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DEVIANT ROLES AND SOCIAL RECONNECTION

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Today I am proposing some ideas about social work practice in the correctional field that have emerged from ten years exploration of problem areas in that field. My hope is that we can engage in a discussion of the possible relevance of these formulations for social work practice in the field of mental health.

First, I should make explicit the boundaries within which my work has been focussed. I have worked entirely in public agencies, because primary responsibility for dealing with convicted offenders is assumed by the State. Correctional agencies deal with offenders after they have been officially identified and committed, so my work does not have immediate relevance for preventive treatment. I have chosen to focus on those agencies that deal with youthful and adult male offenders, since in these the community's correctional intent is expressed least ambiguously. Furthermore, I have worked with populations in which only a few persons are properly called mentally ill. Convicted offenders are selected out of a much larger population of law-breakers by the somewhat erratic operation of law enforcement and judicial agencies. Legal and administrative decisions about behavior rather than professional diagnosis of personality disorders determine entry into the correctional client role. Finally, up to this point in my work, these ideas have been tried out in practice only in the institutional setting. I am now engaged in an extensive study of one correctional field service, adult parole; but it will be two more years before we can test our proposals

in work with real parolees meeting real problems in a specific community. However, our studies already make it clear that the principles of action developed in the prison experiment are generally transferable to work in a field service, although important adaptations in service design will be required by factors characteristic of work in the open community but different from those operating in an institution.

The Client's Task

In analyzing a field of social work practice the question one asks first determines the direction of the analysis and its outcome. I have found that the question, "What is the client's task?" is the most fruitful opening approach when attempting to discover the potential role of social work in the correctional process.

In starting the analysis with questions about the client's task I am deliberately setting aside the medical analogue as a model for examining social work practice. I am not seeking to define a disorder to be treated by an expert in pathology. Rather as a social worker I am concerned with identifying the adaptive tasks, created by the need for fit between the individual and his social environment, that each person in a particular client population must resolve in some way, with or without help. Let me make clear what I mean by adaptive task, since it is related to what we mean when we say "the client's problem", but does not make the assumptions of primary personal inadequacy that are usually implied by the formulation.

The correctional client's task may be usefully conceptualized as a particularly difficult form of a common human task generally known as a "status-passage." All of us live through a succession of status-passages as we grow and change in relation to our social environments. We move from "child-at-home" to "student-in-school"; from hospitalized sick person to

life in a normal setting; from married person to widowed; from beginning grade employee to supervisor. In every such process the individual is posed with a life task requiring some transformation in his personal and social identity, with all that such an adaptation can mean for the breakup of old patterns and the establishment of new.

In corrections each convicted offender (except for those few who spend the rest of their lives in prison) must make the social and psychological transition from a publicly degraded status as a criminal deviant to the status of free person in the community if he is to be successful in either his or the community's terms. This task involves a double transformation of identity, first to that of convicted offender, and then to a reconstitution of self as a normally functioning member of the community. A short way to describe the correctional client's life task is to say that he must achieve social reconnection from the position of an officially labelled deviant.

In most status-passages a transitional period between one status and the next is commonly recognized either formally or informally, providing for that period a supporting set of protections, opportunities for trial and error experimentation, and phased goals. Thus we generally accept engagement as a transition step from the status of single person to that of married person; bereavement as a period between the married role and the reorganization of activities in the widowed role; convalescence as an important phase between a critical illness and the full assumption of normal role obligations; probation as a beginning period for the new supervisor; and some sort of apprenticeship as a planned transition leading to the exercise of professional responsibility. Such transitions permit both the individual and those around him to revise their expectations and customary behavior as needed to complete the psychological and social

adaptations implicit in any transformation of identity. In the case of the correctional client, the entire correctional process can be usefully understood as one of these transition periods often involving distinct phases. During the correctional transition both the person who has committed offenses and his community can, under controlled conditions, test each other out, practice new relationships, and seek to establish the reciprocal interaction patterns essential for reconnection.

