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AN EVALUATION OF MILIEU THERAPY AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING AS METHODS FOR THE REHABILITATION OF YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS*

THEODORE N. FERDINAND

The author is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University. He formerly served on the faculty of Central Michigan University. From 1957 to 1959, Professor Ferdinand worked with the Michigan Department of Corrections at its camp for youthful offenders, Camp Pugsley.

Professor Ferdinand observes in this article that in light of recent emphasis upon the importance of the therapeutic community to rehabilitation of offenders, there arises a need for careful evaluation of treatment programs to ascertain their actual value. Does a therapeutic milieu beneficially influence the attitudes of the offender? Does it help the offender adjust to community life after release from the therapeutic institution? More specifically; does vocational training beneficially influence the offender's attitudes and ability to adjust after release? To answer such questions as these, Professor Ferdinand undertook a study of youths at Camp Pugsley in Michigan. In this article, he reports the results of his study and discusses their significance.—EDITOR.

Since the turn of the century, when the first Borstal institutions were inaugurated in Great Britain, the general philosophy guiding the handling of juvenile delinquents has undergone a rather far-reaching shift. Although formerly a punitive policy was generally followed in both Great Britain and the United States, today the treatment philosophy is widely accepted in training school circles in both countries. But in spite of the shift away from a punitive philosophy, a dearth of carefully documented evaluations of treatment programs still persists. The factual basis for such widespread faith in treatment programs as effective methods for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents remains yet to be laid. To be sure, there are exceptions to this observation here and there, but these are not nearly as numerous as they should be. The evaluation of the Highfields Project by McCorkle, Elias, and Bixby¹ and later by Weeks,² and the study of the Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School by Black, Bertram, and Glick³ to some extent help fill the gap, but by-and-large we are still operating

more on faith and intuition than on sound knowledge in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents.

Recently the Michigan Department of Corrections set out to improve this situation by commissioning the writer to evaluate the treatment program at one of its facilities, Camp Pugsley. The camp is situated in northern Michigan and was established in 1956 as a center for the rehabilitation of youths between the ages of 16 and 22. The youths at the camp have been placed on probation by courts in their home communities, but for a variety of reasons spend a part of the probationary period under supervision at Camp Pugsley.

From the very start, the operation of the camp was guided by the writings of Jones,⁴ Bettelheim, and Sylvester,⁵ who maintain that the social milieu within such a camp is every bit as important in rehabilitating and restoring individuals to society as individualistic, psychotherapeutic measures. The fundamental aim of the programs at Camp Pugsley was to create an atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement for those young men who seemed honestly willing to deal with their problems constructively. The specific programs included a vocational training program, a work program operated in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Conservation, a social education program carried out with the help of lay persons from nearby communities, and a recreation program.

The basic objectives of the research reported here were twofold. First, it sought to determine

⁴ M. JONES, *THE THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY* (1953).

⁵ Bettelheim & Sylvester, *The Therapeutic Milieu*, 18 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 191 (1948).

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¹ McCORKLE, ELIAS & BIXBY, *THE HIGHFIELDS STORY* (1958).

² WEEKS, *YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS AT HIGHFIELDS* (1959).

³ BLACK, BERTRAM & S. J. GLICK, *RECIDIVISM AT THE HAWTHORNE CEDAR-KNOLLS SCHOOL* (Research Monograph No. 2, N. Y. Jewish Board of Guardians 1952).

whether the camp's overall program, based upon the concept of the therapeutic milieu, was effective in helping the probationers develop attitudes more consistent with social conventions and with a full and satisfying community life. Second, we hoped to establish more specifically whether the vocational training program was effective in these same directions. To some extent these programs were interdependent; an effective vocational training program undoubtedly enhanced the effectiveness of the overall treatment program. But there was a sufficient lack of correspondence between the two to make separate evaluations meaningful.

It should be clearly recognized that the primary focus of these programs was on the probationer and his attitudes, with the implicit assumption that successful rehabilitation, to some extent at least, involves a "reconstruction" of the individual offender. Should this reconstruction be successful, it would be anticipated that the resulting increased social maturity of the offender would persist after his release and induce him to seek a social environment compatible with his changed social attitudes. The writer and, indeed, his sponsors were well aware of the necessity of aiding the probationer in finding relationships in the community that would support his changed social view; however, the primary aim of this research was not to evaluate this aspect of the treatment process, but rather to determine the effectiveness of the programs in the institution in changing the attitudes of the probationer and the effect *these changed attitudes* had upon his ability to find a satisfactory niche in the community.

