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THE REHABILITATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL RESIDENCE FOR NARCOTIC USERS

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The Halfway House Project described in this paper represents one among a growing number of efforts to curtail the illegal use of narcotic drugs. Halfway House, located in East Los Angeles, California, is a temporary residence for felon parolees with a history of narcotics use. Residents are admitted there immediately upon release from prison. Situated in a high drug use area in the city of Los Angeles, Halfway House is the first facility of its kind to be established in the United States.

The first two years of operation of Halfway House include a research evaluation of its effectiveness over "straight parole" in reducing the rate of return of men to prison for offenses related to narcotic drugs. This paper is a report of some characteristics of the study population, and of some comparative findings at six and nine month intervals. In addition, a descriptive analysis of the "group counseling" process is presented, from which a theoretically relevant framework for comparative and longitudinal study of the Halfway House as a social establishment is suggested.¹

The experimental-control populations of the study come from a pool of male imprisoned felony offenders who have parole placements in the East Los Angeles community. From this pool, men are assigned randomly (on a one-to-one basis) to control and experimental groups, the former going on "straight parole" and the latter taking up residence in Halfway House for a period of from 30 to 90 days.

The total study population, based on data col-

¹ The data on which this paper is based consist of interviews, recorded field observations, and sociometric ratings. A research unit was attached to the Halfway House with personnel not involved in program matters. Research personnel were identified to residents as persons attempting to learn something about the effectiveness of Halfway House and about the process of drug addiction. Emphasis was given to the confidentiality of research files and to the independence of research personnel from the sponsoring agencies.

lected during the first six months, is eighty percent Mexican-American, "Anglo" Caucasians constituting sixteen percent of it, and Negroes four percent. The age range of the study population is from 22 through 42 years, with eighty-two percent falling in the 27 to 37 year category. Eighteen percent of the men completed high school, and more than half of these completed it while in prison. Eighty-two percent used drugs² illegally before the age of 21. Nineteen percent of the study population reported having completed the necessary training which qualifies them as skilled workers. These characteristics indicate a predominantly Mexican-American cultural group, with a low level of educational achievement and job skill, and a fairly extensive history of narcotics use.

The comparative performance of the two groups at six and nine month intervals now follows. The three dimensions of comparison are numbers of men who have maintained satisfactory parole standing since their initial involvement in the study, total days of satisfactory parole time accumulated, and numbers of men on whom there is official evidence of return to illegal involvement with drugs.

At the end of the first six months of the study, thirty of thirty-six experimentals (83%) and thirty-one of thirty-eight controls (81.5%) had maintained an officially satisfactory parole standing throughout their time on parole.³ Equivalent figures for nine months are thirty-one of fifty-eight experimentals (53.5%) and forty of fifty-seven controls (70.2%). Thus both groups show a decline of persons whose performance on parole has been continuously satisfactory.

Thirty-six experimentals, during the first six

² Either heroin, marijuana, or both, were used.

³ Satisfactory standing means no new convictions or serious alterations of parole standing since last release on parole.

months of the study, accumulated 95% of their possible satisfactory days of parole time compared with 88% at the end of nine months by fifty-eight men. The controls show a more constant trend in accumulation of satisfactory parole time. Thirty-eight controls during the first six months accumulated 85% of their possible satisfactory days of parole time compared with 87% at the end of nine months by fifty-seven men. Thus, at the end of nine months the experimental and control groups have achieved about the same percentage of possible days of satisfactory time on parole.

