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Evaluating systemic change in the Virginia Department of Corrections: Creating agents of change

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Evaluating Systemic Change in the Virginia

Department of Corrections: Creating

Agents of Change

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Abstract

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) is attempting to change the practice of working with offenders placed on probation and parole to effect a reduction in the rate of recidivism. The VADOC's proposal is to get the probation and parole officers to become "change agents" in motivating the offender toward pro-social behavior using evidence-based practices and Motivational Interviewing (MI). The purpose of this paper is to describe the ways in which organizations attempt change and explores the reasons for the resistance displayed by the probation and parole officers. The author argues that the VADOC should employ a second-order change and address the probation and parole officers in the same manner that the VADOC expects the offender to be addressed. The paper incorporates the Stages of Change and the Piagetian terms of assimilation and accommodation to formulate a process that could minimize the probation and parole officer's resistance and allow the acceptance and implementation of the evidence-based practices.

Introduction

In the late 18th century, the process of corrections in the United States underwent a paradigm shift when the first prison was established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with the intent of rehabilitating criminals (M. Lenahan, personal communication, October 30, 2009). The Walnut Street Jail housed criminals in individual cells and each prisoner was provided with his own Bible, in keeping with the Quaker belief that self-examination and penitence provided the means to salvation (Schoenherr, 2009). The prisoner was separated from fellow prisoners to allow him to reflect and repent for his crimes; and, would thus be reformed. This experiment led to the creation of the word penitentiary we use today to describe the buildings in which we house our criminals. The system did not succeed in its goal of rehabilitating the offender; but dealt with compliance and control, which does not result in a lasting change or rehabilitation. The corrections field in the United States is again considering a paradigm shift in how to realize rehabilitation of the offender.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the ways in which organizations attempt change and whether the desired change will occur or the status quo is maintained. I am passionate about this subject because I am employed as a probation officer in the State of Virginia and feel drawn to work with individuals convicted of a crime. I am hopeful of creating the opportunity for change, different from the Walnut Street Jail experiment.

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) has been focusing on promoting “evidence-based practices” in its endeavor to safely, humanely, and effectively change the behavior of the offenders under its supervision and reduce the rate of recidivism. The description of recidivism can be best illustrated by a “revolving door”

whereby offenders not having changed their behaviors are returned to incarceration repeatedly (VADOC, 2005).

The VADOC has joined a myriad of human service related fields (i.e., medicine, psychology, social services, substance abuse treatment, education and criminal justice) in a quest to demonstrate their efforts are effective and definable. The attempt is to demonstrate effectiveness through research and the application of science to identify a “best practice,” or “evidence-based practice,” to guide the delivery of services.

In an October 12, 2009, *Newsweek* article “Ignoring the Evidence: Why do psychologists reject science?” reporter Sharon Begley contended there is a rift between research psychologists and clinical therapists with regard to what interventions are truly efficacious. This contention brings to mind a metaphor of two opposing factions facing one another, each believing his or her “way” of perceiving and interacting with the world is correct while the other’s is wrong. The metaphor seems descriptive and fitting of the researcher having the scientific evidence to indicate whether or not an intervention is effective and the practitioner in the field who has to interact with the nitty-gritty and complexity of the person before him or her. The momentum is building for result-driven outcomes and we, in the human services field, are being challenged to provide services in an ever-competitive environment, made more difficult by diminishing resources (time, money, and staff) and the present reality of less financial government support. We must therefore adapt to provide these services and demonstrate the effectiveness of our interventions or risk becoming discarded through privatization or the public’s clamor for confinement believing “nothing works.”

For the purpose of this paper, I am focusing on the role of community corrections, otherwise known as probation and parole, as its goal is to work with individuals either released from incarceration, prison or jail, through parole and/or probation supervision or placed on probation by the local courts in lieu of being sentenced to a period of confinement.