The study, in pursuit of this aim, was organized into two stages. The first consisted of an attempt to evaluate the effect of the two programs (*i.e.*, the general treatment program and the vocational training program) on the attitudes and values of the young men involved. In order to get an estimate of the attitudinal change evidenced by these young men, the California Psychological Inventory,⁶ referred to henceforth as the CPI, was administered twice to every probationer admitted to the camp: once when he arrived at the camp and a second time when he had been at camp approximately six months. Information was gathered in this way over a fifteen-month period on 233 probationers.

The second stage of our investigation attempted

⁶ BUROS, FIFTH MENTAL MEASUREMENTS YEAR-BOOK 35-38 (1959).

to assess the effect of the two programs on the after-camp adjustment of the probationers and was based upon quarterly reports received from their probation officers after the youths had returned to their communities. In order to standardize these reports, an Evaluation Sheet was developed by the writer consisting of questions about the probationer's adjustment in his home, the nature of his friends, his employment experience, and the likelihood of his successfully completing his probationary period. This sheet was then made available to the probation officers of each of the boys involved in the study. The probation officers, in turn, completed the sheets and returned them to the writer. In this way sufficient information was gathered from the probation officers to permit an evaluation of the community adjustments of 148 probationers.⁷

Discussion of the results falls naturally into two parts. First, the effect of the broader program will be examined on the two criteria of rehabilitation, *i.e.*, the changes in values and attitudes of the probationer while at camp and the adequacy of his adjustment in the community after release. Second, we shall discuss the influence of the probationer's participation in the vocational training program upon these same two criteria.

As indicated above, the effect of the general treatment program at Camp Pugsley on the attitudes and values of the probationers was measured by the differences in their scores on two administrations of the CPI. Means were computed, therefore, for the fourteen scales of the CPI for both administrations, and the differences between the means were subjected to the t-test. The results are presented in Table I.⁸

⁷ All of the completed Evaluation Sheets were assembled by the writer and forwarded to Dr. Donald Thurston, the Department of Corrections' Lifer Examiner at that time and Mr. Robert Berles, the Department's Supervisor of Social Work Training. Both of these gentlemen were fully qualified to rate the adequacy of a probationer's community adjustment, although neither had any previous contact with this particular study or knowledge of the probationers they were rating. Using only the Evaluation Sheets, they rated the adequacy of each probationer's adjustment on a six-point scale and returned their ratings to the writer for use in this study. The reliability of their ratings as measured by their product-moment correlation was .87.

⁸ It will be noted that the data in Tables I and II are based upon only 93 probationers. In order to simplify the statistical analysis, the second analysis of covariance reported below was calculated first, and the t-tests reported in Tables I and II were then computed by using the means and standard errors that had already been prepared in the analysis of covariance.

TABLE I

T-TESTS OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND ADMINISTRATION OF THE CPI*

CPI Scales	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	$S_{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}$	t-ratio ^b
Intellectual efficiency	6.31	7.12	0.27	2.95**
Impulsivity	5.32	4.92	0.24	1.63
Self-acceptance	6.44	6.92	0.16	2.93**
Responsibility	6.52	7.19	0.23	2.92**
Dominance	6.14	7.09	0.22	4.28**
Social participation	6.34	7.08	0.24	3.00**
Femininity	6.85	7.05	0.21	0.95
Delinquency	5.90	5.33	0.21	2.78**
Tolerance	5.79	6.18	0.23	1.70*
Flexibility	4.71	4.22	0.19	2.54**
Social status aspirations	6.12	7.02	0.26	3.40**
Dissimulation	4.43	3.67	0.23	3.23**
Good impression	5.99	6.73	0.25	2.91**
Inconsistency	2.18	1.89	0.21	1.40

* These findings are based upon information obtained from 93 probationers. The original scores were transformed to permit IBM manipulation of the data. These coded scores should not, therefore, be compared with the original scores of other populations.

