



Chapter 1 Introduction and Organization

Each venture

Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling.

—T. S. Eliot

Each age writes its own epitaph—indeed, creates its own eternity—with respect to how it conceives of man and how it conceives of change. Man as the central figure in this unending drama acts out these conceptions, implements its attendant ideologies, and creates (or destroys) societies in terms of his changing images of himself and others. This is but another way of saying that history is a series of continuing and vivid examples of the phenomenon that how one conceives of a problem dictates how one tries to deal with it. The specific societies that man creates, the means he chooses to create them, and the ways in which he goes about changing them are all concrete instances of how conceptions about man determine the form and content of the societies he builds.

Many of the same things that have been said about the development of societies could also be said about the development of institutions.¹ Societies are comprised of institutions—large and small, formal and informal—and it is these institutions which, in their conception and development, both mirror the existing value systems of the society and provide the foundations for future change. Despite differences in scope and complexity there are, at least in principle, great similarities between the attempt to create a society and the attempt to create an institution. In both cases we find ourselves confronted with the problem of understanding the creative process; in both cases there is a

¹In this chapter, and throughout the rest of this book, we shall use the terms “institutions,” “settings,” and “programs” interchangeably. We realize that these terms are often used to describe different kinds of settings possessing different traditions, values, and histories. We shall be employing these terms, however, to depict any formal organization characterized by explicit goals and possessing certain internal processes and relationships, both ideological and interpersonal, to achieve those goals.

need to explore the relationship between the end product and the “builders’ ” original goals and aspirations; in both cases we, either as heirs to or as participants in the creative process, must assume the responsibility for defending, changing, or destroying that which we have inherited or wish to bequeath to others. It would not be unfair to state that in the final analysis, man defines himself through the institutions he chooses to allow to be born and to live, and those he decides he must kill or abort.

On September 16, 1966, a new institution was born in New Haven, Connecticut—an institution called the Residential Youth Center. Very little fanfare accompanied the birth of the new setting: ribbon-cutting ceremonies were conspicuous by their absence, and there were no speeches extolling its virtues or praising its yet unproved worth. It was a quiet beginning, almost a simple one, the kind of beginning one might expect for a setting whose very existence was symbolic of the uneasiness with which an apparently affluent society was finally committing itself to dealing with what had for so long been the muted, disorganized, and often-unheard demands of its disenfranchised citizenry . . . its “Other America.”

The Residential Youth Center was funded as an experimental and demonstration project by the U.S. Department of Labor (the Office of Manpower Policy, Evaluation, and Research), administered through New Haven’s community action agency (Community Progress, Inc.), and run in conjunction with the Psycho-Educational Clinic of Yale University. Its formal goals were both clear and misleadingly simple. They were as follows:

1. To evaluate the degree to which a neighborhood-based Residential Youth Center, developed within a manpower-oriented Community Action Program, could be utilized to facilitate the growth and rehabilitation of economically disadvantaged and/or disrupted adolescents and their families.
2. To explore the clinical and vocational potential of an indigenous nonprofessional staff with respect to their competence in dealing with both the psychological problems

associated with poverty and a population heretofore dealt with exclusively by professional personnel.

3. To explore the relationship between organizational structure and patterns of service, the purpose being to determine the kinds of structural and organizational changes that could facilitate the utilization, training and development of the nonprofessional.

4. To develop criteria by which new and different residential programs could be run more effectively and less expensively than existing programs.

5. To develop a setting in which both professionals and non-professionals could acquire the kind of training that would lead to a better understanding of the problems confronting disadvantaged youth and their families, and of the tools and techniques which might be useful in dealing with these problems.

6. To explore the possibility of establishing a viable and ongoing training, research and service relationship between the United States Department of Labor (Office of Manpower Policy, Evaluation, and Research) and Yale University. [U.S. Department of Labor, 1966; RYC Final Report, 1968]

But the goals of the program notwithstanding, the importance of the Residential Youth Center lies much more in the ideas that shaped it and the people who put it together than in the formal and seemingly explicit purposes for which it was funded. This book is about those ideas and people.