At the end of six months official evidence of illegal involvement with drugs existed for one of thirty-six experimentals (.3%) compared with fourteen of fifty-eight men (24%) at the end of nine months. Of the thirty-eight controls, seven (18%) were officially determined to have resorted to illegal involvement with narcotics at the end of six months compared with fourteen of fifty-seven (25%) at the end of nine months. These figures indicate that, in contrast to the findings at the end of six months, the experimental and control groups have contributed in equal measure to the number of persons in the study on whom there is official evidence of return to illegal involvement with narcotics.⁴

During the nine month interval covered in this report the Halfway House has not been a distinctively important influence in preventing return to use of narcotic drugs. An attempt is now made to account for this unanticipated outcome, beginning with the recognition that within this establishment are to be found a dominant and a subordinate group. These groups are the staff and resident populations respectively, and each has a distinct and separate identity and a different set of loyalties. Staff's primary objective is that of increasing the adaptability of residents to the rigors of conventional life in the civil community. More specifically, staff's objective is to prevent return of residents to prison and to the use of narcotic drugs. Group counseling is the primary means adopted by staff for realizing this goal by causing significant change in the orientation and behavior of residents. I shall now describe aspects of social interaction which have characterized the group counseling⁵ process,

⁴ In both groups there was evidence of return to use on thirteen men.

⁵ Group counseling meetings are held every Monday evening for one hour, and every Wednesday evening for two hours. In addition, men not gainfully employed in the community are required to attend morning group meetings for one hour, Monday through Friday. Group

for interaction in these sessions has reflected certain sociological conditions which help to explain the limited achievements of Halfway House to date.

First hypothesis:⁶ *Loyalty to a set of norms or standards is a function of interpersonal relations.*

One way of looking at group counseling, based on the observable behavior of participants, is as a formal, ritualized dialogue between staff and residents. At regularly scheduled intervals, they confront one another in a somewhat ceremonial display of challenge by staff and defense by the resident group. Staff challenges by confronting the residents with specific kinds of behavior (usually violations of official demands) which it deems "irresponsible," and frequently this is met by a barrage of reasons from residents which for them neutralize or negate the charge of irresponsibility. The recurrence of certain issues in group discussions, and the repetition of characteristic staff and resident positions regarding them, indicates a circularity in the group process rather than progressive and unilinear development of resident action and attitudes increasingly reflective of what is officially desired.⁷

The following issues represent some recurrent matters of contention between staff and residents. These matters both reflect, and in part have given rise to, a degree of role distance⁸ among residents and social distance between residents and staff which, thus far, has obstructed development of the officially intended therapeutic community, at least of the variety suggested by Maxwell Jones.⁹

An issue which practically every man admitted to Halfway House from prison has complained about is the feeling that the requirement to enter

attendance is mandatory, the Monday evening and daily morning sessions applying only to current residents of the House, and the Wednesday evening meetings to the total experimental population. All men who have come through the Halfway House program as experimentals return on Wednesday evenings for group sessions, unless "terminated" by staff.

⁶ The theoretical framework to which this hypothesis, and the two which follow, are related has been discussed in my article, *Varieties of Juvenile Delinquency*, in *Br. J. Crim.* 2f (Jan. 1962).

⁷ A review of field notes on fifty-one group meetings during the first six months of the study revealed that complaints against the Halfway House staff and/or program were among the major issues of discussion in forty of these sessions and narcotics use a major issue of discussion in two. This review represents roughly one quarter of the number of sessions held.

⁸ See discussion by Goffman in his *Role Distance in Goffman, ENCOUNTERS: TWO STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF INTERACTION* 105-110 (1961).

⁹ JONES, *THE THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY—A NEW TREATMENT METHOD IN PSYCHIATRY* 56-57 (1953).

the program is unfair and that notification of this requirement is given too close to the time of release from prison. Men entering the Halfway House from prison have had their parole dates set some months prior to being selected for residence, and they have made plans about their future based on being released in the free community as parolees. The usual procedure is that men are notified from two to six weeks prior to their date of release from prison that participation in the Halfway House program is an additional parole requirement. This condition is generally seen as unfair, particularly as it is not applicable to all inmates. Residents contend that to subject them to additional time in a place which deprives them in many ways "just like the joint" does is punishment above and beyond what is legally required.

