rights because of his origin, nature and destiny. Psychologically, he is understood as a being comprised of matter and spirit whose life processes are achieved by the total operation of his faculties of body and soul - senses, instincts, emotions, intellect, and will. His personality, or characteristic use of his faculties, can be studied and understood in large measure. It manifests itself in both spiritual and material activities and is capable of growth and development.

From the casework point of view, man is seen as a person with a problem, who is served in the helping process by the release of his own capacity for responsible actions and decisions. The casework processes of study, diagnosis and treatment are seen as finding both their incentive and expression in the attitude of acceptance.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF ACCEPTANCE IN THE CASEWORKER

Acceptance, as a professional attitude, is acquired and developed by the worker. The nature and bases of the attitude having been established, there are several additional aspects under which it must be considered in order to determine how the attitude may be developed by the worker.

Focus and Direction

Acceptance is an underlying force in the relationship. It motivates the worker to extend understanding, and establish a relationship.

In the development of casework one of the most important gains has been the recognition and use of the worker's relationship with the client . . . A casework relationship involves a non-moralistic acceptance of the client as he is and a recognition of whatever adjustment he has made to life. With this consciousness on the part of the worker, she can approach the client as a self-respecting adult who has to live his own life in his own way.¹

Acceptance is an attitude which is client-focused. It extends to the needs of the client, and does not include gratification of the worker's own needs.

Social case work differs from ordinary relationships in one important aspect. It is oriented one way - toward the client's need. The professional worker does not expect to get from the client, as he could rightly expect to get from his friends, sympathy or advice, nor does he

¹Elizabeth H. Dexter, "Case Work in Public Relief", The Family, XVI (July 1935), 135.

ask the client to serve his interests. In the hours he gives to the professional relationship, he shelves his own interests as a member of a family, a church or a political party, in order that his clients may realize themselves more fully in the social grouping of their own choice.²

The caseworker will be of little use to clients unless he has a real interest in them - cares about them - but he can never be helpful if he exploits this interest in the form of curiosity or a desire to manage or a need to have clients love him for what he does for them.³

Acceptance is an attitude which involves professional responsibility for the promotion of growth in the client. It includes a professional evaluation of potentialities and a responsibility to utilize these as much as possible.

The worker must be one who likes, understands and is able to be tolerant of human emotions of every kind, but who can at the same time expect the best from an individual and often insist that he carry out this best.⁴

One knows that growth depends first of all on securing the means of subsistence, then on opportunity, but finally on facing immediate reality, accepting responsibility, and working not only against limitations, but also with and within them.⁵

The client should face his problem as his own. He should not be allowed to unload his problem on the worker; only his feeling about the problem should be accepted.⁶ In this way he is kept better able to meet his own situations later on.

Understanding of the attitude of acceptance in these three aspects gives it both focus and direction in its development by the worker. The focus is on acceptance as a force in relationship which is client-centered, uninvolved with

²Fern Lowry, Readings in Social Case Work, (New York, 1939), p. 144.

³Gordon Hamilton, Theory and Practice of Social Case Work, (New York, 1951), p. 40, 41.

⁴O. Spurgeon English, "The Significance of Social Case Work", The Family, XX (December 1939), 179.

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁶Helen M. Walker, "The Aide in Action", The Family, Suppl. XIV (December 1933), 299.

personal need. The direction is toward the growth of the client from within himself.

Development of the Attitude of Acceptance

Acceptance, an attitude that contains both thought and feeling elements can be acquired and developed only on both thought and feeling levels. "The capacity to accept another individual may grow through knowledge of individual difference obtained by a study of psychology, literature, history, sociology and other social studies, but depends primarily also upon an attitude towards the other which knowledge cannot guarantee."⁷ This attitude toward the other involves the use of the self in a unique way. It has been said of the relationship that "the skill lies in the use of the worker's self in a constructive relationship to the individual in his unique situation, and it implies acceptance of him with all his differences and uniqueness, allowing him to exercise freedom of choice."⁸

Development of acceptance on the thought level involves the basic understandings of the person and personality which have been described as the bases of the concept of acceptance.

The greatest gift is to enable another to realize his own capacities for change and growth. One cannot, however, release such energies unless the helper himself has been taught systematically to understand the nature of motivation - how a person feels about his situation, about others, about the worker as "counselor" or "therapist". Only if the social worker in his professional education has been well grounded psychologically can he help the client to mobilize his feelings in the direction of change, growth and adaptation to reality.⁹

⁷Virginia P. Robinson, A Changing Psychology in Social Casework, (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1934), p. 167.