The transition from convicted offender to free member of the community is particularly difficult and complicated because of the value issues that must be resolved for self and others to complete the identity transformation. All status-passages are characterized by a concern with personal and social values, since achieving a new identity in any social area requires establishing congruence between the needs and goals of the individual self and the value expectations of others. But in the correctional transition process the value issue with which the client and his community are engaged is fundamentally moral. The question to be answered during the correctional transition is, Is the individual safe to have among us? Can he belong to normal groups without destroying the trust between person and person essential for social life? Thus the correctional client's task requires him to move from the position of one who has been socially defined as a not-to-be-trusted person to a position in which he is reestablished as one who is morally responsible, and thus safe for membership in the free community. And since moral values are pervasive in social action, his identity as convicted offender affects all his basic social roles. Grave issues hang upon the outcome of each such transition process, both the destiny of a person as a social being and the formation in action of community values as they are expressed in control over deviance. The fundamental morality of both the individual and his community are tried and

in certain ways modified in the transformation of any convicted offender to a free member of the community.

This analysis of the task leads us to recognize that the primary actors in the correctional client status-passage include not only the offender himself but also his community. The central figure is the offender, the one we designate as the correctional client. But the significant persons in the client's personal community, as well as the community framework of sanctions and resources within which the status-passage endeavor occurs, share responsibility for the ultimate social reconnection, since the offender cannot prove himself morally responsible except through performance in the basic social roles required of every community member. No person can "reintegrate" in vacuo. Consequently, the correctional client's task is one requiring reciprocal changes in the client, in his role partners, and in the community processes affecting them all.

Most normal status-passages provide for a "coach" to assist the individual in moving from one status to another; and this role is often filled by some person who has been through the process himself and who is already warmly related to the central actor. Today in our complex and fragmented society, certain status-passage tasks may require the assistance of a professional helper who can guide the individual in managing the personal and social factors involved in identity transformation. The analysis of the correctional client's task suggests that his status-passage is one of those in which most individuals can use some sort of professional facilitation. The value issues at stake are both critical and pervasive; the individual is usually deprived in personal and social resources; and some significant actors may be inaccessible to influence by the client.

Because of the nature of the correctional client's task I see social work as a primary discipline in providing the necessary help. I am not

suggesting that all correctional clients need special help--or help provided continuously--, nor that social work is the only discipline whose assistance is needed to prepare the client for social reconnection. Rather I see the social worker in the correctional status-passage as a guide to the process, one who is alert to critical points in the client's experience, who can mobilize needed resources, and who can represent the community's desire for reconnection through an individualized relationship.

Implications for the Agency

This analysis of the client task in correctional work has major implications for the way we conceptualize the function of the correctional agency. Historically the popular notion of the correctional agency's responsibility--too often naively accepted by the professional social worker--is defined as doing something to and for the client that keeps him from bothering the community. As a result correctional agencies now operate with two conflicting social assignments: (1) Protecting the community through punishing and segregating the client; and (2) changing the client so he becomes an acceptable participant in the community. Agency goals, so formulated, offer opposed models for action and confuse efforts to prescribe how human resources should be organized to accomplish the agency mission, what competencies and skills are required for task performance, and what criteria are appropriate for evaluating success and failure. Until there is more clarity about correctional agency goals and about the means essential for accomplishing those goals it is nonsense to talk of social work practice in the correctional field.

Accordingly I propose that the correctional agency's mission should be defined as establishing, for a population of clients, the general conditions most favorable for task success. This is a very different formulation of

agency function that the more usual one of "meeting the clients' needs". In contrast this position asserts that the client's needs must be met through normal social processes with his significant others, and that the agency is responsible for mobilizing the human relationships involved in social reconnection in a way that encourages the central actors to establish reciprocal and need-meeting interaction. You will also note that this is a "probabilistic" rather than a "deterministic" conception of agency function, since in this perspective the agency refuses to take over from the community, whose actions toward the client are often determining of outcome, total responsibility for success or failure.