^b Based upon 184 degrees of freedom a single asterisk indicates one-tailed significance beyond the .05 level of confidence, and a double asterisk indicates one-tailed significance beyond the .01 level of confidence.

Generally speaking, there is evidence of change in four broad areas. First, there seems to be an increased ability to participate harmoniously in groups as indicated by an improved willingness to accept responsibility, a greater interest in social participation, and a greater tolerance for the needs and wishes of others. Second, the evidence indicates decreases both in delinquent attitudes and in attempts to dissimulate (*i.e.*, to falsify) attitudes on the CPI. Both these findings probably mean that the probationers' basic defiance and suspicion of authority abated somewhat during their stay at Camp Pugsley. Third, there seems to be a more positive self-evaluation as evidenced by the greater self-acceptance, the elevated social status

The analysis of covariance, however, requires that full information on each of the variables being examined be available for each probationer used in the study, and in this case only 93 out of 233 probationers fulfilled this requirement. Hence, the t-tests reported in Tables I and II are based upon only 93 cases. The correlations reported in Table III and in the text below are based upon only those probationers for whom complete data on all the variables were available. In this case the total number was 116.

aspirations, and the concern in giving a good impression on the CPI. And fourth, there is some indication that the probationers are less suggestible and less willing to fill the role of follower in the decreased flexibility and increased dominance evidenced in Table I.

Another, less optimistic interpretation could perhaps be drawn from these findings. It might run something like this: Since the probationers were all intensely concerned with being released from Camp Pugsley at the earliest possible date, and since it was generally assumed by them (incorrectly in this case) that their responses to the CPI influenced their chances for an early discharge, their performance on the second administration of the CPI reflects their desires to appear psychologically healthy more than it does any real attitudinal changes. This interpretation assumes, of course, that the probationers possessed a remarkable ability to out-guess the CPI, *i.e.*, an ability to distinguish those questions that measured psychological attitudes from those that assessed attempts to falsify answers—something neither high school nor college students were able to accomplish in the validation of the CPI. Moreover, since there was a *decrease* in the mean dissimulation scores of this group, we must conclude that the changes in the eleven scales reported in Table I represent actual changes in attitudes and not merely a sophisticated ability to adjust scores in preconceived directions.

We next sought to determine whether these attitudinal changes carried over with the boy in the community and aided him in adjusting satisfactorily there. To this end we formed three groups according to the adjustment of the probationer in the community as measured by the Evaluation Sheets described above. The first group was composed of boys who had adjusted well or very well in their communities, the second, of boys who had adjusted only moderately well, and the third, of boys who had done poorly or very poorly in their communities.

The scores on the second administration of the CPI for these three groups were then submitted to an analysis of covariance. Since the personalities of the probationers undoubtedly influenced the adequacy of their post-camp adjustment, apart from any change brought about in their attitudes by the general treatment program, it was necessary to eliminate this variable as a factor in the probationers' post-camp adjustment. That is to say, we wanted to distinguish the boy who was well integrated before he arrived at camp, who derived

little benefit from the treatment program, and who adjusted quite well upon being released, from the boy whose attitudes were initially less well integrated, derived great benefit from the camp, and also adjusted well upon being released. The treatment program, if judged by its effect on the first probationer, would be considered a failure but, if judged from the performance of the second boy, would be considered a success. Since the analysis of covariance enables us to distinguish these two types of probationers by eliminating the influence of the initial CPI score on the final score, it was selected as the method to be used in determining how the changes brought about through the treatment program aided or hindered the probationers in their post-camp adjustment.

The analysis of covariance was made, and the changes in only one attitude, dominance, were related significantly beyond the five per cent level to the adequacy of the probationer's adjustment after release from camp. Several other attitudes exhibited slight trends, but they were not strong enough to be significant. It is of some interest that of the three levels of adjustment in the community only those who adjusted only moderately well exhibited a significant change in the attitude, dominance, while at Camp Pugsley. This result is puzzling, but it may mean that these probationers had originally become involved in delinquent activity through playing a follower role and that the new confidence and self-assertiveness developed while at Camp Pugsley enabled them to resist the invitation of their delinquent peers more readily than previously. And those who failed to develop these qualities were either still susceptible to the demands of their delinquent acquaintances, or they were immune to them for other reasons. Hence, those who adjusted only moderately well in the community might not have adjusted even that well had they not developed the strength and self-confidence to steer a more autonomous course.

