

# Federal Probation

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tion (as opposed to just the individual counselor) is willing to be open and honest with its clients. We will share our "secrets" regarding our particular prejudiced ideas as to what behaviors "should" constitute a violation. These "shoulds" will vary from office to office and organization to organization. We believe it is all right to set our own particular prejudiced standards as to what constitutes success and failure on probation as long as we are willing to share these standards with the clients. These standards make up the content of any effective Intake Group Counseling program.

This approach and style of working with clients stresses radical involvement with the client in a participatory environment. It is a commonly accepted fact that people in any organization will more readily buy into or identify with an organization's policy if they are allowed to participate in the decisionmaking process.<sup>17</sup> Our organization stresses this approach with professional staff. And we contend that such an approach applies even more to our clients. We desire to negotiate with our clients in order to satisfy both their

wants and ours (meaning the organization). We do not feel these wants are mutually exclusive. We desire to offer the client new choices and options which become avenues to solving problems and reaching goals.

This approach is designed to correspond with the "broker of services" concept. We are working with the client to identify needs and referring the client to the appropriate community resource. By now the "broker of services" concept is not new. However, our systematic method of identifying client needs in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect is new and for us it is working very well.

Finally, we believe it is possible to teach the client how to be successful. There is a certain degree of socialization that takes place with this approach. Many clients need to learn the basic skill of how to get along with people and survive in an organization which has the power to deprive them of their civil liberties. We still have not given up on the very old idea that people have the rational capacity to learn how to resolve their problems and take care of themselves in an effective manner. It is the task of the Intake Group to create an environment for this to take place.

<sup>17</sup> For some detailed information on this see Fremont E. Kast and James E. Rosenzweig, *Organization and Management*, (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1974), p. 584.

## Interviewing Techniques in Probation and Parole

BY HENRY L. HARTMAN, M.D.  
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### II. The Art of Listening\*

IN THE FIRST of my series of four articles on interviewing techniques in probation and parole (March 1963) it was postulated that the probation officer had certain goals in mind while interviewing a probationer.<sup>1</sup> The first of these three goals was "to understand the probationer and his behavior." In his attempt to understand the probationer's behavior, which is frequently

baffling and illogical, the probation officer must avail himself of all possible cues. This implies that he must learn to sharpen his powers of observation, making use of all his sensory modalities, as well as of all the insights into human behavior which he has gained through study and practice.

It is the intent of this article to discuss the various observations which should be made and the information which can be obtained from them. Much of the following material may appear to deal

\* This is the second of a series of four articles on interviewing in probation and parole by Dr. Henry L. Hartman, a practicing psychiatrist at Toledo, Ohio, and a consultant to the Child Study Institute of Toledo's Family Court. Dr. Hartman's third article, "The Initial Interview, Part I," will appear in the September issue of *Federal Probation*.

<sup>1</sup> The interviewing principles discussed in this article relate not only to probationers and parolees, but also to persons on whom presentence investigations are being conducted. In fact, they relate to any interviewing relationship.

with the obvious; yet, unless the habit is formed of making systematic observations, much meaningful material may be overlooked. It goes without saying that all of these observations should be made unobtrusively. No probationer likes the feeling of being a laboratory animal, pinned under a microscope and wiggling for the edification of the probation officer. Once this sort of atmosphere is allowed to creep into an interview, no amount of technical perfection in other aspects of interviewing will breach the barrier and allow a positive relationship to be formed. As a general rule the probation officer comes to the initial interview with some information about the defendant, sketchy as this may be. The type of observation to be discussed should enable the probation officer to modify and expand the impressions about the client's personality gained from this information.

### *Visual Observation*

These observations fall into several categories. The first of these is visual. This entails the ability to look at a person and see everything which is to be seen. As he does this the probation officer should be asking himself a series of questions, and mentally filing away the implications of the answers. These questions start with the general impression which the individual makes on the probation officer. Is he attractive or unattractive? As a general rule, to which there are many exceptions, there are marked differences in self-concept between attractive and unattractive people. As a result, the former do not have to avail themselves of the same sort of defenses and compensatory reactions as the latter. Is there anything bizarre about this individual's appearance? Is there evidence of physical defect which might have had some bearing on his personality development? Positive answers to these questions include such things as extremes in height or weight, buck teeth, hare lip, squint, missing extremities, or other defects of this sort.