In Virginia, more than twelve thousand offenders are released annually from VADOC prisons (Schnabel, in press). The rate of offenders re-offending and being re-incarcerated has statistically averaged 29% (Boone et. al. 2006) and this amount does not account for the offenders placed directly on probation supervision by the courts who are found in violation and have their suspended sentence revoked. In fiscal year 2007, 5,774 probation violation guideline forms were submitted to the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission for probationers who had technical violations (violations of the conditions of probation not involving a new criminal conviction). The alleged violations cited in over half of the forms were for using, possessing, or distributing a controlled substance Condition No. 8 and nearly half cited Condition No. 6 for failing to follow their probation officer's instructions (Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission 2007 Annual Report).

The VADOC has embarked on implementing research that indicates the standard practice of the last 40 years has not succeeded in reducing recidivism. It is hoped that by observing empirically driven research with the goal of identifying evidence-based practices will result in a reduction in the rate of recidivism. The evidence-based practices have identified several components that should be addressed by community corrections agencies in order to reduce recidivism: 1) Conduct an assessment of offender risk and needs using an actuarial instrument and determine the drivers of criminal behavior; 2)

enhance intrinsic motivation through use of constructive communication techniques, such as motivational interviewing and goal setting; 3) apply risk, need and responsivity principles: (i.e., target high-risk offenders, focus on changing criminogenic factors, provide services that match needs), provide the appropriate dosage of services, and deliver treatment and other services as part of the sentencing and sanctioning process; 4) employ programs and practices grounded in scientific evidence (i.e., cognitive behavioral therapy) and delivered by trained staff; 5) utilize community support networks to reinforce pro-social behaviors and help offenders establish pro-social contacts in the community; and 6) routinely monitor and assess offender and staff performance.

I am drawn to write this paper because of my experiences as a probation officer and my education as a counselor-in-training at James Madison University have helped me understand what creates the opportunity for a person to change. I believe in what the VADOC is trying to accomplish: turning probation and parole officers into “change” agents armed with the skills to help the offender affect change in their lives in the hopes of breaking the cyclical nature of crime and recidivism is a worthy and realizable goal. The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which the VADOC is implementing a systemic change on an individual level and risks, through its implementation, causing a Type III error. Durlak (1998) described a Type III error as unfairly rejecting a good program based on not properly assessing the implementation. The VADOC’s proposal is worthy and, when successfully implemented, has the potential to create a win-win for all the participants: the offender, the probation officer, the VADOC, and the community.

The crux of my hypothesis is that the VADOC has overlooked the change that needs to take place within the “change” agent, who is responsible for the delivery of the

“evidence-based practice” services for changing the offender’s behavior. The VADOC is using first-order change principles: training manuals, brief and sporadic booster training sessions, and relying on broadcasting the conviction that this will work because the evidence says it is so. The “change” agents have reacted with resistance, by not fully listening to the message and/or being reluctant to consider a new way of doing business.

A first-order change was described by Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch (1974) as an attempt to create a change using small incremental changes, but leaving the system intact which leads to more of the same: no change. A second-order change requires a discontinuous break from what has been tried in the past, which actually changes the system and therefore creates a lasting change.

The theory of adaption by Jean Piaget regarding assimilation and accommodation can illustrate what is occurring for the probation officers. The VADOC is directing its efforts on getting the “change” agents to assimilate the information provided in the hopes that the probation officers will be able to internalize the change and then interact with the offender in a different, better, and more effective way. At the risk of losing some readers because of my geekiness, I am reminded of the Borg in the *Star Trek* television series. The Borg would annihilate whole civilizations by assimilating them into their Borg collective. The Borg had a warning for their victims prior to battle (say it with me), “Resistance is futile, you will be assimilated.” The VADOC is acting like the Borg by forcing its new directive onto the probation officer; much like a frustrated parent tries to force compliance on a recalcitrant child by increasing the same discipline routine only to meet with the same failure.