It is rather remarkable that only one trait out of the fourteen examined exhibited any relationship to the adequacy of the probationers' adjustment in their communities. It may mean that a treatment program based upon the philosophy of the therapeutic milieu is ineffective as a rehabilitative measure. But before we jump to this pessimistic conclusion, we must remember that extensive changes in the probationers' attitudes were observed during their residence at Camp Pugsley, as indicated in Table I.

A more plausible explanation may be that many other factors in addition to the probationers' attitudes influence his community adjustment, and that these other factors, if left untouched, are nearly sufficient to override any changes that may occur in the probationer while at camp. Thus, it would seem that a really effective rehabilitation program may depend as heavily upon the quality of community services made available to the probationers upon release from a rehabilitative center as upon the quality of the program at the center.

We now turn to the vocational program and its effect on the two criteria of rehabilitation. In evaluating the influence of the vocational program on the attitudes and values of the probationers during their stay at Camp Pugsley, we followed much the same procedure utilized in the analysis described above. The relationship between participation in the vocational program and the psychological changes exhibited by the probationer was examined by means of the analysis of covariance.

As before, it was necessary to eliminate the effect of the initial score on the final score of the CPI. It was also necessary, however, to eliminate the influence of a second variable. As we indicated earlier, an interval of six months was used between the first and second administration of the CPI; for a variety of reasons, however, this standard was more honored in the breach than in the keeping. And since those who were in the vocational training program longest were also subjected to the influence of the overall treatment program for a longer period, it may be that any attitudinal differences between those who participated to a great extent and those who participated to a small extent in the vocational training program were actually a result of their having received varying exposures to the *overall* treatment program. Hence, it was also necessary to eliminate the influence that this factor had upon the attitudinal change evidenced by each probationer.⁹

⁹ The influence of length of exposure was not eliminated in Table I because it is very likely that the degree of attitudinal change is closely related, up to a point, to the length of exposure to the program. If we had eliminated the effect of this factor, we probably would have washed out the major source of attitudinal change, and, hence, we would have measured only the influence of other factors, *i.e.*, changes in personnel and other accidental factors. It would have been interesting, however, to compare the kinds of attitudinal changes that accompany long-term exposure with those that accompany short term exposure to the overall program. The influence of length of exposure was not eliminated in Table II because a more direct

TABLE II
T-TESTS OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ADJUSTED MEANS OF FOUR SCALES OF THE CPI FOR THREE GROUPS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINEES^a

CPI Scales ^c	\bar{X}_I	\bar{X}_{II}	\bar{X}_{III}	SD	t-ratio ^b		
					I-II	I-III	II-III
Intellectual eff.....	6.47	7.66	7.29	.371	3.21**	2.21*	1.00
Responsibility.....	6.74	7.41	7.76	.415	1.61	2.45*	.84
Tolerance ^d	5.74	6.36	6.46	.447	1.39	1.61	.22
Dissimulation.....	4.34	3.53	3.14	.273	2.97**	4.40**	1.43

^a Each group was composed of 31 probationers.

^b The single asterisk denotes a two-tailed significance beyond the .05 level of confidence, and the double asterisk denotes a two-tailed significance beyond the .01 level of confidence.

^c Only four attitudes are examined here since the remaining ten exhibited no relationship to vocational training in the analysis of covariance described in the text.

^d Although the difference between the three groups on this attitude were not significant in Table II, they were significant when examined by means of the analysis of covariance.

In order to carry out this analysis of covariance, three groups of probationers were formed according to the number of vocational classes they had attended while at camp. The first consisted of those who had attended fewer than twenty-one classes; the second, of those who attended between twenty-one and fifty classes; and the third, of those who had attended more than fifty classes. The analysis of covariance was performed, and significant relationships for four of the fourteen scales of the CPI were uncovered. The differences between the three groups for these same scales were then examined by means of the t-test. The results are presented in Table II.