The significance of this sort of observation is noted in the case of Mrs. A. It was not until the third interview that it was noted that Mrs. A was lacking two fingers of her right hand, so adept had she become at concealing this deformity. Tactful focussing in this area revealed that this was a congenital defect, about which Mrs. A was so sensitive that she had devoted an inordinate amount of time in learning how to cover it up. Much of her energy was expended in proving to herself she was just as good as anyone with a complete right

hand. A great deal of her behavior could be understood as compensation for the feelings of inferiority which had developed from this defect.

While the probation officer is questioning himself about his general impressions of the individual's physical makeup he should also be noticing and speculating about the meaning of the probationer's attire. Is it neat or slovenly? If it is neat, is it fussily meticulous? This may be the first clue to a rigidly compulsive type of character organization which will make the probation officer's work more difficult. If it is slovenly, does this mean carelessness or deterioration? Is there a lack of personal cleanliness? This may represent either a personal or a cultural factor. Is there anything bizarre about the person's dress? Does this represent a personality disorganization suggestive of an early schizophrenic process, or is it representative of the mores of the group, as exemplified by the zoot-suiters, the Teddy-boys, or other gangs? If the probationer is a woman, is her dress appropriate to the occasion, or is she overdressed in a manner suggestive of a consciously or unconsciously seductive attitude to the probation officer, and possibly to all men? Is the clothing loud and flamboyant, or unobtrusive and mousy? Does this reflect the personality of the wearer? All of these questions should be going through the probation officer's mind while he is first sizing up the probationer, and he should be formulating tentative answers to them.

Having been aware of the general appearance which the probationer presents, and having drawn some tentative conclusions from this as to what sort of an individual this may be, the probation officer should next turn his attention to the general bearing, manner, and behavior of the probationer in the interview setting. The list of possible observations in this category is almost endless, and only a representative sample will be discussed. There is the high-held head of self-assurance, or even cockiness. There is the furtive look which bespeaks slyness. There are the hang-dog, guilty look; the on-guard, wary, suspicious look; the timid, hesitant look, which proclaims lack of self-confidence; the appealing look, which says, "Treat me like a little child"; the submissive look; and on and on.

Not only should the probation officer be alert to the meaning of these varied demeanors and their possible use at arriving at early emphatic sharing with the probationer's feelings, but he should also be aware of any reactions which they

might call forth in him. If a cocky person makes the probation officer bristle, a defiant one makes him angry, or a submissive one fills him with contempt, the probation officer should be able to recognize what is going on within himself and develop ways of dealing with it, so that this process does not interfere with building the relationship. Also to be noted under this heading of behavior are the repetitive mannerisms, the tics. Tics may be only a sign of general tension (rarely they are indicative of withdrawal symptoms in drug addiction), but most commonly they are likely to have a symbolic significance of their own. This symbolism may point to important areas for further exploration. For example, a constant screwing up of the eyes may represent an attempt to blot out something which the individual had seen, or a denial of something in the environment. A repetitive wrinkling up of the nose may represent an expression of a pronounced feeling of disgust. A frequent turning of the head to one side with elevation of the chin shoulder may be the warding off of a blow. A foot that kicks out from time to time may symbolize aggression. Any such mannerism should be carefully noted, and its possible meaning evaluated.

As the interview progresses the probation officer should take particular note of any signs signifying an emotional response on the part of the probationer. General signs of tension are, of course, quite obvious—foot tapping, nail biting, hand wringing, restlessness, fidgeting, tremor, sweating. Almost every probationer will be under some degree of increased tension during the first interview, and probably during the early period of subsequent interviews. If the proper relationship is being established, and the interview is progressing satisfactorily, these signs of tension should begin to disappear. If they do not do so the probation officer should ask himself why they are persisting. Is this a characteristic anxiety of the patient which is unrelated to the interview situation, or does it mean that the probation officer will have to change his approach in order to put the probationer at ease? It is also quite significant if these signs of tension recur after they have once disappeared. Generally this indicates that some subject with real meaning to the probationer has been touched, either directly or through the associative processes going on within him. The probation officer should note the area under discussion when this occurs in order to explore it more fully at the appropriate time.

