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CORRECTIONAL REHABILITATION AS A FUNCTION OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Our purpose here is not to describe or promote a program for rehabilitation, but to pass on some observations that we have made, as psychologists, regarding the rehabilitative process in correctional endeavors. Our observations of the functioning of rehabilitative programs, of groups of inmates, and of the behavior of individual inmates have led us to the belief that the concept of "interpersonal relations" is one of the most useful keys for understanding and promoting the rehabilitative process. Aside from our personal observations and experiences, a backlog of psychological theory gives support to this concept. Newer contributions to the study of psychotherapeutic processes and the psychological study of social learning have demonstrated its usefulness.

We regard the rehabilitation of inmates of correctional institutions as a learning task. When most people think of learning they think of books, classrooms, and the practice of physical and verbal skills. Most of our learning, however, occurs outside of the classroom situation and before and after formal education intervenes in our lifetimes. Rehabilitation of the felon or misdemeanant may include vocational training, learning of the three R's and formal indoctrination in the rules and regulations of society; but we are primarily interested in social learning. We hope to change the inmates' attitudes toward the institutions of society and toward individuals. We hope to make inmates more respectful of the rights of others, more highly motivated to seek social acceptance, more realistic in their views of the relationship between themselves and society.

Except, perhaps, for a few extremely retarded inmates of institutions for the feeble-minded, every human being has learned some of these social orientations. The majority of us have not learned these things through books and lectures, but through our relationships with other people, particularly our parents and friends. We have learned them by imitating the behavior of these prestige figures, motivated by a desire to gain acceptance from them.

As psychologists we are necessarily interested in the factors involved in learning

and training; as correctional clinicians we are interested in changing the individual to meet society's criteria for citizenship. We therefore offer our particular point of view in regard to the rehabilitative process.

THE REHABILITATIVE PROGRAM

Though many aspects of prison routine are rehabilitative in intent, it is in three major areas that rehabilitative design is most clearly apparent—the disciplinary, vocational, and moral training programs. These divisions are somewhat arbitrary since the total program is educational in a broad sense. The program reflects the values of our society as well as the common perception of the felon as a person deficient in those areas of development which the program aims to stimulate.

The prison disciplinary program should be recognized as a means to the end of inculcating self-discipline. External controls, physical or symbolic, may have the temporary effect of minimizing undesirable conduct. Whether such controls will lead to the modification of behavior under circumstances of greater freedom (i.e. parole) depends on the learning which takes place. It appears that large numbers of inmates resist the learning of an abiding fear of punitive consequences. Thus, the punishing features of the disciplinary program are probably rather insignificant for long-range learning.

Prison rules and punishments are neither more nor less arbitrary than rules and punishments on the outside. The same may be said of their palatability. The crucial question regarding rules is whether they serve practical purposes; the crucial question regarding discipline is whether it induces acceptance or only conformity. Foot-dragging compliance and half-hearted verbal expressions of agreement are commonly encountered symptoms of conformity without acceptance. Good behavior in the face of certain punishment for misconduct is not surprising and is insignificant in the development of self-discipline. The disciplinarian is responsible for communicating the purposes which underlie the rules he enforces. It would, of course, be naive to assume that all inmates will accept the social rationale for institutional rules. On the other hand, it becomes quite easy for an inmate to justify hostility to rules which appear senseless to him. Whatever the disposition of the inmate—to accept or reject discipline—he is hard pressed to justify rejection of rules which are reasonable and punishments which are fair. In making it difficult for the inmate to cling to distorted views, we increase the chances of his adopting new ones. It is a long stride from the acceptance of good intent and acknowledgement of judiciousness in the disciplinarian to the expression, in daily conduct, of mature self-discipline. However, such acceptance appears to be a prime requisite. It can be induced but not demanded.