Another serious issue which frequently has arisen in the discourse between staff and residents in group counseling sessions has to do with the operation of the House. The resident perception that the place is "just like the joint" is based on certain policies and standard operating procedures. First, the appearance of the place is a constant matter of staff concern, and residents are obligated to meet staff demands for maintaining a neat appearing establishment. Staff demands on this issue are much as they are in prison and military establishments. Second, certain security measures must be taken in the House, such as maintaining twenty-four hour coverage by official personnel. Third, a timetable for arising in the morning and for lights out at night is maintained. Fourth, attendance is mandatory for the group counseling sessions. Fifth, week night passes are not allowed. These are among the features of the Halfway House program which are frequently cited by its resident population as justification for viewing it as another "joint."

Staff deportment in group sessions is another matter which has caused much concern among the residents. The staff persons who conduct the group sessions are parole agents, and they function in the groups mainly to bring out that behavior of residents which they deem "irresponsible." They attempt to provoke group discussion of this behavior and hope that subsequent discussion will substantiate an officially favored view regarding it, thus achieving group censure of the deviant. As the residents attempt to justify their actions, or to point out in return those actions of staff which seem to the group equally irresponsible, staff sometimes resorts to the tactic of nonparticipation, of refusal

to respond to questions directed to them by residents. This tactic arouses considerable anger among the resident participants. It feeds their contention that staff is attempting to use the group for purposes which are not related to the welfare of the residents themselves. In one staff evaluation of a Wednesday evening group session, a regular procedure, a staff member paraphrased a resident as follows: "When we ask you a question, why can't you give us an answer instead of acting like a psychologist or sociologist. . . instead of sitting back and acting like you are so smart. After all, you're just a cop. . . Why don't you act like you're supposed to act?"

Residents interpret this behavior by staff as treating them like children, and contend that an individual who asks a straight-forward question deserves a straight-forward answer. It suggest that they are not being treated like "men."

Another issue which has aroused concern and resentment among residents is the staff promulgation of an image of sickness among residents about themselves. A basic criterion used by staff in differentiating narcotics addicts from the population of non-users is psychological pathology, and staff tends to interpret "irresponsible" behavior as symptomatic of this pathology. One staff member commented on the failure of some residents to seek work who were permitted to do so, as follows: "I think it is symptomatic of a much deeper personality disturbance that the majority of these men have. Obtaining and retaining employment has been difficult for, I am sure, the vast majority of every parolee addict that we will come in contact with. He will not have a stable employment record. This will be part of the pathology, part of the symptom of the whole thing. . ."

Residents object to and deny the implication that they are "sick" or that they have "problems" of which their actions in the Halfway House, or elsewhere, are symptomatic. They frequently claim that their actions have to do with the specific conditions which are inherent in their current social situation, particularly the demands of the Halfway House program. They also claim that staff is unwilling, or unable, to see this.

Halfway House residents have frequently said of their condition in the House that they are left "dangling." This means that they are unable to know precisely what the conditions for release from Halfway House are. Length of stay in Halfway House is not determined prior to entry, and

many residents claim to be unable to see why they are held beyond the minimum requirement of 30 days. Residents contend that considerable pressure is created by not knowing when they will be released and what aspects of their department in Halfway House are responsible for prolonging their stay.

Finally, residents have been concerned to know the extent to which their expressions in group sessions render them liable to punitive action. Staff comments to the group on this matter have been contradictory, one group leader stating that group discussions are public information and another stating that what is discussed in the group stays in the group and is not to be "held against" a resident. Technically, parolees known to have returned to drugs are in violation of parole regulations. Open discussion of such matters is thus seen by residents as a great risk which may lead to reincarceration. This, perhaps, helps to account for the tendency not to discuss the subject of narcotics in group sessions, and the reluctance of men to bring up and discuss the serious infractions of other men. To do so means to go against the "code" and may result in serious punitive action against the accused.