In this sense, the VADOC is trying to get the “change” agent to assimilate a new way of interacting with offenders through first-order change, rather than using second-order change to accomplish the process of accommodation, which would engender a lasting change. A review of Piaget’s terms of assimilation and accommodation is necessary for explaining the adaptation of “evidence-based practices” the VADOC is requiring of the probation officers. In describing the ways individuals (specifically children) learn, Piaget developed two complementary processes which allowed individuals to become aware of their external world and internalize what was being observed. In assimilation, the perception of the external world is incorporated into the person’s internal world without changing the structure of the internal world (Atherton, 2009). This works if the individual is able to fit the new information with that which is already internally defined. An idiom comes to mind, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” unless it is similar in nature to the previous tricks already stored in memory. In accommodation, the individual’s internal world must confront and alter itself to the evidence, and thus adapt to it. According to Atherton, this change is not easy or without discomfort. In this sense, the new way of intervening proposed by the VADOC conflicts with the internal world of the probation officer who thus resists because it is difficult to adapt to the new information.

I propose the VADOC has to engage the “change” agent in much the same way as it is hoping the “change” agent will engage the offender. In my estimation this necessitates a parallel process to occur. The VADOC has to create the atmosphere whereby the “change” agent can explore new information and internalize it for use with the offenders. In this manner, the same process of change espoused by Prochaska,

Norcross and DiClementi (1994) in their seminal work, *Changing for Good*, can be utilized by the VADOC in working with the probation officers. The “change” agent has to experience the same process incorporated in the stages of change: Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance, and Relapse. Using this model, I will address the areas in which the VADOC has met with resistance and encountered barriers in implementing systemic change. I will offer considerations for stimulating the change that could transform the system.

The “stages of change” (Prochaska, et. al.) provides a theory for describing how individual’s change negative behavior (i.e., smoking, substance abuse, gambling, and overeating, etc.). The stages incorporate a process that an individual experiences when attempting to change a behavior. The change process does not necessarily proceed linearly from one stage to the next and also provides for the regression from a higher stage to a lower one by way of a lapse or relapse.

Although parsimonious in its detail, a brief description of the stages is necessary to describe where the VADOC stands in the process of change. In Precontemplation, the person is unaware of there being a problem, or is in denial and unwilling to change. Contemplation indicates the person is beginning to think about change, but is unsure or ambivalent on how to change. In Preparation, the person is ready to push for change and begins to consider the ways in which it could be done. Action encompasses the process of what needs to happen to effect the change and doing something about it. In Maintenance, the person continues the new behavior and recognizes the gains that have been accomplished. Termination is evident when the person no longer struggles with the problem behavior or has the confidence not to relapse.

Barriers

As most would agree, change is hard. If it were not so, there would not be the need for organizational consultants, therapists, life coaches, and the teeming abundance of self-help books lining the shelves of our community bookstores. The VADOC is attempting to change the way probation officers do business because the evidence reflects it does not work. The new way being promulgated by the VADOC requires the probation officer to establish a relationship with the offender that is different and invites a more collaborative approach through the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI) as described by Miller and Rollnick (1974). This new approach is threatening and uncomfortable because it is difficult to accommodate with the internalized world of the probation officer. This internal world has been informed by the process of the last 40 years through schema formation, scripting, and roles.

A schema or “internal world” is the cognitive arrangement of the learning and experiences an individual has encountered in the past that is then used to inform the processing and interpretation of information, actions, and expectations (Gioia & Poole, 1984). Organizations through their nature create and sustain schemas, usually called “paradigms” or “cultures,” just as individuals do, to help predict and negotiate the terrain of life (Cowan, 2005). The organization of probation and parole has developed a schema that has been hardened into viewing its role as enforcing court-ordered or parole conditions, verifying compliance, holding offenders accountable, and returning violators back to the court or parole board when the offender is in violation. “For many probation and parole officers, a shift from primarily a monitoring and control model to a behavior

change approach is not congruent with how they were trained and reinforced to do their jobs” (White, 2006, p. 7).