It is difficult to see how rehabilitation could be accomplished in a prison setting without a work program. If what is learned "inside" is to be generalized to the "outside", relative normality of living must be maintained within prison walls. Certainly, then, emphasis on productive activity and the development of employable skills is not misplaced. Faith in the rehabilitative value of vocational training is not always justified, however. Unskilled status is no longer indicative of marginal employability. Though, at first glance, a prison population may appear to be distinguished by its plethora of "men without trades", it is questionable that this attribute

truly sets the prison population apart from groups of similar social and economic standing on the outside. In this day of mass production, a worker may have long tenure and relatively little technical skill. The most important goals of the work program may not be achieved because they are less easily defined and communicated and less readily measured than are skills. Unless one accepts work realistically, can adapt himself gracefully to a place in the hierarchy of power which exists in the employer-foreman-worker relationship and appreciates the values of stability and reliability, vocational skill has little adjustment value. The prison work-supervisor or vocational instructor can influence these work-attitudes only insofar as he is capable of establishing rapport with the inmates who work under his guidance. It is necessary that the work supervisor take pride in his vocation. A cynical instructor can scarcely communicate positive work attitudes or ideals since his own conduct will unfailingly reveal his negativism. When rapport is cited as a requisite for attitude development, it may be mistaken by some to mean the sort of overly casual dealings which wise prison administrators discourage. This is not the intended meaning. The requisites for true rapport appear to be a genuine idealism regarding rehabilitation and a genuine respect for the inmate as a human being. The vocational instructor is in a highly strategic position. Just as, in his role of skill-teacher, he can observe and correct skill-errors, so as a teacher of work-attitudes, he can observe, and correct expressions of attitude. Unless, however, he is accepted by the inmate as someone who matters, his rebuke or word of praise or admonition will have little constructive value.

Just as the goal of discipline is self-discipline, so the goal of moral training is moral choice. Ideally, penal institutions might strive to nurture life philosophies or value-systems which would sustain socially approved and morally upright behavior. It is probably true, however, that well developed, integrative philosophies of life are the exception rather than the rule even among persons on the outside of prison walls. In any case, such human attributes are complex and appear to develop slowly out of experience rather than to appear full blown as a consequence of limited teaching, example, or exhortation.

The aspects of prison life most obviously aimed at moral training are the religious program and the disciplinary program. It is doubtful that enforced attendance at church has the hoped-for effect of stimulating moral growth. The fact of force is sufficient to induce negative attitudes in many inmates toward chaplains, sermons, and the entire ritual of the church service. Church attendance can and should be made attractive without the introduction of either rewards or punishments. The relationship of religious study and religious experience to moral growth is difficult to assess. The immediate value of such study and experience is sufficient to justify the program whatever the long-range consequences. However, since long-range effects in moral growth are desired, every effort should be bent to make moral choice an issue in evaluating conduct.

Moral values are communicated in various ways. From the avidity with which inmates seize on incidents demonstrative of lack of morality in officers, it is apparent that example is an effective communication method in this area. While the bad example may be seized upon to bolster the inmate's rationalization of his own amoral

or immoral conduct, the good example cannot be indefinitely ignored. However, reliance on example alone is unwise. Many opportunities for direct instruction or counselling arise in the course of routine activities within the prison. Moralizing probably has little value as a stimulus to inmate self-examination and critical evaluation. On the other hand, a clear statement of moral principle without condemnation of the inmate as a person would appear to be a vital aspect in the effective handling of disciplinary incidents in or out of the institution court room. It is not enough to jail a man and strive to arouse feelings of guilt and self-dissatisfaction. Opportunities for bolstering self-esteem through approved and significant accomplishments must exist. The calculated risk of a "trusty" program appears to be well-justified by the gains in self-regard occasioned by the experience of being trusted and the accomplishment of proven trustworthiness. Institutionalized "trust", however, is probably less effective than the personalized trust which is implicit in the humane and judicious dealings of a good correctional officer. Identification with a figure who represents an adequate character model precedes the development of conscious ideals. This identification is fostered on the level of interpersonal dealings. The beginnings of moral life-philosophies can and should grow out of these interactions of inmates with officers.

SOME INTERPERSONALIZED REHABILITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Where the motivation for an individual's delinquency lies within himself and results in a pattern of behavior unacceptable to society, it is plain that "cure" or rehabilitation will have two phases: (1) the process of unlearning old behavior patterns and (2) the process of relearning new ones. While most penal institutions provide satisfactory examples of "new" and "acceptable" behavior patterns, the attempt to motivate their acceptance by inmates is largely exhortative and threat of repression remains the principal sanction for their acceptance. There is no love lost or given in the average prison, nor are there any particular incentives offered for the abandonment of old patterns of behavior. In short, the basic rehabilitative necessities are ignored in present penal practice in that the "unlearning" half of the prescription is omitted altogether, and "relearning" is made unlikely since motivation is externally mobilized by the threat of repression rather than rewarded by the introduction of incentives.