Although the Residential Youth Center formally came into existence on that September day back in 1966, it was neither conceived in a vacuum nor, as it were, "born yesterday." No new program or setting ever is. An institution is born at a particular time and place, but its conception and development are reflections of many things, not the least of which is how men think about and go about creating an institution itself. As soon as one begins to define the problem in this manner, two things become quite clear. The first is that the history of an institution extends much further back in time than we tend to realize. The second is that the development of an institution is, in the truest sense, an experiment in nature, an experiment that provides us with the opportunity of studying more general questions about man and about the ways in which his conceptions of himself and

others determine his behavior. This is but another way of saying that one cannot fully understand an institution unless one is prepared to go beyond an assessment of the needs it was created to meet. One must, especially if one wishes to make a contribution to our understanding of the creative process, begin to focus attention on the question of how the institution itself is the product of a complex interaction between the ways in which men define problems and the techniques they devise to implement their solutions. From this point of view the study of institutions becomes a study of ourselves, and the Residential Youth Center is no exception.

Despite the aura of simplicity that surrounded its birth, there was, and continues to be, nothing simple about the Residential Youth Center. The creation of a setting is a complex human process, a process involving motives, values, ideas, and emotions. Unlike other human phenomena, however, it is a process about which we know precious little, for the creation of settings does not appear to be a problem contained in or derivable from existing psychological or social science theory. One who is contemplating the creation of a setting has little to turn to for help or support: there is no organized body of theory, few guidelines, and very little data. It is undoubtedly for this reason that the building of an institution is all too often a process in which the "builders" unwittingly become the prisoners of their own creations—the victims of their own conceptions, choices, and decisions.

This was a very difficult book to write, a book that from the very beginning presented us with great problems in organization. The reasons for these problems were many and varied, but in one way or another they could all be traced both to the difficulties usually associated with the creative process and to the particular problems that came to define what at this point we might call the "Residential Youth Center experience." For purposes of clarity we shall briefly describe these problems before turning our attention to the way in which this book was finally and formally organized.

We might begin by pointing out that this book is in many ways an intensely personal document, a book based on experiences that were extremely important in the personal and professional development of the author. The creation of the Residential Youth Center could not take place in the laboratory nor, for that matter, in any other setting that prides itself on its ability to maximize experimental control while at the same time holding constant or minimizing personal involvement. The Residential Youth Center, as we shall try to indicate throughout this book, was in large measure *built* by personal involvement, and for the author to have acted otherwise would have been to subvert the setting and its people. The Residential Youth Center had to be “lived,” and living the RYC experience meant that one was continually confronted with oneself, with one’s own values, problems, and emotions. It also meant that when the time finally came to communicate these experiences to others—to the reader, for example—the attempt to do so would inevitably suffer the fate of most deeply personal documents: either it would result in an empty echo of what was once so intensely moving, or it would appear as a splendid exaggeration of what might have been an almost commonplace happening. In either case, the mere fact that we were an intimate part of the very setting we shall be describing made the organization of this book more of a problem than it might have been had we been able (or willing) to assume the stance of the disinterested and uncommitted observer.

The final problem of organization had to do with the complexity of the phenomenon under consideration and the range of relevant material that had to be included if this book was to offer more than a hollow and surface understanding of the Residential Youth Center. The reader will recall that the Residential Youth Center was funded for a number of different reasons and was, therefore, from the very beginning a project with multiple goals. In retrospect, it would not be inaccurate to say that an entire book probably could have been written about any one of these goals, for they all involved variables that were at once both com-

plex and relatively unstudied. Thus, while we have chosen to use the "creation of a setting" as the central and unifying theme of this book, it should be clear that the development of the Residential Youth Center took place in a context that provided us with a way of studying not only ourselves and the creative process but also the variety of forces, both social and historical, that shaped the experience and gave it its meaning. Some of these forces and problems have already been mentioned in the brief listing of the program's "formal" goals. They included such problems as poverty and its effects (especially its psychological effects) on the lives of inner-city youth and their families; the War on Poverty and the role of that new mental health warrior called the "indigenous nonprofessional"; the problem of organizational structure and its implications for such issues as the development of innovative services, human growth, and the health and effectiveness of a setting; the relationship of research to the study and understanding of highly volatile rehabilitative and action-oriented programs; and the role of the helping professions in a society undergoing acute social change. The story of the Residential Youth Center could not be told unless attention was focused on each of these problems, for they all, independently and in interaction with one another, had an enormous impact on the eventual development of the setting. Consequently, after some deliberation it was decided that a *narrative approach to the creation of the Residential Youth Center* would afford us the kind of freedom and flexibility within which we could deal with each of these problems both individually and in terms of their relation to the development of the setting as a whole. Having said this we shall now describe the sequence in which our chapters have been organized.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is twofold: to place the Residential Youth Center in some historical perspective, and to describe the variety of forces whose own histories coalesced to form the ground out of which the RYC emerged. Chapter 2 begins in very much the same way that the RYC actually began, with a retelling of the events