In Table II it is always the first group, *i.e.*; those who participated least in the vocational training program, that differs from the other two, which in turn do not differ between themselves. We might infer from this pattern that the changes brought about by the vocational training program were substantially accomplished by the time the probationer had attended 21 classes. We might conclude, therefore, that there is probably an optimal point in vocational training programs beyond which trainees derive little benefit as far as attitudinal changes are concerned.

It is clear that vocational training at Camp Pugsley helped nurture attitudes that would be useful not only in academic areas but also in regular employment should the opportunity present itself. Those who attended a substantial number of vocational classes exhibited changes,

measure of exposure was available in the number of vocational classes each probationer had attended.

TABLE III
PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATIONS OF THE INITIAL SCORES ON FOURTEEN SCALES OF THE CPI WITH PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WITH THE ADEQUACY OF COMMUNITY ADJUSTMENT^a

CPI Scales	Participation in Voc. Training ^b	Adequacy of Com. Adjustment
Intellectual efficiency.....	.156	.025
Impulsivity.....	-.132	.131
Self-acceptance.....	.149	.053
Responsibility.....	.217*	.016
Dominance.....	.066	.015
Social participation.....	.108	.086
Femininity.....	-.114	.032
Delinquency.....	-.130	.029
Tolerance.....	.239*	.074
Flexibility.....	-.077	.076
Soc. status aspirations.....	-.019	.030
Dissimulation.....	-.173	.087
Inconsistency.....	-.236*	.023
Good impression.....	.137	.118

^a The figures in this table are based upon information gathered from 116 probationers.

^b The single asterisk denotes significance at the .05 level of confidence.

for example, in intellectual alertness, responsibility, tolerance, and frankness on the CPI.

Our next inquiry is whether these changes were of any use to the probationers after they returned to their community. In answering this question, we must eliminate the influence that an especially effective personality on the part of the probationer

would have both on progress in the vocational training program and on adjustment in the community. Once again, we are concerned with the effect that *changes* in the attitude structure brought about by the vocational training have upon community adjustment and not with the differences in community adjustment growing out of initially effective or ineffective personality types.

The most efficient method for examining the relationship between vocational training and community adjustment, it would seem, is the partial correlation technique in which the relationship between two variables can be accurately estimated when the influence of a number of other variables has been removed. In order to utilize this technique, however, it is necessary to obtain an estimate of the relationship of the variables that are to be controlled for with the two of primary interest. Accordingly, product-moment inter-correlations among the probationers' initial scores of the CPI, the number of classes they attended in the vocational program, and the adequacy of their community adjustment were calculated. The results of these efforts are presented in Table III below.

It is interesting that although three traits, *i.e.*, responsibility, tolerance, and inconsistency on the CPI, bear a slight relationship to the level of participation in the vocational training program, none seems to be related to the adequacy of the probationer's post-camp adjustment. This fact merely points up the likelihood that many other factors besides the probationer's personality, as measured nine months to a year previous to his return to the community, play a part in his community adjustment.

Although none of the traits was significantly related to both of the variables of primary concern, we decided to remove the influence of both the scales measuring impulsivity and good impression. They displayed the highest relationship with

participation in vocational training and adequacy of community adjustment, and removing their influence from the relationship between these two variables, although not strictly necessary, would tend to improve the validity of our ultimate finding.

On this basis we computed the partial correlation describing the relationship between the level of participation in the vocational training program and the adequacy of community adjustment when the influence of the initial scores on the traits, impulsivity and good impression, had been removed. The partial correlation was .20 with a standard deviation of .09. Thus, the relationship between these two variables was significant at beyond the .05 level of confidence. The conclusion seems justified, then, that vocational training makes a small, but significant contribution to the adequacy of the probationer's adjustment in the community.

To summarize, we have shown in this study that both the general treatment program and the vocational training program have a significant and beneficial impact on the attitudes and values of the probationers who participate in them at Camp Pugsley. We have also shown that these two treatment programs have a smaller and less comprehensive, but still significant influence on the adequacy of the probationers' adjustment upon release from camp. It would seem, therefore, that general programs based upon the concept of milieu therapy and specific programs in vocational training may constitute useful approaches to the rehabilitation of the youthful offender. More generally, however, these findings probably also indicate that the probationer can and will develop socially constructive attitudes under the right aegis and that programs in which he can develop distinctive skills permitting a degree of self-validation can facilitate his progress in this direction.