The implications of this definition of agency mission for agency organization and for the role of social work in the agency are enormous. Rather than attempting to spell out these implications in abstract propositions, I would like to illustrate what I mean by telling you some of our experiences as we attempted to put these notions into practice in a prison for young adult offenders.

Agency, Social Worker and Client in an Institution

Because our project was based in a prison we had, first, to become realistic about what an institution could do to influence the offender's transition toward social reconnection. On his entrance into prison the inmate has been removed from the persons with whom he will associate when he returns to the community, his role partners are in large measure selected for him by the institution, and his whole experience might well seem to him more a suspension of "real" life than a first step in work on social reconnection. Accordingly we adopted a goal for the new "agency" we were proposing to create that was specific for the phase in the client's transition over which we had control; i.e., to establish the conditions under which the

inmate would be encouraged to live today as a morally responsible member of a community. In this way we hoped to encourage individual inmates (1) to conceive of their recently experienced degradation in social identity as an opportunity to make a new beginning, and (2) to establish continuity between their presents and futures through active preparation for a more successful life on the streets. In short, we wanted our men to be in motion in the right direction, equipped with adequate maps and social skills, when they left our doors.

Since the goals we had adopted could only be accomplished through action between the individual inmate and other persons, we had to survey the human resources available for creating "real" life in prison. Who would be the role partners with whom each inmate would find it necessary to resolve moral issues? To begin with there would be his fellows, 130 at a time, randomly selected, aged 17 to 30, and housed in C-Unit, one of seven such wings in the institution. Next, there would be the staff of 12 to 15 officials assigned to C-Unit; three master's degree social workers known as counselors, three regular custody officers, two or three secretaries, three researchers, a social worker as administrative supervisor, and myself as general director of both the research and action programs. In addition there were the many institutional employees who would be related to C-Unit inmates as they participated in the institutional programs for work, education, recreation, and feeding. During the second year there would also be several parole officers from different districts in the State who would be coming periodically to the institution to plan for the parole futures of C-Unit inmates, and finally there would be various representatives of the outside community such as the family members of inmates, volunteers and students from nearby universities. These persons would constitute the dramatis personae in the first act of the resurrection

drama we hoped to initiate. Together they would comprise the human resources available for work on the task of preparing for social reconnection. It was the Project's job, as agency, to organize the relationships among these persons in a way that maximized the usefulness of each interaction for task accomplishment.

Accordingly we set out to create a way of life among all the persons affecting the C-Unit inmate's institutional experience that would encourage the establishment of trustworthy relationships and would demonstrate that morally responsible behavior was both necessary and rewarding for members of a community. This meant creating an organization that resembled a community in which responsibility was actually delegated to individuals and groups; and in which all activities, no matter how superficially insignificant, would dramatize the fundamental issues of individual needs and group welfare, justice under rules and individual rights, and the encouragement of diversity within a framework of necessary social values. In such a community we hoped that each inmate would be challenged to work on whatever value problem was involved in his own banishment from and future reentry to the free community. We also hoped that most of the individual inmate's daily activities would become opportunities for him to explore in action a new identity as an acceptable community member.

In the beginning we established only a few, but nevertheless major, organizational changes. We assigned to each inmate the role of member of the C-Unit community, a role he shared with every other inmate in C-Unit and with staff; and we attempted to clinch the inmate's membership, for him and for ourselves, by requiring that he live in C-Unit until he was ready for release from the institution. We freed staff members from their isolating memberships in hierarchical subdivisions within the institution--custody, counselors, secretaries, researchers--by establishing them as

members of a staff work group under a single administration. And we made the staff responsible as a group for the agency's impact on the total C-Unit population. Finally we set these various kinds of community members to work at solving the "real" problems of their daily lives together.

The community structure and its program of activities emerged, with staff help, from the common engagement with tasks that were meaningful to both staff and inmates. We found that it did not really matter whether the problem at hand was noise in the TV room, disruption caused by poor communication among staff members, rising tension during a holiday period, or the handling of a schizophrenic inmate who was hallucinating. Each identified problem concerned inmates as well as staff, and both had a stake in problem resolution and a contribution to make. As modes for analyzing problems and for mobilizing the appropriate problem solving skills were tried out, community patterns for work were established and community values became evident in shared norms.