of a trip that took a group of people from New Haven, Connecticut, to a Job Corps camp located atop a lonely mountain in Maryland. The trip took place in 1965, a year that will forever be remembered as the time that the programs and ideas, the *promise* of the New Frontier reached its zenith. The importance of that year is discussed at length, for it was a time when the War on Poverty and many of its constituent programs became a reality. Two of these programs, the Community Action Program and the Job Corps, played a crucial role in the eventual decision to develop the Residential Youth Center. Special attention, therefore, is focused on New Haven's Community Action Program (an agency called Community Progress, Inc.) from the point of view of how its own development made it possible for people with seemingly different backgrounds, experiences, and interests (e.g., professionals and nonprofessionals) to meet, begin to work together, and finally get to know and trust one another. The specific program that brought this about was the Neighborhood Youth Corps (in 1965 it was known as the CPI Work Crew Program), and it, too, is described in some detail. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of the events that precipitated the trip, and the ways in which our experiences at a rural Job Corps camp formed the basis for the decision to develop the Residential Youth Center.

Chapter 3 can be considered, in the broadest sense, the book's "conceptual" chapter. In it we attempt to develop a framework for describing and understanding the process by which "helping settings" (i.e., settings devoted to facilitating human growth, development, or rehabilitation) are created. Specifically, the chapter deals with the assumptions and decisions that characterize the creative process, and wherever possible the particular assumptions under consideration are highlighted by the inclusion of specific examples taken from our experiences in the New Haven public schools, the Community Action Program, and the Regional Centers for the Mentally Retarded. The chapter's major thesis is that each decision in the creative process is predi-

cated upon certain assumptions, and that the more aware we become of these assumptions (and their consequences), the more likely we are to be able to control for much of the irrationality and self-defeating behavior that plagues, and eventually undermines, so many programs dedicated to human "renewal." The description of the creative process begins with an analysis of the assumptions under which the decision is made to start a new program; it proceeds by explicating the conceptions underlying a program's choice of its staff, "treatment model," training paradigm, and social structure; and it ends by examining the assumptions under which a new program or institution defines itself both as an organization and in terms of its relationship to the community. In many important ways the manner in which the Residential Youth Center eventually developed was influenced greatly by our analysis of these assumptions; and, by way of introduction, we might point out that the RYC's development was in no small measure predicated both on a rejection of many traditional assumptions and on the attempt to develop alternative ones.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to describing the Residential Youth Center and the people, programs, and ideas that shaped the setting and gave it its form and content. In Chapter 4 we discuss the setting in terms of its organizational structure, the way its staff was selected, the kinds of "clients" it served, and the manner in which its program was developed and defined. The chapter begins with an analysis of the state of the RYC's "mother organization" (Community Progress, Inc.) in 1966. The purpose of this analysis is twofold: first, to provide the reader with an acute understanding of the conditions surrounding the development of the Residential Youth Center; and second, to make clear, if only by comparison, the conceptual differences between the RYC and other action-oriented helping settings. We turn then to the question of its own social structure; the RYC is described as a "horizontal" setting, a conception of organization in which there is a significant alteration in the status, power, role, and decision-making responsibilities

that usually define the relationships between people in a given setting. The RYC's horizontal structure represents an attempt to create the organizational conditions under which people can learn to share one another's problems and functions in an atmosphere of mutual trust and collective growth and not, as is so often the case, in a setting that views its staff as "replaceable" rather than "interchangeable." For purposes of illustration, the RYC's horizontal structure is described in some detail, and its ideas concerning the sharing of clinical, administrative, and programming responsibilities are compared and contrasted with the usual conceptions underlying most "pyramidally" structured settings. The remainder of the chapter describes the staff of the Residential Youth Center and the criteria by which they were selected; offers a picture of the youth and families that were to be served by the project; and discusses the general characteristics of the program itself.