⁸Swithun Bowers, O.M.I., "The Nature and Definition of Social Case Work", Social Casework, XXX (December 1949) 417.

⁹Hamilton, p. 23.

Though described as development on the thought level, it can be seen that this is primarily a matter of division for the sake of analysis, since the acceptance of intellectual truth is almost always accompanied by emotional acceptance.

Development of acceptance on the emotional level involves the emotional phenomenon arising out of the use of the self in relationship. It is in the use of the self, and in acceptance of the self as revealed through this use that the caseworker develops the attitude of acceptance on the emotional as well as on the intellectual level. It has been said of students beginning casework that "they may be astonished to find how often they themselves project into family casework treatment biases arising out of their own parental relationships and experiences."¹⁰ But these projections are detrimental to objective understanding of the client as he is, and it is seen that "he, the student, has to grow into acceptance of his own emotions as vital expressions of living in order to allow the client to feel as he feels."¹¹ The casework relationship is "a reciprocal relationship in which the caseworker must accept herself and the other equally, in which all her attitudes toward the client would be such that she would be content to be at the other end of such a relationship herself."¹²

Use of the self in relationship demands self-awareness. The self is used in the relationship in order to extend understanding and acceptance. But the use of the self professionally, with purpose, can only be achieved through

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Virginia P. Robinson, ed., Training for Skill in Social Case Work, (Pennsylvania, 1942), p. 69.

¹² Robinson, A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work, p. 170.

knowledge of the self.

Arriving at understanding challenges us in that it calls for the maximum in equipment and personality in the social worker herself. It demands that if she is to prove capable of helping her client, she must be able to see him as he really is Through her sympathy and imagination she must be capable of attaining a oneness with him, and at the same time be free from pressure, from without or from within, to center her thinking and activity around her client's need. But in order to reach this oneness with him she must be ever alert in regard to her own personal prejudice, and to her own desires and personal stake in the matter.¹³

This knowledge of self is acquired through observation. This presupposes a willingness on the part of the worker to observe her own behavior in operation and to evaluate it in the light of professional understanding and responsibility.

The worker, as part of his acquisition of knowledge and skill, must to a considerable degree become willing to see himself in operation and observe how his acts affect others in his professional operations. In other words, if he is to use the self in his social skills in casework . . . he must understand the dynamics of self. He grows conscious of his role in all sorts of situations.¹⁴

During the field-training experience, the student is helped to notice and to respond to feelings in the clients, and by discussing his own mistakes, analyzing his reactions both to client and to supervisor, he gradually becomes aware of the meaning of interaction. Thus he begins, at one and the same time, as he lays aside his defenses against seeing his own patterns of behavior, to achieve a greater objectivity and control.¹⁵

Acceptance of the self leads to acceptance of the other. This is true because "a first clue to the understanding of oneself and to the solution to the enigma of one's relations to others seems to be the perception that one's problems are not unique, but are common to others."¹⁶ This acceptance of the

¹³Lowry, p. 244.

¹⁴Hamilton, p. 43.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Gordon W. Allport, "Some Guiding Principles in Understanding Personality", The Family, XI (June 1930) 124.

self as having problems, attitudes and feelings in common with others enables the worker to respond to and accept these feelings and attitudes in others. "In working through to attitudes that are neither moralistic nor coercive, the worker must first be able to understand himself and his own emotional drives and impulses before he can truly accept the "bad" feelings, aggression, or even love and gratitude in others."¹⁷ This does not mean that the worker identifies the client's problem and feelings about it as her own. This would not lead to objective understanding and acceptance. It has been said that "if the first clue to understanding oneself arises from the perception of typicality, it seems equally true that the first clue to understanding others lies in the perception of their uniqueness."¹⁸ It is her understanding of feelings and attitudes as she has experienced them in herself that enables the worker to understand that these feelings and attitudes exist in others. This gives her a security which permits her to accept others as they are. It has been found that "the worker's security in herself and her acceptance of the unique difference of the other is the fundamental equipment for therapeutic relationship in case work."¹⁹

Acceptance of the self is necessary for an ethical acceptance of the other in relationship. It is in being free to accept others because she has been free to accept herself that the caseworker is enabled to recognize and act in accord with the client's right of self-determination.