The development of the relationship between the “change” agent and the offender is viewed with skepticism because it conflicts with the internalized structure of how things have been done. If change is required, individuals may try to resist it when the change is personally or collectively threatening (George & Jones, 2001). In order for the VADOC to get the change agent to implement this new way of interacting, it has to deal with the resistance of the probation officers and help them accommodate the new perspective. When the old way of interacting with the offenders proves ineffective, the individual/entity has to consider alternatives and this is usually not easy.

Clark (2005, p. 23) provided an example of this difficulty, as experienced by a probation officer after he had facilitated a training session on Motivational Interviewing, which I include in its entirety for illustrative purposes.

Agent: Interesting training session, but now you’ve got me thinking.

Clark: What’s on your mind?

Agent: Well, I’m thinking that I should probably shake hands with my probationers.

Clark: You don’t?

Agent: No. I was hired out of the prison. There’s a “no touch” policy inside the facilities. We [staff] can’t touch, they [inmates] can’t touch. Nothing’s allowed, not even hand-shaking.

Clark: But... [pause] you’re not working in the prison any longer.

Agent: Yea. That's why this training's got me thinking. I mean, yesterday I was walking a new case to the lobby door and he stuck out his hand to shake with me. I got a little angry and said, "I don't shake hands! When you get dismissed, maybe then I'll shake your hand."

Clark: Wow. Pretty hard to make the kinds of connections we've been talking about in this training session if you won't even shake hands.

Agent: Yea. That's what's got me thinking.

Clark: Must be hard to make the transition over from the prison. But, hey, don't be too hard on yourself. How long have you been in this job [community-based corrections]?

Agent: Four years.

This encounter between Clark and the probation officer showed not only how difficult it is for someone to change, but also demonstrated Clark's ability to remain open and inviting through the use of motivational interviewing techniques while still exploring the discrepancy. The officer's reflection of his or her behavior provides an example of the "stage of changes" (Prochaska, et. al. 1994) in that the officer is transitioning from Contemplation to Preparation.

This dilemma has been faced by numerous agencies and businesses. The police department in High Point, North Carolina, had been struggling to stem the tide of the illicit drug trade on its city's streets. The police were locked in a process by which they would push harder and harder with what they knew was the solution and the situation remained unchanged or worsened (Smalley, 2009). David Kennedy, a researcher for Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, helped the police try a new approach that was

met with skepticism because it was different from their operating schema. The police mocked Kennedy's approach as "hug-a-thug," a term that has also been used by some probation officers in my office regarding the approach being advocated by the VADOC. The police persisted despite their misgivings and achieved, after four years, successfully removing the drug dealers off the street corner and found a 57 percent drop in violent crime in the targeted areas (Smalley).

In the 1980s, IBM was regarded as a model business that enjoyed much success. The company, however, was unsuccessful in realizing the changes the advent of the personal computer would have on their business model and so continued to conduct business as usual, focusing on developing the mainframe business. As a result, IBM lost its market lead in the 1990s and has been trying ever since to catch up (Glover, Friedman, & Jones, 2002). The example of the High Point, North Carolina, Police Department demonstrates a second-order change success, while the IBM experience depicts a first-order failure.

In this sense, the resistance displayed by the probation officers is similar to the resistance experienced by individuals in the Precontemplation stage of Prochaska, et al, (1994) model of change. The probation officers are unaware that a problem exists or are unwilling to change.

The probation officer's schema is one of a compliance and control, which has been hardened by the process of probation. This process involves the role and scripts that have become institutionalized: the probation officer meets with the offender for brief office contacts to ensure compliance with the court or parole conditions. The officer follows a script that has been "hard-wired" on how this process is accomplished. The

schema as it exists now is highly scripted and informs what the interaction looks and feels like between the probation officer and the offender during an office visit. As White (date unknown) learned from a Chief Probation Officer, it was the Chief's observation that probation officers do not know what to do or say to an offender during an office appointment after the conditions of probation or parole have been satisfied. The following vignette of a probation office visit at my office could serve as a prototype of what occurs in the majority of probation and parole offices throughout Virginia, if not, the United States.

PO: How are you doing?

Offender: Okay.

PO: Are you still at the same residence and job?