The "cure" of the delinquent demands a change in behavior patterns in the direction of social conformity. Such change is a very basic thing involving, as it does, a reorganization and reintegration of the individual's entire relationship with the world in which he lives and the people with whom he comes in contact. His attitudes, social techniques and emotional expectations must all undergo considerable alteration. This necessitates the development and communication, within prison walls, of a stable, supportive, rewarding identification matrix, as well as a system of sanctions which would operate to deter from the old and induce acceptance of new social perceptions. Without providing both of these requirements, any correctional program must fail. People do not easily abandon long term behavioral adaptations which have served an emotional purpose. Imprisonment itself does not necessarily convince the offender of the inadequacy of his delinquent behavior.

In the attempt to foster the development of such an "adjustment matrix" correctional administration must consider two major factors, the first, orientational and the second, interpersonal. The orientation of the correctional institution should be one which places emphasis upon positive rather than negative sanctions whenever possible. It is always preferable, in the training of animals, children, and felons, to provide something to look forward to rather than something to look backward on. In order to foster new behavior it is advisable that such behavior be made to appear worthwhile in the inmate's eyes. Rewards for acceptable behavior should be instituted and emphasized wherever possible instead of punishment for unacceptable behavior. This is not to imply that punishment has no place in correctional custody, but merely that its exclusive, or even primary use is to be avoided. Rewards which have been used successfully include the awarding of "good time", the development of incentive training programs and pay scales, and the attempt to introduce "progressive" custodial functioning.

Incentive programs accomplish several ends. On the job, for example, incentive pay and differential housing, will foster the development of healthy competitiveness. The area of competition is one in which most delinquents prove inadequate, and may indeed, be a key to one of the most important goals in their retraining. Delinquent individuals are notorious for their rejection of the very goals for which the rest of society competes. If the inmate's comfort and personal sense of worth within the institution were to depend upon taking advantage of the incentives which are offered him, then this training would seem quite useful in the rehabilitation process. In addition to fostering such concern with socially approved goals and motivations, the incentive program would provide an additional inducement to the inmate to learn habits of vocational industriousness and stability so essential to satisfactory extramural adjustment. In brief, the prison should become a representative example of the social reality inherent in striving for individual reward.

In speaking of "progressive" custody we refer to a security system which is facilitative rather than regulative. It is quite natural for the psychologist to observe the correctional setting from a primarily rehabilitative point of view. It is also to be expected that he will consider the primary purpose of incarceration to be the rehabilitation, rather than the custodial care of inmates. This being the case, he tends to view problems of custody in their relationship to rehabilitation, and acceptable custody becomes that process by which rehabilitative aims are best facilitated. Too often we encounter the anomalous situation in which rehabilitation is limited, or even entirely regulated by the demands of custodial personnel for a more "secure" institution. The requirement of prison security for the protection of society is not to be denied, but the will of society for the reclamation of its felons is better served by a well controlled rehabilitative program than by the single-minded purpose of running a "quiet" institution.

Another extremely important aspect of rehabilitative technique lies in the effort to maintain consistency of routine and of rehabilitative function. Once the basic orientation of the institution has been set forth in terms of positive sanctions, reward for acceptable behavior, incentive for social productivity and progressive custody, the problem becomes to impress upon each inmate the inevitability of the consequences

of all his behavior, whether compliant or otherwise. Thus, the reward for acceptable behavior should be no less certain or speedy than the absence of reward or even punishment for unacceptable behavior. More than this, resort to negative sanctions should be limited to situations in which the security of the institution or potential harm to another individual are clearly involved. Too often punishment deteriorates to the level of "routine discipline", and custodial officers no longer require the justification of serious offense to warrant serious punishment. For example, to bring an inmate before the institution court and free him from detention upon finding that he was innocent of his offense is an injustice, since the detention constituted *a priori* punishment. Again, the use of a correction cell in the case of an inmate who speaks out of turn is an unjust punishment in consideration of the magnitude of the offense. The "tone" of an entire institution most usually depends upon the manner in which routine infractions are handled, the justice of the handling, and the emotional interactions of the people involved.