The caseworker acquires a capacity to deal with a situation without allowing her judgment to become warped by her own feelings. She has faced some of her own problems squarely so that her poise carries her through without being overwhelmed, depressed or elated by it. She has

¹⁷Hamilton, p. 40.

¹⁸Allport, p. 125.

¹⁹Robinson, A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work, p. 180.

accepted a philosophy of life which gives other people a right to work things out in a way different from her own. As a result, she does not feel it necessary to decide what is "right" for the client and to try to manipulate him to her way of thinking. Being really free herself, she is able to let other people be free and to follow their own ideals and standards.²⁰

Insight and self-awareness are prerequisite in an ethical use of relationship; it is important to know oneself in order to be able to accept others; ability to live with oneself or one's feelings is important for being able to understand the feelings of others. Only if we understand to some extent our own motivation can we leave the client free to establish himself securely, first with the social worker and thus later with others.²¹

Through acceptance of the self, the worker develops the attitude of acceptance of the client on the emotional level as well as on the intellectual level.

Acceptance is developed within the area of practice. Consideration of development from this point of view presupposes all that has gone before. In addition, the knowledge of and understanding of agency function, in its areas of service and in its limitations, influence the worker's acceptance of the client. "Acceptance of the function and adjustment to the policies of the agency . . . is part of the learning situation for any social work student."²²

This relation of acceptance of agency function to acceptance of the client does not prescind from acceptance of the person and personality of the client. However, it does relate to the service that can be offered him. It specifies the aspect under which the person with the problem is accepted, that is, as a person having the kind of psychosocial problem which the agency is prepared to

²⁰Leah Feder, "Why the Professional", The Family, XIII, (December 1932) 278.

²¹Hamilton, p. 40.

²²Frances Preston, "Field Teaching in Medical Social Work", The Family, XXIII (April 1942) 56.

meet. As the relationship progresses, the worker addresses herself to the specific problem as well as to the client as a person.

Acceptance of agency function means "an appreciation that the agency exists for the client and that the point of departure in any case is the client's welfare."²³ It also includes a recognition of limitations, and "in spite of the existence of a problem situation, and his eagerness to change it, he [the worker] learns to recognize and accept limitations within the client, within the service and finances of the agency, within the area of case work service as a whole."²⁴ This acceptance of limitations within the agency is said to have a positive value:

We are increasingly aware of the limitations of the casework situation. It is bounded on the one hand by the equipment and capacity of worker and client It is circumscribed by inadequate resources and the immobility of environment . . . it is limited by what we see in a situation, by what the client wants for himself, and by community demands or expectations. This awareness of limitations, far from stultifying, has a positive value. We take our own measure . . . and then tend to concentrate on the possibilities that lie within the situation.²⁵

The worker, then, addresses herself to an understanding of and acceptance of agency function in developing the attitude of acceptance.

Transmission of the Attitude to the Client

"The caseworker must somehow convey to the client her acceptance and understanding."²⁶ The attitude may be transmitted indirectly, through exterior

²³Mary Hester, "Field Teaching in a Private Agency", The Family, XXII (March 1941) 18.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Lowry, p. 295.

²⁶Ibid. p. 209.

manifestations of respect and courtesy. These have been summed up as, "courteous reception, immediate attention to a request, explanation of any inevitable delay, verbal recognition of the person's right to apply, use of the appointment system . . . information screening and steering to determine whether the client seems to be in the right place for his initial need, genuine kindness and consideration for all clients."²⁷ The worker's responses on this level of service "give clients a first glimpse of that "acceptance" which is so fundamental a part of the whole experience."²⁸ In relation to this, it is stated that "simple interest and acceptance, expressed in action rather than in words, will be more reassuring than any carefully verbalized phrase could be."²⁹

On a deeper level, acceptance as an enduring attitude or disposition is transmitted by a feeling response from the caseworker to the client. "The caseworker, sensitive to the basic needs and feelings of the client, understanding their meaning and appropriately responding to them, wordlessly says to the client: "Knowing your problem, your strengths and weaknesses, I continue to respect you as a person. I have no interest in judging you innocent or guilty; I want to help you make your own choices and decisions."³⁰ Because based on the deepest understanding of the innate dignity of the individual, as well as an understanding of his problem, the worker's response to the client "is principally internal. It may not, perhaps, ever be put into words. If the

²⁷Hamilton, p. 52.