It is important to realize the origins of the Halfway House conditions which have been the objects of hostility among the residents. Several of these conditions are determined by the fact that the Halfway House is a subsidiary of a large scale, politically sensitive organization which is vulnerable to prevailing community sentiment, the California Department of Corrections. Local autonomy on many matters is not possible, final authority residing with "higher" officials of the organization who design policy to accord with the welfare of the entire organization. The request from local officials that Halfway House residence be imposed in lieu of an equivalent amount of prison time was, in fact, denied by the Adult Authority Board. Requirements regarding non-extension of dining privileges to staff, the appearance of the House, etc., fall in this category. Some conditions which are purely local have also engendered hostility. Treatment technique, restrictions on visitation privileges, curfew hours, etc., fall in this category. They in part reflect staff thinking about what parolee-addicts are like and what actions are best suited to bring about officially desirable change in their outlook and behavior.

Thus, group counseling sessions are, among

other things, gatherings wherein staff thinking and demands are made known to the residents, and where particular instances of failure to meet these demands are exposed. The reactions of residents to this have been predominately negative and defensive, involving an occasional angry outburst from accused residents and collective consensus justifying their viewpoint. As one former resident expressed it: "You've got too many guys bitter . . . You have bitter guys, you aren't going to have any group . . . I don't even live here and I'm bitter half the time I come here . . . I'm bitter 'cause I just fall in with the guys. They seem to be bitter, and they have reason to be, so I get bitter too. Everybody in here is bitter, so how the hell can a guy bring up a problem?"

Second hypothesis: *Conforming behavior in the absence of personal loyalty to the norms which this behavior represents is utilitarian.*

This does not mean that the department of residents in group sessions is unrestrainedly and overtly hostile. While open expressions of feeling were encouraged by staff in the initial stages of operation of the groups, this resulted in such an intensity of anger and defiance by residents that official tactics were employed which curtailed such expressions and encouraged pro-staff commentary and behavior.¹⁰ This has meant, in effect, official wiping out of rebelliousness, which was at one time a more wide-spread adaptation of residents to the program. As a result of staff pressure and increased use of negative sanctions, even the residents who most reject the staff and program sometimes express the kinds of feelings in the group which they deem will be viewed as symptoms of progress by staff. The fate of the chronically and overtly angry and recalcitrant resident is now well known among residents to be ultimately, jail or other serious punitive sanction. For this reason such residents, sometimes interpreted by staff to be "deteriorat-

¹⁰ From January through June eight residents were placed in custody and within a few weeks returned to Halfway House, and six of these were placed there largely for continual defiance of demands of the program. On return, most of them expressed appreciation for being allowed to return to the Halfway House, and such expressions seemed to help curtail the extensiveness of anti-staff and program expressions. This seemed to be true in spite of the fact that residents came to recognize the staff tactic of incarcerating men for a few days who persisted in violating the small rules of residence. It was referred to by the residents as a "dry run", which meant that the resident would likely be returned to residence rather than returned to prison.

ing" in the program, are frequently talked to privately by other residents. They are advised of the consequences of an openly angry and defiant line of action and are advised to pursue a course of conduct better suited to their welfare. For some men this informal "grouping" helps in the realization of a line of action more closely cut to official demands.

In this way residents learn to show behavioral responses to staff which are not direct expressions of the anger which they feel, but expressions modified to accord with what is felt to result in a desirable outcome. This process, facilitated by the favorable commentary and example of some men who have gone through the program,¹¹ allows those men in residence to envision the possibility of bettering their situation by adopting a line of action to which they have no personal commitment. It is, perhaps, the development of this set of circumstances to which emergence of the resident adaptation of "doin' time" is attributable. This is an orientation to Halfway House residence which considers it undesirable, combined with a resolution to "put up with it" and gain the freedom of the community. Rebelliousness, an orientation to Halfway House residence which defines it as an intolerable infringement on one's just claims, has largely been replaced by it, accompanied by a decline in open and chronic expressions of hostility and defiance.

The interaction process between staff and residents has appeared to be a halting movement¹²

¹¹ Of the 58 experimentals released to the study at the end of 9 months, fifteen were in residence.