If the interpersonal requirements for correctional rehabilitation are to be met, the caliber of custodial and professional staff becomes a matter of primary importance. These people must all possess the personal and social attributes which would make them acceptable as character models. Staff members for whom asocial, acultural, or even anti-social behavior holds any fascination whatever, or who are personally conflicted or prejudiced in this area, are likely to become disruptive elements in the attempt to maintain institutional discipline and morale. For example, the officer who looks upon heavy drinking as the measure of a man, or who sees in promiscuous sexual contacts the primary means of asserting his masculinity is a poor person to be given authority over inmates with similar problems. Certainly, the moral and ethical requirements for staff members, at least in the performance of their specific duties, should be set and maintained at a high level. Example is an important educational principle.

In general it may be said that too much has been left to chance, insofar as the personality attributes and attitudes of institutional administrators and custodial officers are concerned. We should expect maturity, responsibility, and self-sufficiency in our officers. We should choose people capable of responding to the "needs" of the inmates rather than their "wants" or impulsive desires. True rapport does not imply personal involvement with the inmate or with his asocial characteristics, but the ability to understand and the capacity to accept and respect him as an individual, on the basis of those values and attributes which even the worst felon shares in common with the rest of humanity. The custodial officer must possess the stamina, drive, intelligence and interest to discover and support the positive attributes on which social acceptance is predicated.

In connection with this subject, it is worthy of note that psychologists and other professional personnel are frequently accused of "mollycoddling" inmates. One "mollycoddles" when one responds to peripheral, immediately-satisfying requests which the inmate may make. Conversely, one builds character and self-respect when one responds to the inmate's long-range, realistic needs. We are not concerned with making life, either in or out of prison, comfortable or immediately rewarding, but rather with creating in the inmate the ability to postpone immediate satisfactions in

favor of more solid, long-term, socially approved goals. In order to accomplish this we must provide satisfactions for such behavior when it is noted within the walls. Habit, after all, is built upon experience.

When we have staffed our institution with mature, responsible officers, who can function not only as disciplinarians, but also as character models, and who have the ability to form rapport and to become objects of identification for the inmate body, then we can begin to rehabilitate by responding to the socialized, realistic needs which the inmates express, and by treating each inmate as an individual worthy of recognition for his social advances, and capable of accepting responsibility for his personal deficiencies. Any institutional administration whose object is to rehabilitate must take into consideration the necessity for individualization of program and discipline. Too often when inmates appear before institutional disciplinarians offenses are punished rather than people. External circumstances and individual responsibility as well as the nature of the infraction itself should enter into consideration in an individualized disciplinary approach. There is no substitute for humane judgment. Institutional officers and officials are prepared to render such judgment only when their own anxieties, and asocial personality tendencies or prejudices have been recognized and integrated into mature personality patterns.

It should also be remembered that the rules of consistency, fairness, individualization, positive outlook, and provision of incentives, are as vital to the maintenance of officer morale as they are to the fostering of inmate adjustment. Just as the "tone" of an entire institution depends upon the manner in which routine matters are handled, the justice of the handling, and the emotional interactions of the people involved, so the morale of the staff depends upon an adequate and progressive personnel policy.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

We have noted above what some of the characteristic demands should be in regard to personnel who must handle interpersonal relationships in prison situations. It should be evident that we must select institution personnel with regard to their ability to relate to inmates without hostility, without emotional dependence and untoward involvement, and with a perceptiveness as to inmates' motivations and needs. We also wish to select men who can serve as models for imitative behavior, and who generally possess emotional maturity and stability. In the past, lack of consideration of such qualifications and the inability to attract large numbers of good personnel would have made it difficult to apply such criteria. At the present time, we should be more cognizant of the necessity for such qualifications. In general, most correctional institutions are now better able than formerly to compete for personnel on the job market. Because of generally increased salary scales we should be able to apply more rigid selection criteria.

Normal intelligence, suitable literacy, and good physical condition and stature have been the main criteria for selection in many institutions. While educational requirements are many times taken into account, it would seem that personal effectiveness might be more a function of the ability to learn quickly than of past accomplishments in education. We certainly would wish to select fairly intelligent men

with aptitude for education and training. These things are easy to ascertain through the use of standard intelligence and educational tests. Finding men with the requisite personality qualifications is a somewhat more difficult task. But personality descriptions and predictions of behavior are made in regard to inmates of most correctional institutions, and a similar job could be done quite readily in the selection of correctional workers, by existing, trained personnel. The psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers or counsellors who routinely make such descriptions or predictions of inmate behavior could make similar predictions regarding job applicants. It would not be the place of such staff members to recommend the hiring or turning down of applicants, but to lay before the hiring body the information on which they might make their judgments.