There are further signs, indicative of emotional reactions other than those of general tension, for which the probation officer should be looking. These include the clenched jaws and hands, paling or flushing, of anger; the little moue and wrinkling of the nose of disgust; the droop of the corners of the mouth, reddening eyes, and choked back tears of sadness; the blush of embarrassment; the dilated pupils, deep and rapid breathing, and frequent swallowing of fear. This list, too, could be expanded almost indefinitely. In every instance the probation officer should be asking himself, "What is bringing about this response?"

### *Aural Observation*

Concurrently with this visual observation there should be an equally thorough aural observation. This refers still not to content, but to form. What does the probationer's voice reveal of his personality? Is the voice slow and hesitant, that of a timid or insecure person? Is it forthright and confident? Is it loud and aggressive, at times belligerent? Is it angry and hostile—constantly, or only when certain topics are under discussion? Does this individual initiate and carry more than a fair share of the conversation? Is this because of a basic need to dominate the situation, or is it because he is frightened, and is concealing this fear behind a facade of self-assurance? Does he wait for the probation officer to take the lead? Does this portray his concept of the respective roles of probation officer and probationer in the interview, or does it mean dependence and non-aggressiveness? Could this represent a fear that if he initiates the conversation he will be sticking his neck out and may reveal too much? As these questions are going through the probation officer's mind he should be looking for speech defects, just as he looked for physical defects, and should be aware of their significance in the development of the individual. He listens in this connection for stammering, lisping, transposition of syllables, baby talk, inability to pronounce certain letters. As he does so he should be continually asking himself, "Has this meant anything to the probationer?"

In this systematic appraisal of the picture that the probationer presents to the world, the probation officer should next listen to the general qualities of the language which the probationer uses. This furnishes valuable clues to the general intelligence and cultural level of the client. Whatever the language employed by the probationer, it

should serve as a key to the language which the probation officer should be using. This should be tuned to the level which the probationer can comprehend and feel comfortable with. This does not imply that the probation officer should take a condescending attitude to the probationer, nor should he say, "dese, dose, and dem" because the probationer says, "dese, dose, and dem." It does imply, however, that the probation officer phrase his questions, explanations, and comments in terms that the probationer can understand.

At times, whether intentionally or out of habit, a probationer may use the argot which identifies him as belonging to a special group. This may be a universal jargon, such as the *gay* speech of the homosexual or the *cool* speech of the hep-cat, or it may be the specialized slang of a neighborhood gang. Under these circumstances, the probation officer should indicate his understanding of, and familiarity with, the particular idiom, but he should not use it with the frequency of the probationer.

In connection with the probation officer's own language, he should be on his guard against the use of technical terms, which may be second nature to him, but are frequently incomprehensible to the probationer.

One other aspect of this matter of the probationer's language deserves attention because of its implications. Just as most clients exhibit some degree of tension during the early stages of the initial interview, and the relaxation of this tension serves as an indication of a good relationship in the process of formation, so, too, many probationers tend to talk in a language a little formal for them in the early stages of the interview in order to impress the probation officer. Relapsing back to a more normal speech pattern may be interpreted as a sign of beginning rapport. An occasional probationer will consistently use language which seems to be way over his head, sometimes quite inappropriately and ludicrously. This is likely to occur particularly in people who are mentally defective or of borderline intelligence, and is generally to be interpreted as a means of bolstering a poorly developed ego-concept. Where a formal, almost stilted language replete with big words and sonorous phrases is consistently and appropriately used, it generally connotes a person who has effected a partial retreat from his environment into a world of books, and is beginning to sound like the books he reads.

### *Listening to Meaning*

As this observation with the eyes and the ears has been going on (the use of the nose to detect the odor of alcohol is too obvious to merit discussion) the interview has been progressing. As it does a different type of listening should be going on, a type of listening for which the observations serve as a useful aid. This is listening to the content of what the probationer says, but listening to it in a very special way. This is the process of listening to meaning, a sort of assessment which has been referred to as *listening with the third ear*. This involves evaluating what it is that the probationer is communicating about himself as he talks. At any one moment his verbalizations are determined at three different levels.

