

Progress Note

Tommy Shay - 11/28/80

Today I saw Tommy Shay for a one hour interview and reevaluation. I have seen Tommy only about three or four times since the beginning of the school year and saw Tommy one or two times over the summer. There have been several missed appointments - were difficulties with transportation to get Tommy to my office. Although last Tuesday I heard a good report about Tommy from his teacher at school, there have been a series of incidents which have appeared to indicate that Tommy has been doing much more poorly at home and in the community. His mother has reported these to me in terms of difficulties that Tommy has had with other children in the neighborhood. On one occasion Tommy was knocked unconscious by another boy who hit him with a bottle. This last week Tommy was again knocked unconscious by a boy who hit him with a rock. There have also, in the last couple of weeks, been an increasing of incidents in which Tommy has stolen money from his family. In some instances, this has involved large amounts of money such as when Tommy took two one hundred dollar bills from his mother's purse earlier this week. He apparently was flashing the money around the neighborhood. He also stole \$40.00 in coins from his father's coin collection and various lesser amounts of money from his sister's and mother's purses. Tommy has been caught on nearly all of these occasions before he has got rid of the money although that is not the case with his father's coin collection. From his mother's report, Tommy has distributed the money to friends or bought them various goodies with his money. He has explained to his mother that he needs to do that in order to have friends.

Although Tommy has been caught and severely reprimanded for stealing, he does it at an even higher rate each time after he is caught. For instance, the day before yesterday he stole the two one hundred dollar bills after having stolen a single one hundred dollar bill the night before. Yesterday he stole another ten dollars from his mother's purse and just this morning stole another twenty dollars from his mother's purse. On each of these occasions Tommy was caught while he still had the money. His latest claim is that he owes another boy forty dollars because that boy gave Tommy forty dollars that that boy had stolen from his own mother and that Tommy will get beaten up if he does not pay the forty dollars back. Tommy can only vaguely account for what he might have done with forty dollars in terms of buying candy and food.

When I met with Tommy today I asked him to give me a detailed description of the latest incident in which he was hit on the head by a rock thrown by one of his schoolmates. Tommy could only give a very vague description but it seems that there was a rock fight going on between two other boys. Tommy came up to the rock fight and began calling names to one of the boys involved. The other boy then fled on his bicycle but Tommy stood there until he finally got hit by a rock and knocked out. Apparently when he was hit he was lying in the middle of a busy street and even when he woke up he refused to get up or move until his father finally arrived to take him to the hospital. Today Tommy said that he was going to call the boy up who hit him on the head and tell him that he was going to throw a rock at him. Then he thought he would go try to meet the boy down on the street even though the boy was much bigger than him and he thought maybe he would get hit again by another rock. It seems that Tommy demonstrated in his story about this incident, his own involvement in getting himself hurt. Tommy seems to very much like the kind of attention that he gets because of these kinds of happenings and rather freely puts himself in danger and even probably provokes trouble from other children so that he might get hurt.

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With regard to the stealing, Tommy said that the only way that he could stop stealing would be if his father took him someplace. He said he would like his father to take him to the Hancock Building or to some other place in downtown Boston. He said that his father never takes him anyplace and that he has not told his father this but he did tell his mother that and that she doesn't care enough to do anything about it. Tommy more-or-less put it as an ultimatum that he would keep doing things to get into trouble if his father didn't take him places. At the same time, he indicated that he would be willing to be good first, if his father promised to take him some place afterwards.

I gave Tommy some projective personality test to try to get some idea of the extent to which he was able to reality test and the extent to which morbid or guilt provoked ideation was forming part of the reason for his behavior. I was unable to really find out anything about the later since Tommy refused to give responses to the thematic and perception test. On the Rorschach ink blots Tommy showed generally good reality testing. He showed a number of what are called penetration responses which involve seeing the inside of the human body which are usually given by children who feel ineffectual and vulnerable. There was little indication of anger or aggression.

I am presently extremely concerned about this child. He has a history of self-destructive behavior and has, in the past, had very negative and guilty feelings about himself that he has tried to alleviate by seeking punishment. He is also extremely prone to trying to win attention from others and seems to do this indiscriminately of whether that attention is positive or negative. I believe that he has developed a pattern in which he seeks out situations where he could become a victim and where he can secure the center of attention by being hurt. I also believe that he is very much looking directly for his father's increased attention through the stealing incidents and some of these other behaviors. He demonstrates extremely poor judgment in his description of his own behavior and in his plans to handle these kinds of situations. He also is resistant to the control of his parents and they have shown an inability to keep him under control or contained enough within the household that he will not get into further similar difficulties. For all of these reasons, I think that it may be necessary that Tommy be placed in a residential treatment environment. Although he is not behaving in a psychotic way, he does show extremely poor judgment and self-destructive impulses. I think that there is a genuine danger to his physical well-being and that it is necessary to have him in a more restrictive environment where the kinds of attention that he gets can be more easily directed toward his positive behaviors and where the underlying issues of guilt and self-hate can be examined. Even Tommy's inconsistency in coming in for outpatient therapy presents a problem in trying to alleviate these difficulties and that would be another problem more easily solved by a residential environment. I have no idea of how such a placement might be funded nor the parents will react to my suggestion of this. I will be with them tomorrow and make this recommendation and I will explore some of the possible facilities where such a program might be carried out.



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