²⁸Ibid. p. 53.

²⁹Muriel Gayford, "Field Training in Medical Social Work", The Family, XXIII (April 1942) 54.

³⁰Felix P. Biestek, S.J., "An Analysis of the Casework Relationship", Social Casework, XXXV (February 1954) 59.

caseworker feels that way. . . the client will sense it, at least intuitively. If the worker does not feel it, the client will equally sense the lack of such response, regardless of the verbal protestations of the caseworker. The response, moreover, is not established once, at a given point of time, and then taken for granted. Rather, it is an ongoing, continuous thing that grows and deepens throughout the casework process."³¹

Summary

The development of the attitude of acceptance is given focus and direction through the worker's understanding of it as an attitude which is an underlying force in the relationship, which is client-focused and unrelated to personal needs or wishes of the worker. The direction is toward the growth of the client which the worker has a professional responsibility to promote.

Factors in the development of the attitude are philosophical, psychological and casework knowledge; acceptance of self; and acceptance of agency function. Development of the attitude of acceptance occurs on both intellectual and emotional levels, through study and the use of the self in relationship.

Transmission of the attitude is achieved on two levels in the relationship. On the more superficial level, it is transmitted through courtesy, immediate attention, explanation of unavoidable delays, verbal recognition of the client's right to apply, carefully conducted intake, genuine kindness and consideration. On a deeper level, acceptance as an enduring disposition is transmitted chiefly through a feeling response to the client by the worker, and may not ever be put into words.

³¹Ibid.

CHAPTER V

ACCEPTANCE AS EXPERIENCED BY THE CLIENT

The client who comes to the social agency with a problem is essentially a person who is dissatisfied with some aspect of his present living, sees the need for change, but cannot make the change unaided due to environmental pressures or limitations within the personality. The strength of the desire for change and the readiness to effect change exist in varying degrees in each individual. Nevertheless it can be assumed that the client who comes to the agency has some degree of each. In addition to these two factors, however, there exists a third that has a profound significance in relation to the interaction between client and worker. This is the constellation of feelings and attitudes that is a part of the human person's adjustment to his environment, which feelings and attitudes are activated in a unique way when one is unable to cope with one's own problems, and must seek the help of another. These feelings and attitudes are stimulated by the two inherent relationships in the helping process, relationship to self and relationship to the helping person.

The Client - In Relationship with Self

Need for acceptance of his need to seek help.

In arriving at the decision that he will seek help with a problem, the client is faced with the knowledge that he cannot handle it alone. This knowledge may cause any one of a number of reactions, depending on the nature of the

problem and the personality of the client. At best the client feels the insecurity of approaching someone he has never met, fear that his request for help will be refused or that he will not meet the necessary qualifications. On a deeper level, he may have feelings of inadequacy, or resentment against the conditions that make it necessary for him to seek help, or of resistance to self-involvement. Discussing these factors as evidence of initial resistance, it has been said that they "make applicants falter and give information with extreme caution".¹ The author continues: "Courtesy, quick attention, explanation of necessary delays, recognition of the right to apply, privacy and quiet for the interview tend to reduce early defensiveness and resistance. Genuine kindness and consideration . . . give clients that first glimpse of 'acceptance' which is so fundamental a part of the whole treatment."²

Need for acceptance of his feelings as the relationship deepens.

In addition to the initial feelings and attitudes that the client brings to the helping situation, there is within him a capacity for growth that is his natural endowment. This growth capacity may be helped or hindered by the client's emotional response to his problem since "how this person feels is going to determine in considerable measure what he thinks, how he acts, and what use he makes of an agency's service."³ Recognizing that the client may be protecting himself against many of his own unacceptable feelings, which may be intimately related to the problem, it becomes important that an accepting

¹Gordon Hamilton, Theory and Practice of Social Case Work, 2nd ed., (New York, 1951), p. 171.

²Ibid.