The first level is the face value of what the probationer says. It is the way he sees the facts in his environment, past, present, and future. It is full of what I said and did to him, and what he said and did to me. If the probation officer is willing to accept this face value he will never fully attain his goal of understanding the probationer and his behavior.

The second level at which the probationer is communicating is determined by his characteristic attitudes and defenses, and it is at this level at which the probation officer strikes pay dirt. The meanings implicit here are revealed by the probationer's choice of topics for discussion, by the manner in which he describes these happenings, by the emotions he displays, by the way he habitually distorts the environment, by the way he relates to the probation officer as compared to his description of the way he relates to others, by his use of all of the methods of nonverbal communication which have been discussed under the topics of observation. It is by listening to this level that the probation officer determines the defenses which are characteristic of the individual, e.g., projection, rationalization, fantasy, identification, displacement, compensation, intellectualization, denial, etc. It is at this level, too, that the individual's attitudes are most clearly seen—attitudes toward society, authority, parental figures, peer group, religion, education, and work. Here, too, is where the individual's less repressed motivations can be seen—need for status, need for punishment, personal aggrandizement, need for affection, need for sympathy, need for sexual gratification—and the strength of these drives can be assayed. This does not mean that the probation officer should play the role of psychiatrist or



analyst. It does mean identifying and utilizing these factors within his competence as a counselor.

It is the third level with which these other disciplines are concerned. At this level, revealed by dreams, slips of the tongue, and free associations, are buried in the unconscious impulses, conflicts, and drives. In some probationers the roots of behavior will be so deeply imbedded that alteration in behavior can be brought about only by referral to this more specialized treatment with its attention to this third level. In general, for the purposes of the probation officer, this level may be ignored, although there are times when the unconscious meanings become so clear that they are almost forced upon his attention.

This matter of listening to meaning in terms of levels can be approached most easily by means of examples. Mr. B is a white, single male who is under treatment for a character disorder. He opens the interview by describing in explicit, almost clinical, detail a recent sexual encounter with a young woman. At the last moment, after much fore-play he had refrained from actual intercourse because she was a virgin. On the first level, he is relating an environmental episode, which he appears to view as quite ego-satisfying. Yet it is necessary to ask, why does he relate this private, intimate experience. What is he really talking about? What does he mean? At this second level he is revealing his compensation for feelings of masculine inadequacy by his conquest. His need to relate this would appear to reveal a need to be seen by others (in this case the therapist) as an adequate and conquering male. The pride in refraining from intercourse is seen as a defense by denial against the feeling of guilt engendered by the illicit sexuality. One might also speculate (and this is confirmed by subsequent interviews) that this holding back may represent a defense against a fear of failure were he to attempt to carry this episode through to its conclusion. One further question might be raised, which carries listening to the third level. This is the question of why the prolonged use of clinical detail. It is almost as though he were inviting the listener to observe him as he performed. This confirms a suspicion which had been raised on previous occasions because of the flamboyant nature of his attire. He has deep, basic, exhibitionistic tendencies.

Mr. C is also a young man of 25, who has sought help because of marked feelings of inadequacy, inability to stand up to authority figures, and inability to carry through anything of significance

to completion. During the course of an early interview, as he is talking about his childhood, he relates a memory from about the age of 6 of roughhousing with his father. As he remembers this he had to be very careful when wrestling with his father not to pin him as the father just couldn't bear to lose and might even become quite angry. Here again, at the first level, is an environmental episode which seems to bring a great deal of satisfaction. Once again, however, the listener must ask himself, why this particular episode, and in this case, why the obvious distortions of fact. A 6-year-old boy is not very likely to pin a father who is described as very heavy and quite powerful. What is he trying to say? What does he mean? The answer at this second level would appear to be a need to feel superior to the father, and at the same time a great fear of the retaliation which would follow should he demonstrate this superiority. It is quite possible this is the root of his difficulty with authority figures. It might even be speculated that this is a partial explanation of his inability to complete any major task. This might be equivalent to outstripping the father and retaliation would follow. It is not necessary for the probation officer, in his attempt to understand this probationer, to speculate on the possible third level meaning.

