

REPORT ON BASKETBALL 1971

When the present writer joined the project, his primary function was to assess the services, functions, and events provided by the basketball project which were not planned to be components of the project's design. The first section of this report is the result of the assessment efforts directed at these non-programmed components of the project. In addition, while engaged in this endeavor, the present writer felt that an assessment of the formal, programmed project components might also prove helpful in your regular evaluation and continued refinement of Palama's sports projects. Thus, the second section of the report discusses project components directly involved in the achievement of the stated goal of the project. In both sections, it should be noted that the assessment and the writing were based on the assumption that the project, if sponsored again, would be offered in essentially the same form. Thus, for example, suggestions for change are offered with reference to the structure and operation of Basketball 1971 (with the presumption that later projects would be structured and operated in basically the same manner). Major changes probably will occur and it may be noted that while some of the comments and suggestions contained in this report may not apply to a sports project with major reorganization, many of them would still apply since many of the same features of the current project would be retained (for example, Training Table).

The two sections of the report are based on information and impressions obtained from the following sources: (1) discussions with the project's professional staff; (2) interviews with the participating youngsters (Bantam team members); (3) discussions with the Training Table staff; (4) interviews with the contingency managers; (5) casual observations of the activities, interactions, and events related to the project; and (6) with your cooperation and assistance, direct observations of youngster-manager study sessions.

NON-PROGRAMMED COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

Training Table

The stated objective of the Training Table is to "Increase the quality of nutrition in each participant's diet, with emphasis on protein and mineral consumption". While it is difficult to implement this objective (due to insufficient funds), as far as the present writer could judge, Palama has done remarkably well in attaining this highly desirable (and in view of the participants' usual diet, perhaps necessary) objective.

The concern with the Training Table, however, is not with its formal function but rather with its unofficial, unstated contribution to the operation of the project. This non-programmed contribution is apparently very important, since at least three Palama professionals have expressed high positive regard for the Training Table. Moreover, the Training Table mothers themselves have expressed general positive attitudes toward this component of the project. Finally, in interviews with the Bantam youngsters, about

one-half volunteered the opinion that the Training Table was one of the things they liked about the project, at least three volunteered the opinion that the Training Table staff were "nice", and one youngster even suggested that the Training Table be offered every day of the week.

Given this high positive regard held for the Training Table, the question then is: what is this positive contribution that it makes to the project? A possible answer is contained in the comments by some of the Training Table mothers: some mothers feel that the Training Table provides the youngsters with opportunities for "fun and fellowship", getting to know one another, and building "team feeling" so that they can work better as a team. Casual observations of the youngsters in the kitchen and dining area before daily practice sessions and during and after the meals suggest that this view is basically correct. That is, the Training Table seems to provide: (1) a place (like a clubhouse) to which they can go after school and know that they will be welcomed; (2) a time when they can relax and have fun---free from the restraints and constraints of the practice sessions before (and the study hall sessions after) meals; (3) the presence of same-age peers with similar interests with whom they can engage in informal, social interactions without the pressure of adults in authority roles (for example, teachers, parents, coaches, and managers); (4) the presence of warm and friendly adults in "non-threatening, non-punitive" roles (Training Table staff as well as Palama's professional staff); (5) of course, the provision of tasteful, attractive and free meals; and (6) the elevation of Palama teams to a unique and prestigious status among teams in the Pop Warner League---no other team in the League has anything like a Training Table and Palama's youngsters know it. In short, these features of the Training Table essentially constitute a highly rewarding experience (social, personal, and material) for the youngsters.

In this view, then, the Training Table component serves to supplement the reward value of the participating in the basketball practice sessions and scheduled games. That is, the non-programmed rewarding features of the Training Table increases further the reward value of remaining an active member of Palama's basketball team. The question of whether it is a necessary component of the project or simply a desirable element cannot be answered at this time. It can be noted, however, that at least one youngster stated that he would remain with the team even though the Training Table were omitted---indicating that basketball playing is, by itself, sufficiently high in reward value (for at least one youngster and perhaps, more). It can also be noted that another youngster pointed out, with much insight, that eliminating the Training Table may not mean much to newcomers to the project but that returnees (an newcomers who know about it) would probably feel the loss and feel dissatisfied.