Offender: Yes.

PO: Have you been paying on your court costs?

Offender: No, I haven't made a payment this month.

PO: Make sure to make your payment because you won't get off probation until it is paid.

Offender: Okay.

PO: Have you had any contact with the police?

Offender: No.

PO: Any drug or alcohol use you need to tell me about?

Offender: No.

PO: Good, because I am going to get a urine screen from you today. Can you go to the bathroom now?

Offender: I think so.

PO: Here's a card with our next appointment. Let's go get the screen.

The appointment is predictable and encompasses the process of probation: adherence to the rules of the court or parole board, compliance with the laws, and ensuring the safety of the community. It creates a false sense of control, in that, the process would stand scrutiny if the offender committed a new crime or violated the conditions of probation or parole because the probation officer had fulfilled his or her role. It does not however lend itself to the desired outcome of motivating the offender to change and therefore reducing recidivism.

It takes a leap of faith to engage the offender at a deeper, relational level, and this is what the research and studies report creates an atmosphere capable of promoting change. This is risky however because it requires the probation and parole officer to relinquish control. In a metaphorical sense, it is similar to what the U.S. Army is contending with in Iraq and Afghanistan in battling the insurgent and Taliban forces respectively. The U.S. Army has been fighting using its weapons and displays of force to gain control and compliance. The result, however, has created divisiveness and mistrust among the local citizenry and alienated the U.S. Army from the pro-social members of the society. The solution as practiced by the U.S. Army has made the situation worse. U.S. Army General David Petraeus reflected on this situation and came to understand the solution is the problem. General Petraeus ordered the soldiers to get off their fortified bases and get out of their fortress-like Humvees and engage the local citizenry to seek what is important to them (Dehghanpisheh & Thomas, 2008). As a result, the U.S. Army is helping build schools and bridges. The U.S. Army had to change its schema and script.

There is no intent on my part to diminish the risk and danger the U.S. soldier faces in promoting this change as being comparable to what the probation and parole officer faces in meeting with the offender. The comparison is used solely to describe the ability to obtain information from the environment and then accommodate it with the internal view of the actor.

The probation and parole officer, in essence, has to get out from behind the figurative Humvee of “process” and engage the offender. Likewise, the VADOC has to identify the goal of probation and parole (reducing recidivism) and then pursue it, and, empower the organization in taking the risks necessary in becoming more than just “process.”

This resistance to learning or to changing the way of doing business has been conceptualized by Atherton (1999) as having to deal with supplantive learning. In supplantive learning, the difficulty arises because it calls into question the practices or knowledge of previous learning. This process entails a decrease in the person’s competence because of doing something new and uncomfortable from the old way of doing it. It takes time for the person to adapt to the new learning and achieve a degree of competence. Atherton described a natural progression through the following stages: De-stabilisation, the old way is no longer fitting; Disorientation, in that the loss of competence and self-esteem combine to thwart learning, and creates an opening for a return to the old way of interacting or conducting oneself; and Re-orientation, when the learner starts to experience confidence and mastery of the new way. It is in the stage of Disorientation that a person can experience a lapse or relapse as described by Prochaska, et. al. (1994) to the old way of doing or thinking.

The probation and parole officers in Virginia have been tasked to adopt a new way of being with the offender at a time when other attendant demands are being placed on the officers. The VADOC has adopted and implemented a new computer system, Virginia Corrections Information System (VACORIS) with the goal of integrating the various departments that make up the VADOC. The implementation has not been without difficulty or easy to learn. At the same time, the VADOC has had to adapt to a new computer system put into operation by the Interstate Compact for Adult Offenders to integrate and aid the process of transferring offenders throughout the United States and its territories. The stress associated with learning these new systems has, coupled with staff shortages and lay offs, created the avenue by which probation officers have resisted the new way of being with the offender for the old ways of relying on the “process.”

Considerations

In the face of these barriers, what can the VADOC do to institutionalize the organizational changes being promoted? The following section of this paper will outline several applications and considerations that might be helpful in describing how organizations incorporate change, how to resolve the resistance from the probation officer, and improve the implementation of the practices.