No one knew ahead of time that community would first emerge as a matter of pride among the C-Unit inmates in their unpremeditated but uniform refusal to participate in an institutional riot, and in their overriding concern for the safety of each C-Unit inmate member during the riot period; nor that, by the end of the eighth month, a major project would be a C-Unit Inmate Welfare Fund from which needy inmates could draw money to purchase the grooming aids and small luxuries available at the canteen; nor that the contribution of money from inmates would eventuate in a fund to be used for "the good of the whole", making possible a Unit library as well as other amenities. Such activities--the newspaper, the football team, the monthly dinners that included C-Unit inmates and staff together with other officials from the larger institutional staff, the holiday open houses with visitors from the community, the many kinds of interest groups ranging in

focus from concern with race relationships or the problems of job seeking to learning about art or music, might on the surface seem to have been time filling pursuits similar to what people do anywhere in the use of leisure. Similarity between activities in prison and life on the outside was perceived as good in itself; but the staff also valued the fact that such activities provided opportunities for the outcast deviants of society to act in their own behalf while learning to resolve such issues as sub-group needs and community welfare, individual interests and social control over the means by which individuals pursue their own goals.

Equally important was what the staff learned through the spontaneous individual and group developments that appeared as soon as the "agency" became in fact a process for organizing human resources in a way that established conditions favorable to work on the task.

Of first importance, we learned that the kind of work group that the staff created for itself out of its own relationships determined, in large measure, the quality of problem solving in the official program where staff and inmates worked together and the quality of the relationships the inmates established among themselves in the inmate system. All our data, both positive and negative, made it clear that when staff was in conflict, fragmented, and evasive with each other, "shuck" and "front" took over in the relations between staff and inmates, and conflict groups appeared among the inmates. It was equally evident that when the staff was task focussed, openly sharing information, undefensively analyzing problems and contributing without regard to hierarchical differences, similar problem solving processes appeared in action throughout the C-Unit community.

We also learned that we did not have to try to "break the inmate system" in order to influence inmate norms in support of staff values. A survey of

inmate systems in the institution at the end of C-Unit's first year supported observational data in suggesting that C-Unit had a stronger inmate system than did other units. However, the C-Unit inmate system was unique in the institution because its norms supported its members in working with staff for individual and group welfare. Our strategy for influencing the inmate system was a simple one. We legitimated those inmate interests, usually served only by sub-rosa inmate activities, by making these the concern of staff as well as of inmates; and we designed the agency as a set of means by which the inmates, with the help of the staff, could pursue their legitimate interests. Overall the C-Unit experience proved abundantly that inmates in prison are not necessarily anti-staff and that, given the chance, they became the active members of the agency work force that we anticipated they would be.

Further we learned that this pooling of human resources for flexible use made it possible to develop spontaneously quite different kinds of treatment strategies in response to the different needs and capacities of different kinds of inmates. These strategies used all the ongoing relationships in the life of the individual inmate--counseling, custody, work, education, parole officer, and fellow inmates--to reinforce and complement the contributions of each to preparation for social reconnection. Each such team was led by the inmate's counselor. In action these teams were quite different from those formed when independent experts, each representing a different discipline, gather for occasional case conferences and divide responsibility among themselves. The C-Unit treatment team evoked an aware, purposive, and pervasive action system with the individual inmate as the central figure, permitting leadership roles to shift as need varied, as well as in-and-out participation by various persons as some became more and others less salient in the inmate's experience. Such an action system could operate

in response to momentary contingencies outside of professional purview because each actor was in some way aware of the goals and governing values; and it could continue to be effective without formal convening of the persons involved. In many cases this group of significant persons, rather than a single "treator," became the socializing "personal community" that made daily life in prison "real life," and therefore a preparation in action for the individual inmate's return to the free community.