³Charlotte Towle, Common Human Needs, (New York, 1952), p. 11.

atmosphere be created in which the need to protect himself becomes lessened. The caseworker's degree of understanding and appreciation of the importance of approach and relationship will determine the qualitative content of the first contact with the client. Through acceptance of his right and need to express his feelings, and acceptance of the reality feelings themselves, natural growth capacity is strengthened and his relationship with himself undergoes a change. This change is the client's attitude toward himself. It has been stated that "acceptance of the client's attitude without personal response gives a new and unique character to the client's efforts for self-expression and self-realization in which he has been through all his life engaged, in that here for the first time all his attitudes are accepted as alike real and significant. Here he is free to feel and admit the value of his impulses to himself since for the first time he is met with no approval or disapproval of their value for the object, as is the case in the response of parent, teacher, friend or lover to the expression of all feelings."⁴ It is the worker's accepting, understanding attitude which promotes this inner change, which is the beginning of the client's ability to accept himself. It is stated "we do know that a client's sense of being understood will not in itself remove his difficulties, but it will make it easier for him to turn from talking only about things to talking about feelings, even those inner and most protected feelings about himself and others, the recognition of which may help him to meet his difficulty."⁵

In exploring a child's behavior problem the parent is willing to give the obvious social facts readily enough, but when approaching her own handling of the child, her punishing attitudes, and so forth, she feels

⁴Virginia P. Robinson, A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work, (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1930).

⁵Hamilton, p. 32.

guilty and defenses are set up. Acceptance, permissiveness and indeed active support must be given to enable the parent to feel secure enough to proceed.⁶

Her [the worker's] interest and understanding can furnish a basis of confidence that will prevent the client from yielding to fears and resentments that arise naturally out of his uncomfortable situation.⁷ Thus the client's relation to himself becomes one of a beginning acceptance of self.

In relation to himself, then, the client has a need for acceptance of himself as a person in need of help, and as a person with feelings and attitudes proper to himself. Acceptance of these by another enables him more easily to acknowledge and accept them in himself.

Client - in Relationship with the Worker

Need for acceptance in order to enter into a relationship.

In entering into relationship with the worker, the client not only sees himself as indicated in the foregoing consideration, but also is seen by another, that is by the worker, and this has tremendous significance for him.

Terming the relationship thus established a "bilateral relationship", the Manual on Military Psychiatric Social Work states:

Bilateral relationship implies that there is a common purpose to the interview in pursuit of which the social worker and the patient are to work co-operatively. In order to do this, the persons involved in the interview must have a feeling of common purpose, which makes for a feeling of mutual trust and responsiveness A friendly, accepting, sympathetic attitude on the part of the interviewer is imperative. Otherwise the patient will protect himself either from the approval or disapproval of the interviewer and accordingly the content will be what the patient thinks the interviewer wants to hear rather than an expression of

⁶Ibid.

⁷Elizabeth H. Dexter, "Casework in Public Relief", The Family, V 16, (July 1935), p. 135.

what the patient really thinks and feels.⁸

It is the client who initiates the establishment of the relationship by his coming to the agency, but the degree of ease with which he is able to follow it through depends largely on whether the attitude of the worker permits him to express himself. The fact of his coming calls for a definite response from the worker.

The client comes because he has problems he cannot solve, he is frustrated, he seeks advice or assistance His coming is the result of a certain amount of cogitation, and he is ready to tell his story - always, no doubt, with a certain amount of bias. He is ready to go through with a new experience. He is led in this by the caseworker. Her mood is receptive, without prejudice. His is one of out-pouring. His freedom of expression should be encouraged, his thoughts and plans should be heeded. He should be drawn out with the idea of having him see his own problem in the light of day and therefore better understand himself.⁹

This initial need of the client is to be accepted by the worker. It has been stated: "Our client comes to us in the throes of finding a way out of his difficulty. He talks it over with a person who, he believes knows something about situations such as his, whom he can trust to be impartial, and who in this capacity stands him in better stead even than a friend. In discussing his problem he has lightened his burden in the discovery that another human being understands"¹⁰

Acceptance enables the client to enter into a relationship regardless of any preconceived expectations.

Respect for others, acceptance of others as they are and as potentially

⁸Department of the Army, Military Psychiatric Social Work, (Washington, 1950), p. 24.

⁹Mary Arden Young, "Supervision - A Woman's Eye View", The Family, X (April 1930), 44.

¹⁰Fern Lowry, ed., Readings in Social Case Work, (New York, 1939), p. 244.

they can be tends to introduce between worker and client, between the one who seeks and the one who offers help, a relationship that is the medium not only for educational counselling but for a treatment (therapeutic) process.¹¹

To the client, the social worker assumes for the moment a representative character, a symbol of that society whose critical judgment he fears. In that listening relationship and the attitude therein implied, he finds not the reaction he was braced to meet or powerless to face; instead this representative of the public displays a wholly different attitude. He meets an absence of judgment. He has been accepted for the moment as he is until his perspective is clarified, until he can see reflected back to him from the worker his own hope of what he might be.¹²

In addition, the worker's attitude of acceptance as perceived by the client to a large extent determines the ongoing strength of the relationship.