¹² Staff's ratings of each resident's participation in each group session as supportive of or antagonistic to the officially desired view of matters discussed indicate a progressive increase of support and decline of antagonism from Feb. through April. The month of May shows a marked increase in antagonistic participation and a decline in supportive participation by residents. The figures, as average percentages of total ratings in all groups and classed as supportive, ambivalent, and antagonistic, are as follows:

	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.
Supportive	44%	47%	59%	38%	45%	50%	53%	55%
Antagonistic	52%	27%	20%	39%	37%	19%	18%	23%
Ambivalent	4%	26%	21%	23%	18%	31%	29%	22%

The increase in antagonistic participation in May is in large part accounted for by the breakdown of rapport between staff and an influential resident whose orientation and influence among peers had previously been pro-staff and program. His loss of confidence in the

from rather extensive conflict to what Park and Burgess have labeled accommodation. They write: "In an accommodation the antagonism of the hostile elements is, for the time being, regulated, and the conflict disappears as overt action, although it remains latent as a potential force."¹³

The product of this interaction process, in terms of resident self-presentations, has seemed to be an equally uncertain movement from an openly and chronically defiant line of conduct to "doin' time" as a predominant adaptational alternative. While resident conduct has moved closer to what is expected by staff, there have been some official alterations in the program in the direction desired by the resident population.¹⁴

Neither rebelliousness, nor "doin' time" are adaptational alternatives to the Halfway House and program which staff has consciously hoped to promote. Enthusiastic participation and involvement by residents is closer to what was officially desired, a condition of group relatedness which sociologists refer to as assimilation. However, social interaction must meet certain requirements before this condition obtains. As Park and Burgess suggest: "Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where contacts are primary, that is, where they are most intimate and intense, as in the area of touch relationships, in the family circle and in intimate congenial groups."¹⁵

To achieve a greater degree of assimilation between the two groups, staff has attempted to develop a coterie of residents who share the staff viewpoint and who promote it when specific issues arise in group discussion. This effort has, as a whole, been unsuccessful, partly because each individual who enters the program with a pro-staff outlook and is eager to support and make positive use of it, is confronted by two obstacles.

operation was accompanied by a rather rapid spread of an anti-official influence, made possible by his high standing among peers.

¹³ PARK & BURGESS, INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY 665 (1921).

¹⁴ The following are some examples. Insufficient quantity and variety of food in the lunches of residents working in the community was among the complaints about food which residents discussed in group session. Over time this situation was improved by staff largely to the satisfaction of the resident population. Initially, staff adopted a policy which prohibited residents from seeking employment for a considerable time after establishing residence at Halfway House. Protest from residents in group sessions was prolonged and vociferous regarding this directive, and staff eventually shortened the period of residence required before employment may be sought.

¹⁵ *Op. cit. supra* note 13 at p. 737.

First is the cumulative experience of the group and the contagion of its resultant negative outlook. The second is a gradual confrontation of those matters regarding which there is no staff compromise and no legitimacy from the residents' point of view. These influences nurture the recognition that the encysted resident view of the place is, in fact, accurate, and stifle attempts to develop an attachment to the formal aims and operations of the program, that is, to the official view of the resident role. Residents, as a rule, have not been proud of their engagement in the Halfway House program. They have not perceived this social experience as a positive link in the development of the kinds of career lines which they desire.

As treatment strategy, staff has attempted to create anxiety in individual residents about their "irresponsible" behavior by bringing it before the group for discussion. Such anxiety, combined with the hoped for condemnation by the group, was felt to lead to behavioral change for the better. Staff attention to the behavior of particular residents has seemed to create a great deal of anxiety among residents, but it is an anxiety combined with a prevailing sentiment of resentment of staff and its demands. As many of these demands are not viewed by residents as just and fair, the apprehension felt by residents when staff attempts to create anxiety has been largely a matter of fear of negative consequences. Shibusani, writing of this phenomenon as a generalized feature of power relations states:

"Some regard the exercise of power as unfair, and they comply only because they can find no alternative. For such persons the dominant party becomes a frustrating object, and the sentiment formed is one commonly called resentment. The pattern of rebellion is frequently not overt. But a resentful person constructs a personification of the other party as one who is really not worthy of the deference he demands. He becomes especially sensitized to faults, and complains frequently. At times his acts may approach open defiance, if he feels he can get away with it. . . ."¹⁶

Thus, the anxiety and consequent apprehension created among Halfway House residents must be recognized as different from that based on failure to meet the expectations of a collectivity to which one feels personally loyal. Rather, as a rule,

residents have come to recognize a course of conduct which is opportunistic and which for the most part, satisfies the demands of staff in action, while leaving intact their negative viewpoint of the House and program.

Third hypothesis: *Utilitarian conformity in a given normative context renders persons vulnerable to opposing standards of behavior to a greater degree than does conformity based on personal loyalty.*

It is, of course, premature to say that the limits of rehabilitative achievement have been reached at the Halfway House.¹⁷ There is, however, abundant evidence that the lack of rehabilitative significance of Halfway House thus far is closely associated with a widespread lack of identification of residents with its official aims and agents. Viewing rehabilitation by a social establishment as achievement of specific kinds of conforming behavior in greater measure than subject individuals are able to realize in the context of their everyday life situations, we are faced with tentative negative evidence in support of this hypothesis.

The conforming behavior thus far promoted by the Halfway House program is largely utilitarian, meaning the more or less rational pursuit of a line of action designed to circumvent negative sanctions. It is at the same time associated with a degree of rehabilitative effectiveness no greater than that achieved in a similar group not exposed to the program. This kind of conformity is different from that which is presumed to occur in places like Synanon¹⁸ where public declarations of its worth and usefulness are repeatedly made by its residents, and where staff and residents associate together both formally and informally and consider that they belong to a single social unit. Also, Synanon is reputed to have achieved a degree of rehabilitative effectiveness unequalled by other efforts. In attempting to account for this effectiveness Volkman and Cressey, in a recent article on Synanon, write: "The criminals who are to be reformed and the per-

¹⁷ This statement of failure at the end of nine months must not be taken to mean that a greater effectiveness of goal achievement will not be realized. Staff has learned from this pioneering effort and has subsequently introduced some changes in the program designed to increase its effectiveness.

¹⁸ Halfway House and Synanon provide unique opportunities for empirical study of the effectiveness of alternative social arrangements in the realization of rehabilitative goals. At present available data on Synanon are not sufficient to substantiate the many claims of its enthusiasts.

¹⁶ SHIBUTANI, SOCIETY AND PERSONALITY: AN INTER-ACTIONIST APPROACH TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 351 (1961).

sons expected to effect the change must, then, have a strong sense of belonging to one group; between them, there must be a genuine 'we' feeling."¹⁹

Synanon's reputed success with addicts is in significant measure explained by Volkman and Cressey by a factor which is conspicuously absent at Halfway House. A major burden of this presentation has been to point out that staff and inmates do not have a feeling of being members of a single solitary group. Recognition of such theoretically important distinctions between different social establishments with similar goals may help to sensitize those who study them as forms of social organization to some of the mechanisms which may be crucial to their effectiveness of goal achievement.

¹⁹ VOLKMAN & CRESSEY, *Differential Association and the Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts*, 69 AM. J. SOC. 135 (1963).

In considerable measure social establishments create the perspectives which participant individuals adopt regarding them by the kind of social interaction which they promote. I have reported on the limited effectiveness of a utilitarian perspective, developed within a specific interactional context, in achieving an officially desired conformity. While social interaction in Halfway House may take a number of alternative directions in the coming months, evidence thus far accumulated and its interpretation are suggestive. They suggest that one way by which increased conformity to the normative demands and expectations of the Halfway House program may be realized is through an increase of personal loyalty by residents. As I have suggested, however, certain built-in organizational and attitudinal barriers inhibit, if not prohibit, the kinds of fraternization patterns which reflect and nurture such loyalty.