For the professional social workers in the staff the C-Unit experience meant an expanded image of social work, especially for those caseworkers who entered the experience fearing they might lose their professional skills in doing many things formerly not perceived as part of the method in which they had been trained. Of special importance for such persons was the value added when they assumed a responsible share in planning how the agency would establish the conditions on which their work and that of the inmates depended. The counselors, together with the rest of the staff work group, became the agency in action; and what they had made they could change whenever new perceptions of the task or new needs indicated that change should be made. Furthermore, the community setting greatly facilitated casework diagnosis, helping to distinguish disruptive behaviors that were symptoms of personality disturbance from those that were situationally caused. And the expanded range of ways to intervene in a problem enriched the content of action to be examined in casework interviews, heightened the effectiveness of any one treatment method through reinforcement by other means of influence carrying the same message, and encouraged economy of effort through selectivity in the choice of approaches to specific problems.

We also learned negatively through failure. During the second year the C-Unit community deteriorated. Staff interests and those of inmates were increasingly perceived as opposed; sub-groups in staff as well as among

inmates competed with each other for power and privileges, sometimes with great bitterness; and treatment once again became what was done in private between the counselor and an individual inmate, a process essentially in conflict with the pervasive routine activities required by institutional management.

Our analysis identified three major causes for this disintegration of what had been coordinated work by many on a common task. In the first place C-Unit was required to maintain in its ongoing structure the methods used by the larger institution for the control of undesirable behavior, e.g., the rules defining deviance, the processes for determining which acts were deviant, the punishments used and the formal rewards for conformity. By the end of the first year it became increasingly evident that the means used for the control of behavior are critical for the treatment of deviants, and that no real community can exist unless the principles that govern its response to deviant behavior are the same as those governing its welfare activities. A second important contribution to disintegration in the C-Unit community was the gradual removal of responsibility from the staff work group and the reinstatement of bureaucratic, hierarchical authority patterns in the management of the official segment of the C-Unit community. Finally, the ultimate cause for dissolution lay in the increasingly evident divergence between the principles of action used by the upper institutional authorities and the problem solving principles on which the C-Unit community was established. The opposed patterns characteristic of the larger agency and of the small demonstration agency within it could not be reconciled by efforts from the subordinate unit alone. Eventually C-Unit re-established within itself the divisive management practices of the total institution rather than becoming the instrument for change it was designed to be.

It should not be assumed, however, that nothing of value occurred because the C-Unit experiment failed to stabilize the problem-solving culture of its

first year. Rather we learned that it is important to live with an agency through an apparent short run failure in a way that helps administrators learn what is necessary in the long run to support their announced goals for change and for increased effectiveness. Today the institution in which C-Unit is housed has been reorganized throughout, using many concepts developed in the C-Unit community. The Unit approach to grouping staff and inmates has been picked up by other institutions in the State to good advantage. And the State Department of Corrections is now supporting a thorough study of parole services in preparation for a similar demonstration program in paroles, with considerable more sophistication about the commitments and costs required to make such an endeavor successful. Thus the C-Unit community may be termed a "qualified success", with much to teach us about the complex factors involved in changing old bureaucracies so they can support new services and about the time it takes to translate therapeutic ideas into stabilized organizational action.

Agency, Social Worker and Client in the Field Services

As we watched C-Unit inmates go out of the institution it became increasingly evident that the correctional client's adaptive task on reentry into the community was, in certain ways, even more difficult than that he faced on admission into the institution; and that clients on parole needed the same kind of agency facilitation as we attempted to provide in the institution. Accordingly, during the last three years, some of us who were associated with the C-Unit Project have been examining the parole process to see if what we had learned might have relevance for organizing the persons who help to determine parole outcomes. So far our studies have identified certain dimensions of the parolee's task that call for adaptations in the C-Unit model for agency design, although the basic principles seem as

appropriate for social work in the field service as in the institution.