How a relationship with a professional person, temporary as it is, may produce greater maturity of personality is hard to explain. Perhaps, at the risk of too great simplicity, one might say that it gives the chance to 'live over again' relationships once badly bungled, perhaps because the other person, parent or playmate or teacher, could not play his part of the game fairly before because of his childishness or fear of being hurt. This time the client tries again, but with a professional person, who presumably, is not childish nor afraid, who dares to accept him, his worst as freely as his best, and help him to work out better adjustments to people in his own situation through living them first in the security of professional understanding.¹³

The child and the adolescent form their ideals through identifications. The adult can be sustained and to a degree, at least, stimulated to change by means of constructive relationships. The experience of having a friendly and interested worker listen attentively to one's troubles, not minimizing the difficulty, not criticizing or advising, tends to induce a warm response in the client, leading to a sense of being understood, which is the deepest bond in either personal or professional associations.¹⁴

¹¹Cora Kasius, ed., Principles and Techniques of Social Case Work, (New York, 1950), p. 90.

¹²Lowry, p. 241.

¹³Bertha G. Reynolds, "A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work", The Family, XII, p. 111.

¹⁴Hamilton, p. 30.

The attitude of acceptance stimulates satisfaction in the relationship which may compensate for the anxiety produced by temporary disturbance within the client.

When a person gives information he frequently gives the other person a part of himself which then in his mind may be used as a means of harming him. He has become vulnerable and withdraws from the possibility of further injury by breaking off the relationship unless the satisfaction of sharing his information with someone who accepts him over-balances the sense of danger involved.¹⁵

It further frees the client to reveal himself to another, with his limitations and mistakes, releasing fears, anxiety and guilt feelings, without detriment to his dignity.

. . . if the worker is able to accept the client, his values, his mistakes, his emotional contradictions, and his uncertain solutions with a calm assurance that deeply respects his dignity, there may come about a release of tension, anxiety, guilt feelings, and fears which hitherto may have immobilized the person.¹⁶

The client himself is permitted to accept the help the worker is prepared to offer to the degree and at the rate that the client is able or wishes to do so.

To "accept" a client has come to mean more than taking responsibility for his problem as we may have used the term in the past We think now of his acceptance of us in any really helpful casework relationship as implying an equal right to reject our help or to use it in any way he can best do so. We "accept" him when we are able to understand him as he is, and to respect his integrity as a fellow human being.¹⁷

The client sets the tempo and is called on to assimilate concepts only as he is emotionally ready to do so. Thus we eliminate the dangers inherent in revealing problems deeper than the client's emotional comprehension at

¹⁵Herbert Stroup, Social Work, an Introduction to the Field, (New York, 1948), p. 27.

¹⁶Leah Feder, "Early Interviews as a Basis for Treatment Plans", The Family, XVII (November 1936), 237.

¹⁷Bertha C. Reynolds, "A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work - After One Year", The Family, XIII (June 1932), 107.

the time. The relationship is here maintained on a level of mutual participation, the client's acceptance of what the caseworker has to give being ratio to the acceptance of the caseworker, to the security offered in the relationship and the confidence inspired by it.¹⁸

The client responds to the understanding with a sense of release and of being accepted by another and in turn accepting the other, never before experienced.¹⁹

Summary

The client responds in two ways to the accepting attitude of the worker. In relation to himself, he becomes freer from the tension and anxiety which arise from the fear of initial rejection. He finds it less necessary as the relationship progresses to protect himself from acknowledging his deeper feelings and attitudes, and the value they have for him. Though this in itself will not remove his difficulties, the growing recognition of his inner and most protected feelings about himself and others, may help him to meet his difficulty.

In his relationship with the worker, the attitude of acceptance frees the client to engage himself in this specific relationship, to express what he really thinks and feels without thought of what the worker would want to hear. It provides the basis of an on-going relationship, and the security it provides may compensate for the anxiety produced by temporary disturbances within the client as he gives information about himself and his problem to another. The acceptance he perceives permits him to reveal himself with his limitations and mistakes, thus promoting release of tension and guilt feelings, without

¹⁸Fern Lowry, ed., Readings in Social Case Work, (New York, 1939), pp. 288-289.