Mr. D is also a male, 22 years of age. He is being examined formally for a court on a charge of having made homosexual assault by force on a minor. From the social history available he is an adopted child, and neither he nor his foster parents know anything about his natural parents. Yet when he is asked what he knows of his natural parents, he replies as follows: "Well, I understand that my father was a rich business man, and my mother was a society woman. They had an affair, and I popped out of it." This last phrase, "and I popped out of it" is accompanied by a moue of disgust. On the first level he is making what seems to be a simple statement of fact about his parentage. As the probation officer queries himself: "What does he mean by this? Why does he have to make up this sort of story?," he might answer his own questions somewhat along these lines. The first sentence illuminates Mr. D's use of fantasy as a compensatory defense, and also expresses his need for status. The second sentence, by its contemptuous tone, reflects his feeling of being rejected by the natural parents and the reaction of hostility to this. It might be postulated that at the third level, his use of the phrase, "and I popped

out of it" and the emotional tone accompanying this suggest a deep feeling of disgust of the female genitalia, and may point to some of the roots of his homosexuality.

Listening in this fashion is an arduous and demanding task, but is well worth the effort. As the probation officer listens in this way throughout an interview, or more particularly in a series of interviews with the same probationer, certain themes, attitudes, and reactions, begin to be recognized, running through the probationer's conversation over and over again with minor variations like the main themes of a symphony. This serves to transform a series of seemingly unrelated and isolated instances into a meaningful interrelated whole. This does not imply that the probation officer must probe for the deeply unconscious meanings of what the probationer reports. In the examples cited it is possible for the probation officer in the first two cases (Mr. B and Mr. C) to understand and work with the meanings apparent at the second level without having to deal directly with the exhibitionism or the castration fear. The case of Mr. D is somewhat different since the basic problem, homosexuality, cannot be understood or treated without attention to this third level, and therefore is properly the province of the psychiatrist and not the probation officer.

### *Listening to Silence*

There is one other aspect of the art of listening which deserves attention. This is the matter of listening to silence. There are several types of silence which may occur in the interview situation, and the probation officer should be alert to recognize their occurrence and understand their meaning. The first of these is the long silence, most likely to occur early in the first interviews. This is usually accompanied by signs of increasing tension on the part of the probationer. (Frequently this sort of silence is likely to make the probation officer feel uneasy as well.) Almost invariably this is a sign that the interview is not progressing well, that the probation officer is not creating the sort of atmosphere in which the probationer can talk. As a general rule this sort of silence, early in the relationship, should not be allowed to continue. The longer it goes on the more ill at ease the probationer becomes, and the more difficult it becomes for the probation officer to lower the tension level. Some such remark as, "It is difficult to talk to a stranger, isn't it?" should be made. A specific topic for conversation

may then be introduced. When this sort of silence occurs in a well-established relationship it should be allowed to continue. The tension is an indication that the probationer is considering discussing something which is quite difficult for him, and interruption by the probation officer may make it impossible for him to continue. At times the anxiety in itself may be helpful in getting the probationer almost to blurt out what he has to say. In a well-established relationship a long silence may sometimes occur without any signs of tension. This is generally indicative of the fact that the probationer has lapsed into a reverie. This may be interrupted with, "I wonder if you'd care to tell me what you're thinking about?" or some similar query.

A second type of silence which is frequently encountered is the block. This is a term used to describe the silence which occurs when an individual who has been talking along in a normally communicative fashion suddenly goes blank, sometimes even in the middle of a sentence and is unable to continue. Generally this is accompanied by physical signs: paling, flushing, clenching of the hands. At times the mouth may open and close soundlessly, or the jaw muscles tighten and relax, as though the individual were trying to talk. As a usual thing the block indicates that the individual has touched on material, either directly or through associations, which is so threatening to him that he is unable even to continue the thought, let alone utter it. When this occurs the probation officer should alert himself to its significance.