The above description of the Training Table applies to the youngsters' perspectives and experiences. In addition, however, it should be noted that Palama's professional staff and the Training Table mothers also gain "something" from this component of the project. For the professional staff, it appears that many of the same non-programmed, rewarding features of the Training Table discussed above also apply particularly the presence of the mothers, with whom they can engage in informal, pleasant, social interactions. Moreover, it seems that some of Palama's professionals view the mothers in a helpful, supportive role by providing assistance and advice when solicited. For the Training Table mothers, it appears that the volunteer work of preparing and serving meals four times a week is maintained by: (1) intermittent and temporary escape from possible boredom or aversiveness of home life; (2) the presence of persons

(other mothers) who have similar interests (values, attitudes, activities) with whom they can engage in casual, social interactions; and (3) the presence of Palama's professionals from whom they gain "social approval" and with whom they engage in pleasant social interactions.

In other words, the non-programmed (as well as the programmed) features of the training Table component of the project serve a highly rewarding function for nearly all individuals involved in the project. For the youngsters, it serves to maintain or, at least, help to maintain (along with basketball playing), their continued participation in the project. For the professional staff, it helps to maintain their work behaviors related to the project. For the mothers, it helps to maintain their continued assistance and cooperation in making the training Table possible at all.

Parents of Participants

Basketball 1971 was apparently designed to involve parents of the participants in the following project objectives and sub-objectives: (1) "Facilitate communication between parents and Settlement workers"; (2) "Hold regular meetings with parents and staff beginning with here-and-now topics---that is, meal-planning, work assignments, transportation, etc."; (3) "Help establish a car pool to take participants home after study hall"; and (4) "Provide training table where dinner will be served four nights a week". In the first two objectives, parental involvement was clearly designed while in the latter two, parental involvement is not explicit but, as in previous projects, the parents were viewed as providing the manpower to operate the car pool and training table.

While assessment of these objectives was not systematic, it would appear that the following can be said with respect to the nature and degree of parental involvement in the project. First, with respect to facilitating communication, the project first of all made it possible for Palama to make contact with the parents of some youngsters in the Palama area.¹ Having made that contact, the

Although in most cases this event was not (and was not planned to be) employed as a means of intervening in problems and issues unrelated to the project goals (for example, family conflicts, child's drug abuse), the importance of this contact with the parents cannot be overemphasized. That is, in any delivery system of helping services, the first question is typically how does the delivery system make contact with those to be helped so that the services can be delivered. In the case of Palama, the sports projects provide a relatively non-threatening entry into the family environment for possible intervention in family-related problems. Now, the present writer is uncertain as to whether Palama wishes to get involved in this "bag" (indications are that it does not, at least when the task is not related to projects currently sponsored by Palama) but it is clear that some of the agencies presently operating out of the Settlement's buildings are in fact in that "bag". It would not be very difficult for Palama, if it wishes, to provide a little assistance to these agencies (such as the mental health clinic, planned parenthood society, and the DSS welfare unit). This could take the form of, for example, mailing letters to parents of participants which contain information on the nature and range of social services offered at Palama Settlement by the various agencies.

nature and degree of subsequent parental communication with Palama ranged from heavy through moderate to little: (1) heavy communication characterized those mothers who staffed the Training Table---these 4-6 mothers constituted the active parental core of the project; (2) moderate communication characterized those parents who, for example, informed Palama that their youngster was ill and would be unable to meet with his manager, assisted in the sausage sale, attended a meeting of the cheerleading squad to discuss some problems, attended most of the teams' games, picked up their youngsters' after practice sessions or study halls, and participated in the annual awards banquet; and (3) little communication characterized those parents who merely signed the project's contract, attended some of the teams' games, and perhaps, attended the annual banquet.

Second, there was apparently no schedule of regular meetings with the parents to discuss "meal-planning, work assignments, transportation, etc.". Aside from the orientation session and the banquet, the only group meeting of parents of which the present writer has knowledge involved the cheerleading squad girls, their parents, and two Palama staff professionals. That meeting, however, was not designed to be a regular component of the project---it was apparently held in response to the increasing frequency of drug use among the girls.

Third, there was apparently no parental involvement in the operation of a car pool to take the participants home after study hall. A few parents did come to Palama to take their youngsters home but there was apparently no organized car pool to take all of the youngsters home. It seemed that most of the youngsters either got somebody (manager, Palama professional, or an "outside friend") to take them home or used other transportation means (walking, bus).

Fourth, as previously discussed, there was heavy parental involvement by at least 4 to 6 mothers in the operation and maintenance of the project's Training Table.