Van de Ven and Poole (1995) introduced four basic theories for explaining how organizations change: life cycle, teleology, dialectics, and evolution. The authors conducted an extensive literature review of numerous theories across many disciplines to describe the processes of change. A brief description of the models is presented in order to differentiate which models the VADOC might use to promote the implementation and acceptance of evidence-based practices among probation and parole officers. Life-cycle

theory is similar in keeping to its terminology, whereby an organization follows from its initiation to its termination through a process of stages or phases. Teleological theory relies on the premise that the goal is the driving force of the organization and then it proceeds through a process to realize the stated goal. Dialectical theory depends on the Hegelian assumption that organizations exist in a pluralistic world of conflicting values that are in competition with each other for domination and control. Evolutionary theory, borrowing from Darwinian influences, dictates that an organization proceeds through a cycle of variation, selection, and retention.

In attempting a second-order change (Watzalick, et al., 1974), the VADOC would do well in following the components of teleologic and dialectic theories because they subscribe to a constructive mode of change that is an unprecedented, novel form that, in retrospect, is often a discontinuous and unpredictable departure from the past (Van de Ven & Poole).

According to the teleologic theory, the VADOC would publicize its goal for the probation and parole officer is the reduction of recidivism among offenders and how best to accomplish this end. This would entail the whole organization, administrators and probation officers, buying-in and collaborating on changing the institutional culture and schema from compliance and control toward an emphasis on change. The process would then duplicate the stages of change by proposed by Prochaska, et. al. (1974) in that it would enable a constructive definition of the change needed and describe the process by which the entity, through its individual members, would proceed from Precontemplation through Maintenance in keeping with the new behavior.

According to dialectical theory, the administrators pushing for change (thesis) and the probation officers resistant to changing the “process” of probation (anti-thesis) would oppose one another and create a synthesis from the administrators’ directive of establishing a motivational relationship with the offender and the probation officers’ modus operandi of establishing “control and compliance,” which has guided the practice of probation. The Prochaska et al., model of change would lead the VADOC administrators to promote consciousness-raising awareness for the probation officers and introduce the idea of discrepancy that the goal of reducing recidivism is not being met by the present behavior.

The resistance displayed by the probation officers can be viewed in the same way Begley’s October, 12, 2009, *Newsweek* article wherein therapists reject the research psychologist’s science because it does not fit with their practical experience; and the probation officer discredits the evidence-based practice research because it does not fit with their practical experience. Again, the metaphor of two opposing factions springs to mind, much like the armies of Troy and Greece in the Trojan War. According to the myth, the factions were engaged in a battle lasting more than ten years with neither side within reach of victory. Eventually, the Greeks effected a second-order change by ending the fight and erecting a huge wooden sculpture of a horse in honor of their opponent before departing for home. As the myth proceeds, the people of Troy brought the horse inside the walls of their kingdom and allowed their adversaries, secreted inside, to accomplish what had eluded them for over ten years.

The metaphor reflects my belief that the probation officer has to be provided with a figurative “Trojan horse” representing the motivating relationship that would be

capable of being invited into the internalized world of the probation officer. The process could be presented as a series of group activities that would demonstrate the process that is required by offenders to change their behavior and thought process. The first exercise would serve as a primer for the probation officer to experience how individuals, themselves included, have a different way of perceiving the external world and how this process can affect the internal world of the perceiver.

First Session

The first session would utilize the Dimensions of Cognition (DOC) instrument developed by Jack Presbury, Jerry Benson, Jon Fitch and Ed McKee. The DOC provides a way of understanding yourself better through a process of gaining clearer knowledge of how you take in and use information. The instrument is comprised of 45 items on which you are asked to endorse one of two pairs of words or short phrases that is most like you. The result of the survey will provide the participant with three dimensions of knowing, with two poles on each dimension. The names given to the dimensions: Prehension (refers to whether one processes information at an abstract or a concrete level); Purview (refers to how much deliberate conscious control one exerts over their thought processes); and Paradigm (refers to how tightly or loosely one's thought processes flow). The choices selected by the participants breaks down into a preference for how the participant takes in and uses information, much like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in that the result provides one's preference and does not preclude one from employing characteristics from the opposite side of the pole.