The preceding material at times may furnish a clue as to its meaning. At other times the probation officer's own associations to what has been said may lead him toward the origin of the block, or no meaning may be immediately obvious. It is generally profitless to try to explore this immediately with the probationer. He should be allowed a moment or two in order to recover his composure. The interview may then be continued by the repetition of the last word or two he had said. If he is able to respond to this he should be allowed to continue to the next natural break in the conversation, at which time the probation officer might inquire of the probationer why he felt he went blank in this way. If the probationer is unable to respond to this technique, another topic may be introduced, and the block and its possible meanings filed away for reintroduction at a later appropriate time. It is worthy of mention that the

individual who blocks frequently and chronically is probably either terrified or schizophrenic.

There is one other type of silence which deserves attention. The probation officer should train himself to be alert to the thing which is not said, the omission which shrieks for attention because of its absence.

An interview with Mrs. E serves as an example of this sort of silence. Mrs. E described her husband in minute detail. She discussed his habits and his hobbies, his vices and his virtues, his handsome face and his unruly hair. She dissected his ancestry and his background, his work and his pleasures. It came as a distinct shock on meeting him to discover that he had an artificial leg. The silence about this screamed that it had great significance to Mrs. E. What the nature of the significance of this type of silence is, the probation officer can determine only after he has gotten to know the probationer better. Like all other silences it deserves attention.

#### *Comment and Summary*

Much of this discussion of the art of listening particularly in those areas devoted to observation, may seem elementary and obvious. Yet attention to these elementary details adds depth to the surface of the words the probation officer hears. It might be noted that in the case of Mr. B observation of his attire added substance to the conclusion that he was basically exhibitionistic. In the case of Mr. D observation of the moue of disgust called attention to the feeling expressed in, "and I popped out of it." It is seldom that the probation officer can arrive at a complete picture of an individual from observation alone, or discover sensitive areas through noting blocks or omissions alone, but they serve as helpful signposts along a road which is extremely tortuous and largely unmarked.

In attempting to understand the probationer and his behavior, the probation officer, then, should utilize all the information he can gain in the interview situation. He should be constantly aware of the valuable information available from carefully observing the probationer, and should simultaneously be attempting to assay the possible meanings of what he sees and hears, while being careful not to make this observation too obvious. He should be listening to the meaning, as well as the words, of what the probationer says, and should be constantly correlating these interpretations with what he sees. He should be alert

to the possible meanings of silence. Various techniques helpful in attaining these ends have been presented, with the hope that their utilization will allow the probation officer to attain his goal more completely and efficiently.

#### *Current Comments*

Two of our basic senses were slighted when this article was written. One was the olfactory sense, the other, touch. To the use of smell to detect the odor of alcohol I would add that it should be used in detection of the acrid sweet smell of marihuana which may linger in clothing or hair. Body odor may have the same connotations as do the slovenly dress and lack of personal cleanliness already discussed. The kind of perfume used by a female client may sometimes be tied to personality characteristics. The sense of touch comes into play in the evaluation of the handshake which should be performed at the beginning and end of each interview (particularly the first) and any differences noted. Handshakes may be limp, firm or vigorous, wet or dry. Each says something about the person, as does change in the quality of the hand clasp. In adolescents a change from the traditional grasp to the right angle grip represents acceptance.

Visual observation is also important in the detection of drug or alcohol abuse. The individual dependent on narcotics (heroin, Dilaudid, morphine, etc.) will show pinpoint pupils, which will still be smaller than normal for some time (weeks or months) after drug use has stopped. Speed or cocaine users will exhibit dilated pupils. Needle tracks on the backs of the hands or the anterior surface of the forearms, particularly at the bend of the elbow suggests *shooting* rather than *popping* or *snorting* drugs. Chronic use of alcohol or of gasoline and present usage of marihuana leads to reddened eyes. The chronic alcoholic may have a reddish complexion due to many small, broken, blood vessels on the face. These are particularly apt to occur on the nose and over the cheek bones. Cocaine and speed users may be extremely thin, and tend to have jerky movements. People under the acute effects of downers (including alcohol) may exhibit thickened or slurred speech and motor incoordination.

A word also might be said about tattoos. Poorly executed tattoos on the arms and forearms are generally acquired in adolescence and self-perpetrated. If present, the odds are good that the



adolescent in question has been in an institution for delinquents. They are frequently the results of boredom, peer pressure and poor judgment. LOVE and HATE on the backs of the individual fingers of each hand frequently connote an aggressive individual, or one who wants to give that impression. The presence of multiple, professionally executed tattoos on a male does not any longer carry the same implications of pseudo-aggressiveness and exhibitionism it once did, although it is still worthwhile to note them in the general

evaluation. Tattooing on females is more common, but is currently confined to parts of the body not generally exposed. Visible tattoos suggest exhibitionistic traits.