When we wanted to change an institutional program from a process for "doing something to people" into a set of conditions supporting the work of clients, we found it necessary to make three kinds of structural changes: 1) We made the client an active member of the agency. 2) We delegated responsibility for designing the agency-in-action to a staff work group. And 3) we involved the client's significant role partners in appropriate task-related agency roles. As we changed the relationships among the persons who were important to task outcomes, we found that the "shape" and function of the agency changed. It was no longer the traditional bureaucratic, limiting "frame" for the activities of the caseworker. Rather it was better described as a flow of mutually reinforcing human activities, each of which could be used flexibly as a resource. The agency itself became a treatment tool, communicating to the inmates the moral values of "the good society" and thus helping to prepare prison inmates for futures in the free community.

The adaptations of the C-Unit model required by conditions in the field arise directly from the nature of the correctional client's task once he is released to the open community. Here he is involved in actual social reconnection rather than in preparation. His work on the task occurs in those relationships that will hopefully become his permanent personal community--in his home, his work, his activities as a consumer, and his use of leisure time,--rather than in daily interchange with agency officials. This fact has many implications for agency structure in the field service.

In parole the significant persons affecting the task outcome are widely dispersed and often they are not even aware of others in the task-related network. These significant others tend to hold conflicting goals and expectations for the parolee, and may act in ways that disrupt what others are trying to accomplish. At the same time the client moves alone

among these relationships as a stigmatized person surrounded by free people. In most normal roles his position is weak, although in each he is expected to behave as though he were both independent and adequate; in contrast his role with the agency emphasizes his dependent and restricted membership in the community. The formal agency responsible for guiding the client in his adaptive efforts influences the social reconnection process primarily through a caseworker, the parole agent, who works in isolation from his colleagues while performing many agency functions for each client in his dispersed caseload. Furthermore, wherever the parole agent moves in his client's life he makes explicit the parolee's degraded status simply by his official presence even when his intention is to help. In addition the agency represents the power of the State to return the parolee to prison as well as the intention of the community to help, thus introducing conflicts for both the parolee and the agent into the process of gathering the information needed to facilitate social reconnection.

Thus each parolee tends to spend his life interacting with persons who are psychologically and socially distant from each other, all unaware that their combined actions will determine the success or failure of social reconnection efforts. Such a system of action is normally characterized by interrupted communications, distorted information, ambiguous or conflicting expectations, and unilateral decision-making. Our studies already reveal that most parolee's lives are, in fact, severely fragmented and subject to unanticipated crises that can be widely disruptive throughout the tenuous new relationships each is attempting to establish. Accordingly organizing the parole agency to support social reconnection requires finding some way to coordinate the activities of the many individuals who are contributing to parole outcomes. At this stage of our study we are better able to document the problems to be anticipated in such an attempt

than to prescribe "the shape" of a more effective parole agency. However, we do have some educated guesses about the patterns for work that should characterize a future "C-Unit on paroles".

Staff Work Group

The obvious first step would be to do something about the current fragmentation among the employees of the official agency, since these persons are most easily affected by administrative direction; and the staff work group responsible for an identifiable population of parole clients suggests itself as the most appropriate means for starting coordinated work. In the agency I am studying such a unit of operations would be the supervisory unit with its supervisor, six or seven agents, one or more secretaries and possibly a psychiatric consultant, who together share responsibility for 250-400 parolees living in a given geographical area. Organization of these persons as a work group would encourage them to pool information about the needs evidenced in their shared caseload and to deploy their combined official resources in response to these needs. Of major importance, such an arrangement would encourage the development of a colleague--enforced system of values to guide the individual agent's exercise of discretion as he represents the agency in decision-making with parolees and other task-related persons.

The Client as Member of the Agency

A first assignment to such a staff work group would be to discover means to engage the parolees as active co-workers on the task of social reconnection. A major finding of our exploratory studies is that the dependent, supervised role currently established for the parolee in relationship with the official agency is so incongruent with the expectations of

his "normal" life roles that it frequently introduces additional strains into an already difficult undertaking. Since the parolee has limited means for influencing what the agent does about his life, most parolees are evasive about sharing information and hesitant to ask for help even when faced with complications they cannot manage on their own. Finding some means by which parolees can act vigorously on their own behalf with the agency seems necessary if they are to behave as "free" men when they go about their normal social duties.