¹⁹Virginia P. Robinson, A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work, (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1930), p. 154.

detriment to his dignity. In addition to being accepted by the worker, the attitude implies the right of the client to accept the help offered in the way he is best able to do so, or to reject it if he wishes.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

The casework literature which was reviewed for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of the concept of acceptance in the casework relationship revealed that the concept has been defined up to the present in terms of its component parts. These fell into three categories; those which related to the client, namely, understanding of himself and his problem; those which related to the worker, namely, warmth, outgoingness, concern and self-discipline; those which related to both client and worker, namely, transmission of acceptance and the results it produces in the client.

An analysis of eight definitions formulated from the year 1932 through the year 1954 pointed up the fact that three questions necessary to a more precise conception of acceptance were as yet unanswered.

What is the generic classification of acceptance?
What does the caseworker do when she "accepts"?
What is accepted in the casework relationship?

The generic classification of acceptance was determined to be an attitude or enduring disposition toward a person. It was further seen to be natural as founded in the worker's qualities of warmth, outgoingness and concern for the other which attracted her to social work as a profession, and acquired as knowledge and understanding of human nature and behavior, professional self-discipline and emotional control are acquired.

When she "accepts", it was determined that the caseworker perceives the client, his problem and his feelings about the problem emotionally and intellectually, integrates her perceptions, reflects on the integrated impression, and relates to it positively in the light of her understanding of philosophical, psychological and casework principles regarding the nature of man. The response of positive relationship is the act of acceptance. As a professional attitude, acceptance is not a series of single acts, but is an enduring disposition toward the client.

That which is accepted in the casework relationship was found to be the human being, with all his individuating characteristics, feelings and attitudes, that remains essentially his to be solved by the exercise of his own choices and decisions. He is accepted as an individual human being with certain fundamental rights of self-determination, the right not to be judged by anyone other than duly constituted authority, and the right to the preservation of secret information about himself within the area of professional service.

The bases of acceptance were determined to be three: Philosophical understanding of man as created by God and destined for union with Him, and endowed with rights which guarantee his attainment of happiness in this life and the next; psychological understanding of man as possessed of faculties for self-direction and achievement of a spiritual and material nature, the characteristic use of which indicates the personality of the individual in a way which can be understood; casework understanding of man as an individual with psychological problems, who can be served best by the release of his own capacity for responsible actions and decisions, toward which the casework process is directed.

Acceptance was observed to be an attitude which is an underlying force in

the relationship, client-focused and unrelated to personal needs or wishes of the worker. It is directed toward the growth of the client which the worker has as a professional responsibility to promote.

Factors in the development of the attitude were found to be philosophical, psychological and casework knowledge; acceptance of self; and acceptance of agency function. Development of the attitude occurs on both intellectual and emotional levels, through study and the use of the self in relationship.

Transmission of the attitude of acceptance was found to occur on two levels - on that which may be termed the more superficial by means of courtesy, immediate attention, explanation of unavoidable delays, verbal recognition of the client's right to apply, carefully conducted intake, genuine kindness and consideration; on a deeper level chiefly through a feeling response to the client by the worker based on understanding of himself and his problem. This may not ever be put into words.

It was found that the client responds in two ways to the accepting attitude of the worker. In relation to himself, he becomes freer from tension and anxiety which arise from the fear of initial rejection, and as the relationship progresses, he finds it less necessary to protect himself from acknowledging his deeper feelings and attitudes, negative as well as positive, and the value they have for him. In relationship with the worker, the attitude of acceptance enables the client to express what he really feels and thinks; it provides the basis of an on-going relationship through promoting a sense of security which will see the client through periods of temporary disturbance as he reveals information about himself and his problem to another. It permits the client to reveal his limitations and mistakes without detriment to his dignity; and it enables him to accept the help offered in the way that he is best able to do so, or to reject it if he wishes.

DEFINITION OF ACCEPTANCE IN THE CASEWORK RELATIONSHIP

On the basis of this study, the following is offered as a definition of acceptance in the casework relationship:

Acceptance is an acquired professional attitude by which the client is conceived as a person with innate dignity based on his origin and ultimate destiny, possessed of individuality manifested by a specific personality, having a specific psychosocial problem, and as such, held to be entitled to the full resources of professional casework service.

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