One matter could be added to the paragraph on speech peculiarities. This is the matter of the names assigned to street drugs. These names vary from locality to locality, and more importantly, from one period of time to the next. Corrections officers should be aware of the street names used in their communities and alert to changes therein.

## News of the Future

### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CORRECTIONS

By JOHN P. CONRAD

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TO THOSE who looked in vain in the last issue of *FEDERAL PROBATION* for a contribution from me, I offer the explanation that I was on a protracted absence in Africa. The only criminological observation gleaned during the expedition was the finding that prisoners at the men's correctional facility in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Empire, wear old-fashioned striped uniforms and are required to shave their heads bare. The prison itself is a grim edifice into which I did not attempt to intrude. There was no evidence in sight of a local receptiveness to transcultural comparative penology.

On the way back from the exotic to the mundane, I stopped at the Cambridge Institute of Criminology where, under the direction of Nigel Walker, the Radzinowicz tradition continues to flourish. One of the most impressive of its accomplishments is the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development over which Dr. D. J. West has presided for since 1961.

This is a longitudinal study of 411 boys selected at the age of 8 while they were attending primary schools in a working-class district of London. Of the original 411, 389 have been followed to the present time both in official records and with periodic personal interviews. Three reports have emerged from the study so far; in the most recent report the reckoning was taken at age 21 when the cohort had completed the years of juvenility.<sup>1</sup> Because the study does not seem to be well known on this side of the Atlantic, and because some of its findings are at considerable variance with prevailing thought about delinquency, I want to recapitulate it here. For obvious reasons of cost and continuity, longitudinal studies of delinquents

over so long a period of time are few and far between, especially where personal contact has been successfully maintained throughout. None, so far as I know, have maintained direct comparisons with nondelinquent controls.

West and his collaborator, David Farrington, monitored the official records and administered what must have been long and arduous interviews to both delinquents and nondelinquents. Self-reported delinquencies were recorded and compared with the official records. The life-style of each member of the cohort was recorded in admirable detail. Some tests were administered. Under the circumstances, the project struck a hard bargain with its subjects: The cooperative respondents were paid at a rate of one pound an hour, but those who required persuasion were paid more. In the pragmatic world of criminological research, recalcitrance can be made to pay. Persistence was rewarded; only 14 boys refused to be interviewed; of the remaining 8 cases, death and emigration accounted for the loss. The two investigators are rightly proud of their success in maintaining contact with nearly 95 percent of the original sample over a period of 13 years.

The study sets out to discover if there is a way of life that can be described as delinquent, and, if there is, in what respects it differs from the nondelinquent life-style. The authors candidly state their original bias; they expected that there would be little difference between delinquents and nondelinquents when social class is held constant, as it was in this research. Their conclusion is that there are differences wholly apart from and in addition to the commission of criminal acts. If we accept their views, delinquents are different from their nondelinquent contemporaries, and, for the most part, the differences are to be discerned early in life.

Of the 389 boys who were followed all the way through the study, 120—30.8 percent—were delinquent before the age of 21. The peak age of onset was 14, as compared with 13 in Wolfgang's Philadelphia Birth Cohort,<sup>2</sup> and 14 in the violent juvenile offender cohort studied by

<sup>1</sup> In order, the reports so far issued are: D. J. West: *Present Conduct and Future Delinquency*. (London: Heinemann, 1969). D. J. West and D. P. Farrington: *Who Becomes Delinquent?* (London: Heinemann, 1973). D. J. West and D. P. Farrington: *The Delinquent Way of Life*. (London: Heinemann, 1977). The discussion in this column is entirely based on the last-named book. All three are publications in the Cambridge Studies in Criminology, edited by Sir Leon Radzinowicz.

<sup>2</sup> Marvin E. Wolfgang, Robert M. Figlio, and Thorsten Sellin. *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972) p. 132.

**END**