Various interview techniques are available to these trained personnel, as well as recognized psychological tests, particularly those of a projective nature. These projective tests present unstructured stimuli such as ink blots, pictures of people, unfinished sentences, etc., and force the applicant by means of his personal perceptions and emotional reactions into structuring the material. We can gain considerable insight into the applicant's emotional maturity, his ways of dealing with problem situations, and his usual modes of interacting with other people.

Taking the applicant on a short, informal orientation tour of the institution may serve several purposes. With an eye to selection, we may make observations about him and the way he views the job and his future co-workers. This would also provide some initial job training and a basis for establishing emotional security on the job by letting him see the institution as a whole and enabling him to make his first contacts with his future co-workers. Another by-product of this orientation tour is that it will afford opportunity for the applicant, prior to his final commitment, to assess any misgivings he may have about the job.

Selection, then, as long as we have criteria upon which we can agree, would seem to be a soluble problem in view of the fact that we already have trained personnel for the job. Training in interpersonal relationships should prove more of a problem since little attention has been paid to it in the past and since training of personnel in correctional institutions usually deals strictly with matters of custody. Most hiring officers in such institutions want applicants who can "get along with people" but seldom consider the problem of training them for the task.

How can we train officers in interpersonal contacts? The device which most quickly comes to mind is that of the "critical incident technique". Using this method we may bring before the trainees frequently-found problem situations and their possible answers, in order to prepare them for such situations that they may meet in the future. These situations may be presented orally, they may be acted out by other officers, or they may be presented by sound motion pictures that can be prepared by the training department. Acting out the situation in the style of "psychodrama" or "role playing" might be a very effective way of helping the trainee to identify with inmates and other officers. Since the trainee is going to have to deal with such situations on the spot, we also provide him with problem-solving techniques by withholding the answers until he himself has rehearsed possible solutions in a give-and-take group discussion.

At the same time it should be the job of the training leader to make clear to the officers that they are handling concrete situations in which their own emotional responses are important. He should help individual trainees to understand their personal responses, and help them clarify their own attitudes and feelings. It should be emphasized that feelings of hostility or sympathy are not necessarily bad, or a handicap in doing the job, if they recognize, and make allowances for such feelings in dealing with inmates and with other staff personnel. At the same time the instructor, trained in psychotherapy or counselling, can help the individual correct irrational emotional responses.

After the trainee has completed his orientation and is actually working with inmates, there should be a continuing program of "brush-up classes" and group discussion regarding specific problems which he faces on the job. Again, interpersonal relationships, feelings and attitudes of new personnel should be clarified and corrected by training supervisors. In addition psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, etc., should make themselves known to the trainees and be available for counselling on problem situations of an interpersonal nature which may arise on the job.

Along with the training program, the institution staff should make every effort to integrate new officers into the institution—to make them feel emotionally secure, necessary, and part of a team. Such emotional security is important if the officer is to be effective in his dealings with other people. This attempt can be helped by a consistent personnel policy and by making the officer feel that his work is understood and appreciated.

We have noted above the desirability of stringent selection and training of correctional personnel in regard, particularly, to interpersonal relationships. It would seem that to further rehabilitative programs for inmates we must put as much effort into educating and selecting officers as we do into the diagnosis and treatment of the inmates whom they are to help rehabilitate.

SUMMARY

It is common opinion among authors that correctional rehabilitation is achieved as a function of interpersonal relationships. From the point of view of psychologists who have had opportunity to observe the correctional situation in all its ramifications, the authors have attempted to set down the procedural assumptions which underlie the general philosophy of rehabilitation, including, within a general educational frame of reference, the vocational, moral, and disciplinary training aspects. These are discussed with a view toward distinguishing between exhortative, repressive, and truly identified means of achieving such education. Techniques designed to foster rehabilitation are then discussed, with a view toward the orientation of the institution and the interpersonal requirements which must be met. Emphasis is placed upon the use of positive rather than negative sanctions, reward in place of punishment wherever possible, progressive custodial functioning, and consistency of program. A third topic deals with the need for custodial officers who are capable of serving as character models, competent to respond to the true needs of the inmate, capable of achieving adequate rapport and of dealing with inmates as individuals. Finally, recommendations are made for the training and orientation of such personnel.