An obvious difficulty in the parolee's role with the agency, as it is now defined, is the negative nature of the rules administered by the agent, and the added fact that rule ambiguity gives each agent wide latitude for making idiosyncratic decisions about the personal life of each parolee. No parolee is encouraged to involve his agent in thoughtful consideration of pros and cons when he knows that an unexplained "no" on the part of the agent can deny him permission to drive, to buy a car, to move across county lines, to change his job, or to take any one of a number of actions that seem necessary if he is to get about his business of living a normal life in the community. The rules of parole are not easy to change; legislative enactments, the parole board and the Department of Corrections all share in responsibility for maintaining the "custody in the community" concept of parolees that is embodied in the list of parole rules. But as they now stand, these "conditions of parole" define the parolee as helpless to make any major and many minor decisions on his own; and they must be either modified or reinterpreted if the parolee is to see himself in any sense as a "co-worker" with parole officials.

Once the parole role is designed so that agents and parolees can conceive of themselves as co-workers, it will be necessary to plan activities through which the parolees can contribute their knowledge of problems and their

resources to the common task. It is not easy to describe just what activities would establish the parolees in a given client population as contributing members of the agency's working force without some knowledge of the concrete problems met by a specific set of parolees. But, from what we have learned by following a panel of parolees from pre-release through the first year of parole, we can sketch a number of functions that almost any caseload of parolees could usefully perform in influencing the way the agency seeks to support social reconnection.

First, it is clear that parolees should be more actively involved in identifying and specifying commonly experienced problems, including those problems caused for parolees by agency policies and practices. I could see in almost any parole caseload a number of parole groups, brought together not for some vague "counseling" or "therapy" goal, but because the members of each were commonly concerned with core problems, such as obtaining employment, budgeting and purchasing, how to fill leisure time, problems encountered with welfare agencies and the police, or the ambiguities inherent in parole rules. Such groups can easily be turned into resources not only for understanding the nature of the problems but also for inventing solutions and for mobilizing resources in the parolee's own lives.

At this point I would not envisage such group activity as either useful or necessary for all parolees nor as a continuing form of participation for many, although all would benefit by having their role in the agency changed from that of "subject" to "co-worker". In the institution, group activity among inmates was an essential dimension of institutional living; the C-Unit plan simply made use of the facts of daily life. But in the community there are some parolees whose normal group experiences are adequate

for personal problem solving and for whom enforced association with other parolees would serve no useful function. For the large number of parolees, however, legitimate and mutually useful activities with others who share the same status would provide much needed support during the early months on parole and would offer mechanisms through which even such disadvantaged persons might gain the enhancement of self-worth that comes from helping others. As we learned in the C-Unit experience, one cannot anticipate the specific patterns of work that might emerge as parolees were offered the opportunity to use agency membership for work at shared problems. But I have heard enough parolees talk about isolation, loneliness, lack of access to social resources, discomfort in normal groups, and feelings of indignity, impotence and confusion in relation to the agency to feel sure that pooling agency and parolee resources for joint work on such problems could help turn the parole agency from a handicapping factor in the lives of many parolees into a "launching pad" toward social reconnection.

Significant Others

Perhaps the agency's involvement with the parolee's significant others is the most problematical area for consideration by the staff work group and the parolee members of the agency. It is unfortunately a fact that many persons and agencies in the non-parolee community do not really want to readmit the parolees to normal membership and tend to look on the agency, not as a support for their own efforts to assist in social reconnection, but as an official means for keeping the parolee from bothering them. In addition, as we have already noted, whenever the parole agency moves into a parolee's life officially there is the danger of spreading stigma, severely diminishing both the parolee's control over the spread

of information about himself and his capacity to build a new life for himself.