While parental involvement was not the goal of the project, it should be noted that it was one of the programmed components of the project. In addition, it may be suggested that parental involvement in the programmed form, as discussed above, while highly desirable, it probably not crucial for the success of the project (that is, increasing reading standing level of youngsters). On the other hand, what is probably more important is the non-programmed impact that the parents have on their youngsters and the consequent effects on the youngsters' participation in the project. That is, in general, the parents can influence the success or failure of the project in at least two primary ways.

Parents can increase or decrease the rewarding value of basketball playing by their communications to and other acts with respect to their children. Thus, parents can increase basketball's reward value by, for example, praising the youngster for outstanding plays, simply talking (and spending time) with the youngster about Palama's team and the "world of basketball", and attending the scheduled games and practice sessions of the team. On the other hand, parents can also decrease basketball's reward value for their youngsters by, for example, criticizing the youngster for mistakes and poor playing on the court, deriding

the youngster for being unable to make the first team and to score more points, and denigrating the activity of basketball itself.

Parents can also influence the outcome of the project by acting in ways that either facilitate or inhibit the development of reading skills of their youngsters. Thus, parents can facilitate reading development by, for example, paying attention to the youngster when he engages in reading or other academic activities, praising the youngster for completing assignments made by the project managers and school teachers, and providing a physical home environment suitable for engaging in reading and other academic activities. On the other hand, parents can also inhibit reading development by, for example, criticizing the youngster for doing poorly in school, communicating messages that reading and the whole "education bag" is just pure "junk", and failing to reward (by praise, attention, material goods) success in schoolwork and even the simple activity of reading, writing, etc. assigned by the project managers.

It should be noted that the above discussion is offered in a hypothetical context. That is, it is possible for parents of the participants to affect the outcome of the project in the ways described above but, this is not to say that they, in fact, did behave in those ways during the basketball project. There was no assessment of this parental factor and hence, nothing conclusive can be said about it--as it applies to the basketball project. In principle, however, the parental factor can indeed serve a facilitative or disruptive function in the operation of the project and thus, its potential should at least be recognized. Should Palama

Should Palama wish to move beyond this awareness level, it will probably find a limited range of options for the simple reason that it lacks control over the behavior of the parents. It is a difficult problem and the present writer has no "grand" solutions. However, in the interest of generating some discussion at least on this question, the following suggestions are offered: (1) select only those youngsters whose parents have been assessed (through interviews, questionnaires, etc.) as potential facilitators of the project goal (that is, those who will increase the reward value of basketball and facilitate development of reading skills); (2) conduct an orientation session specifically for parents in which discussion centers on how parents can help their youngsters (and Palama) achieve success; and (3) include as an necessary element of the contract a provision that parents will agree to participate in a regular schedule of meetings which would be devoted to child management techniques related to the project goal (that is, increase basketball reward value and facilitate reading development).

Non-Programmed Services

These non-programmed components of the project are either: (1) services introduced on an "ad hoc" basis as certain needs arose during the project; or (2) elements that were not designed to be directly involved in the achievement of the project's goal of reading development. Under the first category are group "counseling" services and individualized instructional services while

under the second category are special project events and informal social activities.

Towards the end of the project, a Palama professional observed that paint-sniffing (and perhaps other related problems) among the cheerleading squad girls had been increasing in frequency and thus, felt that a general meeting of the girls, their mothers, and Palama professionals might be appropriate and fruitful. The meeting apparently served two functions: (1) information exchange on what the girls had been doing while in the project; and (2) open up lines of communication between mother and youngster. Also towards the end of the project, some members of the Bantam team were caught sniffing during a special outing, which resulted in the termination of the outing for the entire team. In an agreement later drawn up to regain the privilege for that special activity, the youngsters involved agreed to participate in twice weekly group sessions with a Palama professional. The apparent function of these group sessions was to get the youngsters to talk about, deal with, and resolve the reasons for and the effects of "drug abuse" (as well as other questions and problems which arose during the course of the sessions).

These were the non-programmed group "counseling" services offered during the project by Palama professionals. In addition, an individualized instructional program was developed for one member of the Bantam team. This youngster was experiencing difficulty in school (non-attendance, tardiness, non-completion of classwork, etc.) and it was felt by a Palama professional that something had to be done for him. With the cooperation of the youngster's school, at least two things were done: (1) with respect to the basketball project, about midway through the project the youngster's points were to be earned solely through school attendance and not through completion of manager-assigned work; and (2) with respect to the youngster's school, an individualized program was developed and initiated following the completion of the basketball project. The special program involved attendance in school in the morning and engaging in a special reward program at Palama in the afternoon. The special reward program involved the performance of academic work assigned by the Palama professional and a point system leading to material rewards (essentially, money).