The end of each pole is identified by a color that represents a style or mode: white (the thinker) and green (the doer) on the Prehension dimension; blue (the controller) and

red (the dreamer) on the Purview dimension; and black (the legalist) and yellow (the stylist) on the Paradigm dimension. The DOC provides a list of traits associated with each style.

The purpose envisioned for the use of the DOC is to provide the officers with the recognition for how they take in their environment and explore how this might affect them personally and professionally. It is hoped this exercise could engender a conversation that would open the officers' mind to consider alternatives, especially if the officer finds a "stuckness" in his or her processing style in working with offenders and could consider using traits associated with the opposite end of his or her preferred style.

Second Session

The second session would open with a discussion on what the probation officers' view as his or her purpose is in working with the offender and what constitutes success in fulfilling the stated purpose? The group would then be presented with several problems to solve, which would perturb the participants and open his or her mind to consider alternatives to inflexible solutions.

The first problem would be the nine-dot problem that Watzalick, et al. (1974) introduced as an example of a second-order change because the solution requires the solver to go beyond the self-imposed constraint of the dots; and thus, creating not a change in the solution, but a change in the systemic nature of the problem.

The second problem introduced would be the impossible figure that requires the participants to replicate an image displayed on the blackboard or poster-board. Again, the purpose would be to perturb the participants into considering other solutions.

These problems would help generate emotional arousal for the participants and allow them to go beyond seeking to solve problems in the same ineffective way. The session would end with the facilitator posing the question on how these exercises might apply to the work of the probation officers.

Third Session

The third session would involve a demonstration by two probation officers acting as a teacher and a learner, attempting to duplicate an object made of Duplo™ blocks, in front of the rest of the group. Nichols (2002) developed this technique to teach educational and developmental psychology undergraduates about Piaget's theory of learning.

The teacher and learner would sit back to back and the teacher will provide instructions on how to replicate a pre-assembled asymmetrical structure of blocks to the learner, who has a group of unassembled blocks that identically matches the shape and number of blocks used in the assembled structure. The learner is not able to talk and must rely solely on the instructions given by the teacher on how to build the structure. The exercise will provide the observers with a concrete example of how difficult it is for the teacher and the learner to accomplish the task. The facilitator would have the group entertain a series of reflective questions on how this exercise might apply to the work between probation officers and offenders; and, how it might apply to the VADOC's attempts to get the probation officers to try something new and different.

Fourth Session

The fourth session would involve the facilitator educating the group on the Karpman Drama Triangle created by Stephen Karpman in 1967 based upon the

transactional analysis theory developed by Eric Berne. The triangle incorporates three roles or positions that individuals assume in relation with another: the victim, the persecutor, and the rescuer. The patterns that develop, as individuals switch roles, create difficulties in the relationship.

The facilitator would invite the participants to consider how probation officers might experience each of the roles in relationship with offenders and further, explore how this pattern can create an energy drain and lead to burn-out. The facilitator would discuss the benefits of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and further, expand on how MI maintains the responsibility for change on the other person and allows the probation officer to not assume the role of rescuer, persecutor, or victim.

Conclusion

In the hope of changing the way the probation officer interacts with the offender, the VADOC has to change itself: It must have to become less about “doing to someone” and more about “being with someone” that makes change possible. As Cowan (2005) explains, the relationship should exist on the level of an “I-Thou” rather than an “I-It.” In this manner, we, the “change” agents must be willing to be the “change” we want to see in the other.

It is my hope that the sessions described in this paper will provide the “Trojan Horse” allowing the probation and parole officers to accommodate “being” different with the offender and reduce his or her resistance to providing a motivational and collaborative relationship as being less effective than compliance and control.

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