Even in this sensitive area, however, work by agents and parolees together have, in a number of small experiments, proved it is possible to reduce the handicaps of public apathy, disrespect, and disconnection in the lives of certain groups of parolees. One program for addicted parolees of which I have some knowledge has used a parolee group formed to work on the development of educational resources to modify the restrictive policies of a number of schools; another group in the same program has undertaken to provide a public service through offering speakers on the problems of drug addiction to various community groups, and in this way has opened up wider resources for the employment of addicts while increasing public understanding of parolees and their potentialities. Ultimately we may need to form multi-service agencies to serve many kinds of deviants in order to reduce the stigma against any one group that follows official intervention whenever an agency represents a special set of deviants. Although we are not yet at that stage in paroles, it is necessary to find immediate means for coordinating the work of others in the community for the positive goal of keeping parolees in the community, rather than, as so often happens, waiting for the breakdown in social relationships that results in a community demand that a particular parolee be returned to prison.

Certainly we do need to reexamine our usual assumption that the client is the only individual in the social reconnection task who needs to change; and to consider with great care the way the client's various official and personal role partners contribute to the success or failure of social reconnection, and how they can be helped to become positive forces in the achievement of the task they share with the client. And we

need to give much more attention to helping the community create the marginal roles through which identified deviants can satisfy both their own identity needs and the community's need for a certain level of conformity.

The Process of Change

All of us in the group gathered together today are concerned in one way or another with the development of new or improved services for deviants. The C-Unit experience has taught us that at least two perspectives are crucial for success in planned change, especially when it envisions adjustments in basic organizational dimensions such as the role of the client in the agency, the relationships among staff members, and the way the agency functions toward the client's various role partners.

- 1) A period of intensive study of the agency processes to be changed seems to be essential if one is to avoid unanticipated and undesirable consequences as a result of the change. During such a preliminary study one can discover the connections among organizational units on which the functioning of each depends. Identifying what actually happens in current operations allows one to be selective in proposing those among all possible changes that are most economical and that give most promise of accomplishing the stated goals. It also permits one to take into account the way organizational dimensions that cannot be changed at the beginning can be expected to affect the proposed new services. The process of study itself helps administrators and others understand the reasons for change and to participate in the choices among alternative means for achieving ends. In addition preliminary study established baselines against which the new program can be evaluated. In fact, in our parole study we are finding that

the study process itself is the beginning of change action, both providing the information needed for sound program design and preparing personnel at many levels for the new approach in the making of which they will have had a part.

2) In designing any agency as a process for establishing favorable conditions for client work, our experience in C-Unit suggests it is critically important to remember that "one thing leads to another." Change in one aspect of an agency's organization requires reciprocal changes in all other relevant role relationships or the initial change goes sour, resulting in undesirable consequences for the clients. If you restore client dignity by making him a responsible member of the agency work force, then you must consider changes in the way the official members of the agency relate not only to him but to each other. These changes in turn must be supported by reciprocal changes in upper administration and in the way the agency relates to other parts of the community. Unless such change problems are anticipated and dealt with as professionally as one deals with the relationship between the social worker and his client, that relationship itself will remain, in operation, simply a cover-up process for applying community pressures to isolate and control the deviant client.

Social reconnection of deviants, the facilitation of which I conceive to be a primary social work function, is not accomplished by the caseworker and his individual client working together in isolation. This fact has implications for social work theories of intervention, and for the methods of intervention the profession develops and teaches. Even more urgently, as we move into bold new service designs, we need to pay attention to the

nature of the client's task when the goal is the return of the deviant to the free community, and to what this means for organizing the work of the many different persons who make a difference for the accomplishment of the task. Increasingly social scientists are pointing out that bureaucracy is a model for any agency whose function concerns the present and future welfare of individuals. Social work, of all the helping disciplines, should be particularly concerned with exploring and developing organizational models that are effective in releasing human creativity, encouraging the development of common value systems, promoting flexibility of response, and establishing viable connections between alienated people and the social matrixes within which they must find their on-going social and personal satisfactions. In the process of learning to relate staff members and others in new patterns we must also focus more carefully on the steps involved in planned organizational change and on the skills required to mobilize all available human resources for the accomplishment of client tasks.

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