In Chapter 5 we deal with the general question of training—its goals and processes—and with the particular pre-service and in-service training methods developed at the Residential Youth Center to provide the organization and its staff with a way of dealing with the problems that the setting would inevitably pose. The type of training utilized at the RYC was "sensitivity training," and the rationale behind its use is discussed at some length. The areas of concern for which this method of training was developed went far beyond the "usual" kinds of problems dealt with by T-group or T-group-inspired types of guided group interactions, and because of this the RYC's training paradigm is compared and contrasted with the T-group approach to laboratory education. At the Residential Youth Center, sensitivity training was initiated to meet a variety of different needs. These included the need to develop a vehicle for dealing with organizational and interpersonal problems; the need for clinical training; the need to develop a stable self-corrective and self-reflective mechanism for the setting as a whole; the need to handle problems of decision-making and growth; and the need to develop a system of

feedback and research. The kinds of sensitivity training sessions held at the RYC varied both over time and as a function of the particular problems confronting the staff. In general, however, they fell broadly within what might be called three contexts: the "individual," the "interpersonal," and the "group." The chapter concludes with examples of each of these three types of sensitivity training sessions. The examples are taken from the verbatim transcripts of RYC sensitivity sessions and are included so that the reader will have a better understanding of the kinds of issues the staff was called upon to deal with, and the ways in which the sensitivity sessions were used to handle the very real and pressing problems of the setting and its people.

In Chapter 6 we turn our attention to the problems and issues a new program must deal with *before* the day arrives that it finally becomes a physical reality. In describing what might be called the RYC's "prehistory"—in detailing the variety of activities that became a part of that crucial period of time devoted to "community preparation and penetration"—our purpose is twofold: first, to dispel the myth that an institution is born on the day it opens its doors and starts "doing business"; and second, to indicate as clearly as possible the degree to which the eventual fate of the RYC may have been decided during the days and weeks that preceded its formal opening. Most of the "data" for this chapter are taken from a diary that the RYC's first Director kept during the period of time that he was a full-time member of the staff. It details the varying degrees of success (and failure) with which the Residential Youth Center was able to develop significant relationships with those segments of the community whose help and involvement were crucial to the future "health" and effectiveness of the new setting. The community groups involved included the residents living in the neighborhood where it was hoped the RYC might be located, the police, the mental health professions, and those low-income people who, because of the concept of "maximum feasible participation," found themselves to be members of what were called Resident Advisory Com-

mittees. In addition to a description of the nature of these early relationships with different community groups, special attention is focused on the ways in which the RYC's staff defined and implemented its thinking with respect to the involvement of its own potential clients in the development of the program. Briefly, this "involvement" consisted of two things: the continual sharing by the staff of the program's problems and "preoperational crises" with its clients, and the attempt to enlist client support in the resolution of these problems. In time this led to a major reconceptualization of the setting's basic orientation: the RYC became a "self-help" program. The chapter concludes by detailing the special problems that confronted the RYC by virtue of its being an integral part, both administratively and financially, of New Haven's community action agency. Such issues as autonomy and independence, on the one hand, and accommodation and coordination, on the other, are discussed from the point of view of how a new setting must, if it is to avoid being perceived as an internal threat to an already established program, deal with the problem of its relationship to its "mother" organization.

Chapter 7 is perhaps the most "personal" of the book's chapters, for it tells, once again in diary form, the story of the Residential Youth Center from its chaotic opening days to the time some two weeks later when it began to look as if the setting would survive. The opening days of the Center were indeed days of stress and trial, and they are described as one of the RYC's staff members (its Director) experienced them. No attempt is made to "pretty up" the story, nor have the data been expurgated for purposes of publication. The diary presents, as concretely and honestly as possible, the Director's perception of and reaction to the range of problems that beset the setting and endangered its existence during those early crisis-filled days. Most of the problems described were "internally generated," that is to say, indigenous to the setting and its people. Some, however, were either created or exacerbated by the pressures and tensions that arose between the Residential Youth

Center and the larger organization (the community action agency) of which it was a part and to which it was “answerable.” Following the diary, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of some of the pressures and problems that defined the RYC’s opening days. These problems are discussed in essay form, the purpose being to try to use the early experiences of the RYC as the basis for a preliminary exploration of such issues as the role of the clinician in the world of community action, the problem of leadership in helping settings, and the effect of established organizations (and their bureaucracies) on the development of new and potentially innovative programs.

