

Introduction to Charlotte Ellinwood's "Some Observations from Work with Parents in a Child Therapy Program"

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Charlotte Ellinwood began working at the University of Chicago Counseling Center in 1946. At that time she was hired for the job of secretary and held a B.A. in English literature and education. Through the years her roles changed; she was secretary, administrator, trainee, graduate student, supervisor, consultant, professor, researcher, writer and therapist. When she left the Center at the time of its closing in 1971, she was coordinator of its child therapy program, had a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and was a lecturer in the Department of Psychology. She received training and supervision in play therapy from Virginia Axline around the time Axline was finishing her classic book *Play Therapy* (1947/1969). "There always was a play therapy (later called child therapy) program at the center, initiated by Virginia Axline and carried on by Nat Raskin, Jules Seeman, Edyth Barry, and myself over the years" (Ellinwood, 1990, p. 410). Referring to the 1949 to 1951 play therapy group which included Edyth Barry, Esther Blustein, Chris Cadbury, Elaine Dorfman, Len Hersher, Sophie Fox Kirtner, Armin Klein, Gordon Liddle, Nat Raskin, Dick Robertson, Ferdinand van der Veen, and herself, she wrote, "... I believe the seeds of client-centered family therapy were planted in the discussions of that group" (p. 411).

I stumbled upon Charlotte's 1959 Chicago Counseling Center Discussion Paper several years ago. At that time I was working with children and finding my brief encounters with parents and foster parents to be challenging at best, something I tended to avoid whenever possible. Charlotte's discussion paper assisted me in articulating theoretically some of the difficulties I was having. It constructively forwarded my thinking about how to "be" with caregivers of child clients. Reading this paper was the beginning of a transition in my work from therapist to the individual child in isolation, to therapist better able to receive and engage with client parents, to the present point where I heartily enjoy doing client-centered family therapy. Thank you, Charlotte Ellinwood.

References

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