The Palama professionals involved in the delivery of these "counseling" and instructional services must be commended for their concern for and actions in helping the participants in the project. On the other hand, these services raise an important question: should the delivery of these services be considered standard practice for dealing with problems involving participants in the sports projects? The crux of the issue is that, while youngsters with urgent problems cannot be ignored, dealing with those problems involves: (1) the investment of time and energy by Palama's professionals, which may result in a concomitant decrease in time and attention devoted to components of the sports project necessary for its success (reading goal achievement); and (2) possible investment of Palama funds for operating individualized academic programs based on monetary rewards--a potential problem, expressed by Palama's director, if many youngsters are placed on such programs.

The second consideration is, of course, relatively easy to resolve: simply control the number of youngsters who are placed on such programs. This can be done by restricting the number of youngsters who can be given this indi-

visualized treatment and by developing academic programs which are not based on monetary rewards. In the latter case, use of the M-R Incomplete Blank should help to identify non-monetary sources of rewards for the youngster (for example, playing pool on Palama's tables, spending time with a liked Palama professional, desirable privileges at home). The more difficult problem to resolve is the first: how to offer "counseling" and instructional services without diverting professional time and attention from achieving the goal of the sports project. This question, it should be noted, does not in any way imply that professional time and attention have in fact been diverted in the basketball project. There was no systematic assessment of this factor and thus, nothing conclusive can be said about it. Rather, the question is raised to generate some discussion about whether it is in fact a problem to be concerned about and if it is, what to do about it. One way of viewing the question is to consider these non-programmed services, not as components of the sports project, but as helping services typically offered by Palama to any youngster who displays a need for assistance. That is, whether or not a youngster is a member of the basketball or football team makes no difference in how we treat him. If he has problems, we should try to help him in our usual manner. (This viewpoint, of course, may raise other questions about Palama's "usual" manner of assisting youngsters with problems but, these questions are beyond the scope of the present report).

The second category of non-programmed services offered by the basketball project have been special project events and informal social activities. The special project events included the annual awards banquet, two camping trips (for the pretesting and posttesting), U. of H. games, sausage fund-raising sale, and the Kauai trip for the Bantam team and cheerleading squad. The informal social activities included peer-peer interactions, youngster-manager interactions, youngster-Training Table mother interactions, youngster-professional interactions, and use of Palama's facilities (for example, pool table, table tennis). In general, these special events and social activities are highly rewarding and can be viewed as supplementing the reward value of being a part of Palama's basketball project. On the other hand, since these non-programmed components are typically offered as usual elements of the sports projects it may be asked (as it was with the non-programmed features of the Training Table) whether these components are necessary or simply desirable features of the project. Of course, this question (as the earlier one involving the Training Table) cannot be answered conclusively at the present time).

The question, however, is important because, while the programmed reward in the project is the privilege of basketball playing, these special events, social activities and non-programmed features of the Training Table may be serving a secondary reward function. More specifically, these non-programmed rewards (unlike the basketball reward) may be supporting the youngsters' participation in the project by providing a wider variety and range of rewards.

This function becomes highly significant under at least two circumstances: (1) satiation of basketball reward: if the sports project (basketball or football) were to continue for 9 or 12 months (its current duration is approximately 3 and 4-5 months, respectively), it is highly possible that the reward value of sports playing will decrease in potency and hence, fail to motivate the youngsters to work on reading development; and (2) decreased reward value of sports playing under a losing team record: one factor that maintains the reward value of playing team sports is winning (at least, intermittently) games against other teams and if Palama's teams were to experience defeats in most of its games, the reward value of playing may decrease rapidly and fail to motivate the youngsters to work hard on their reading development. While the first circumstance is unlikely to occur, the second is very possible every time Palama enters a team in any league play in any team sports. Given this possibility (and since this circumstance may have already occurred in Palama's previous projects, you can make an experienced assessment of this discussion), it appears imperative that Palama provide for this contingency and program alternative actions. The various non-programmed rewards (special events, social activities, non-programmed features of the Training Table) can--with relative ease--be employed in this case of a Palama sports team experiencing constant defeat and the consequent decrease in motivation to perform the target behavior (reading development or whatever). That is, these non-programmed rewards (particularly, the special events) can be used more deliberately and more frequently & in the case of a losing Palama team.