Unlike many War on Poverty programs, the Residential Youth Center was funded as a research project. This meant that the question of assessment was, from the very beginning, of central concern to the program. In Chapters 8 and 9 we present some of the research that was carried out at the RYC during the first two years of its existence. Chapter 8 begins with a brief discussion of the problems associated with the attempt to evaluate highly volatile and complex settings—settings like the RYC, in which the criteria usually employed to define scientific “rigor” (e.g., control, replication) are either difficult (if not impossible) to apply or inappropriate as a means of understanding the phenomena under consideration. Following this discussion, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to the description of “a day in the life of an RYC worker,” an observational record (not too dissimilar from the kind utilized by Barker [1951] in his book *One Boy’s Day*) that attempts to make explicit the “blood and guts” of the RYC operation. Our reasons for wanting to present this chronicle were many and varied. Primarily, however, it is included not only because it provides the reader with an additional perspective from which to view the program, but because of what it says about the importance of observational records as a way of understanding settings that are less than perfect candidates for assessment by our more “accepted” empirical techniques. The chronicle itself follows an RYC worker from the time

he enters the Center in the morning to the time he goes home at night. It records, as faithfully as possible, everything he did and said during the course of one working day.

In Chapter 9 we turn our attention to some of the results of the Residential Youth Center program with respect to the clients it served, particularly those youngsters who lived in and became a part of the setting. When the RYC first opened its doors, it took into residence 20 New Haven youngsters independently judged to have the greatest number of problems and the longest histories of social, vocational, educational, and personal failure. An additional 20 boys with similar problems were placed in a control group. Both groups were tested, assessed, and interviewed on a host of variables involving both behavioral (e.g., work attendance, difficulties with the police) and attitudinal (e.g., feelings of alienation, trust) functioning. Retesting of both groups was done between 6 and 12 months after the program began. Although the test-retest analyses indicated that participation in the program was highly correlated with a marked improvement in almost all the areas utilized for purposes of comparing the two groups, the results (and the limitations of the data) are discussed from the point of view of their implications, both methodologically and conceptually, for the application of research techniques to the study of action-oriented settings.

Chapter 10 is the book's "reflective" chapter, the chapter in which we look back over the RYC experience from a point in time when, for all intents and purposes, our own involvement in the setting had ceased; ceased, that is, being in the nature of a full-time commitment. The chapter focuses on two issues: first, the problems that have remained essentially unresolved even after the setting has emerged from its infancy and entered into the phase of its life when it has begun to be referred to as a "going concern"; and second, the implications of the program with respect to the broader question of institutional change. In terms of its unresolved problems, attention is once more directed toward the concept of "horizontality," this time

however, from the point of view of how well (or poorly) it served the setting and its people. Similarly, the advantages and disadvantages of sensitivity training are discussed at some length. With respect to the question of institutional change, attention is focused on the potential of a setting such as the RYC to serve as a vehicle for altering the ways in which people (and professions) think about the problems associated with human renewal. This "potential" (or the lack thereof) is discussed not only with reference to the RYC's impact on conditions that define the quality of life locally (e.g., among the agencies that serve the people of New Haven), but in terms of its effects on the plans and policies of agencies whose power and influence extends far beyond the local level. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the War on Poverty and the problems and conflicts that have defined its short life and now threaten its very existence.

It is in the book's last chapter, Chapter 11, that we finally come full circle, that we return once more to the journey that precipitated the development of the Residential Youth Center. This time, however, the journey is viewed in the context of its meaning for the helping professions as a whole, and for the continuing development of clinical psychology in particular. The chapter's central thesis is a relatively simple one: that professions, no less than individuals, are shaped by the same profound tendencies of history that mold the societies of which they are a part; that their orientations and practices are more often than not a reflection of the prevailing values and attitudes of the greater society in which they are embedded; and that they change as the needs of their societies change and accept as inevitable that through this process of change they continually will be defining and redefining themselves. In short, it was no accident that a clinical psychologist was one of the people who journeyed to that mountain in Maryland. Neither was it merely by chance that he became involved in the development of the Residential Youth Center. Therefore, his behavior is reviewed, this time, how-

ever, from the point of view of the developmental history of clinical psychology. The book concludes by pointing out the degree to which the present and future relevance of the helping professions, no differently than that of our society itself, is contingent upon an appreciation of the dynamics of change.

As indicated earlier, this book begins and ends with a trip, a trip that for many of us was no less exciting, disturbing, or personally meaningful than those currently being taken by so many of our alienated youth. The trip that began the story of the Residential Youth Center took place in the Fall of 1965, and it is with the events of this trip that the next chapter begins.