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FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION  
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

AN EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S  
CHANGE AGENT PROGRAM

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The Change Agent program at the Federal Correctional Institution, Fort Worth, deals with the areas of functional helping, human relations, social problems, effective speaking, group work, and counseling. Student-residents in the program are trained in effective counseling techniques so as to be able to function in a helping role. The program is taught by a resident instructor and predicated on the techniques developed by Dr. Robert Carkhuff (Carkhuff, 1971).

The program is run two hours daily for a period of ten weeks. During the first two weeks, the residents become acquainted with one another and learn the fundamentals of effective speaking. This is followed in the third and fourth weeks by the discussion of Carkhuff's concepts.

Topics discussed are:

- I. The Four Basic Parts of Therapy
  - A. Attending
  - B. Responding
  - C. Initiating
  - D. Communicating
- II. The Goals of Helping
- III. The Morality of Therapy
- IV. Levels of Response
- V. Functional Helping
  - A. Functional Helping
  - B. Additive Statement
  - C. Immediacy

The next two weeks the basic concepts of Reality Therapy and Transactional Analysis are taught. Following this, several days are spent in presenting an overview of Gestalt and Synanon games. The rest of the course is devoted to group discussions and applying techniques learned in the course.

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the Change Agent Program was associated with any significant improvements in the subjects' levels of self-awareness, performance levels, and subsequent improvement in their interpersonal relationships.

#### METHODOLOGY

##### Subject

The subjects were twenty-two residents of the Federal Correctional Institution, Fort Worth, Texas. There were members of three Change Agent classes during the period of May to October, 1974.

##### Dependent Measure

The questionnaire used was concise, consisting of twenty-four items dealing with subjects' insight into self and interpersonal abilities. Seven raters - self (resident), instructor, caseworker, correctional counselor, education specialist, work supervisor, and unit officer - were asked for pre- and post-treatment evaluations of each of the subjects. They rated the residents on each of the twenty-four items, along a six point continuum ranging from "very poor" to "excellent." The post-tests were given at the end of the class, about nine weeks after initial testing.

Individual ratings were obtained by assigning numerical scores to each of the possible responses. A "very poor" being given one point, and an "excellent" response being assigned six points. Each rater's score on all items for pre- and post-tests was then summed. There were seven possible judge's ratings on each subject for both tests. In some cases, not all

seven raters returned the questionnaires and some raters failed to respond to specific items. There seemed to be a trend toward raters not responding to the same items on the post-test which they failed to complete on the pre-test. In two cases staff failed to respond to the questionnaire since both residents had left the institution shortly after completing the class. These raters later stated they did not see the need to complete the form since the residents had left.

### RESULTS

The overall pre-test mean score received by residents was 95.7 with the post-test mean reaching 99.4. This represents a mean increase of 3.7 points and reflects a small overall improvement of the subjects in the areas evaluated during the ten week period. Pre- and post-test scores given by each rater were compared, using a "t-test" for related samples. There was a trend toward significance ( $p < .10$ ) for the ratings of the unit officer and the education specialist. The caseworkers' pre-post ratings closely approached statistical significance of  $p < .05$ .

A comparison was made between each category of raters (e. g. caseworkers) and all other raters for both pre-test and post-test sets of data. The "t" tests showed no significant difference between the means of each category on the pre-test data and the overall mean for all raters. The same computation was done for the post-test rater means, by category of raters, and their difference between the overall post-test group mean of 99.4. The correctional counselors' mean of 90.5 was significantly different at the  $p < .05$  level compared with the global mean. The lower mean seems to indicate that the correctional counselors tended to see

the resident as somewhat less positive along the dimensions rated.

An interesting finding was that the post-test range of scores for the instructors (91 - 105) was considerably narrower than that of all raters considered together (43 - 144). An F-test for the variance ratio using Snedecor's tables was computed to see what rater groups did not have the same variance. The instructor's rating differed highly significantly at the  $p < .001$  level from the ratings for the caseworker, correctional counselor, education specialist, work supervisor, and unit officer. In addition, the caseworkers' rating varied significantly ( $p < .05$ ) from the ratings of the work supervisor and unit officer. The ratings of the correctional counselor and the education specialist also differed significantly from each other at the  $p < .05$  level.

The most significant findings of this study, then, are the following:

- A. The caseworker reports the largest amount of change in the subjects at the program's completion.
- B. The correctional counselors tended to see the smallest amount of change at the end of the program.
- C. The instructor didn't rate the subjects either as high or as low as the other raters.
- D. The variance of certain other rater groups was significantly different.

#### DISCUSSION

It seems possible that the greater change perceived by the caseworkers may be a function of the fact that their contact with the subjects is on a relatively infrequent basis, rather than the day-to-day contact that the correctional counselors and instructors have with the residents.

The implication here is that those persons having less frequent contact with residents may be in a better position to notice change than are persons who are in constant contact with residents. These latter persons, because of their constant contact with residents, may more easily overlook the gradual changes of the type that are induced by programs of this kind. An appropriate suggestion, therefore, for future studies of this type is that the raters chosen might better be persons whose contact with the subjects is on a periodically longer term and intermittent basis, rather than those whose contact with the subjects is on a daily and fairly intensive basis.

It is interesting to note the very narrow range of the instructor's post-test ratings (91 - 105) as opposed to an overall post-test range of (43 - 144). The instructor was the only resident rater other than self ratings done by the subjects. The reasons for this narrow range along with a tendency to rate subjects neither too high or too low, are not known. It may be speculated, however, that since the instructor himself is a resident there may have been some hesitation and/or lack of self confidence on his part to rate subjects either way high or low. Another possibility, in view of our explanations concerning caseworkers' higher post-test ratings and correctional counselors' lower post-test ratings, may be that the day-to-day contact of the instructor with the subjects provided too much "closeness of contact" thereby attenuating the range of the ratings.

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