AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT GROUP AT M.C.I., CONCORD

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History

In 1963, a handful of prisoners founded the Self-Development Group as a means of meeting the problems posed by their incarceration in M.C.I., Concord. The rationale behind the organization was based on the premise which governed the founding of _Alcoholics Anonymous_, i.e., that prisoners, like alcoholics, can be of service to one another in the elimination of a habit harmful to themselves as well as society, that crime, like alcoholism can be significantly curbed by the moral support achieved through group identification.

The forerunner of SDG was a small group composed of inmates who were administered a drug, psilocybin, by Timothy Leary of Harvard University and his associates. It was hoped that the primary effect of this drug would be to permit the inmates at Concord to gain the necessary insight into themselves as a first step in their ultimate adjustment to roles as productive and spiritually healthy citizens. This so-called "mushroom experiment", however, was short-lived, for, although Leary and the inmates with whom he worked claimed positive results, the contract between Concord authorities and Harvard University was not renewed.

Today, self-realization is attained, not through the use of drugs, but through awareness that others exist with similar needs and problems, and through association with these persons in an intimate group environment. The stated purpose of the Self-Development Group is "to reduce the recidivism of people released from correctional institutions. It seeks to serve this end by using prisoners and released prisoners to prevent the committing of new crimes and parole violations by releasees, and to help change the attitudes of potential criminal in the community".[1]

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[1]Self-Development Group Pamphlet

Membership in SDG is based on the "desire to remain out of prison and a willingness to help others do the same."[2] The basic unit of the organization is the binary group with 10 members. A ten-member "center" group is responsible for the program's administration. The group holds weekly meetings lasting approximately 1 1/4 hours with the emphasis on participation and discussion.

The purpose of this paper is to present some preliminary findings of the research carried out on the Self-Development Group thus far. These findings are indicative of the types of inmates who compose the membership of SDG and the degree to which these inmates may be considered "risks" in terms of an expected recidivism rate. Hopefully, a more intensive study will be completed pending the gathering of more data relative to the general Concord population.

Procedure

The sample employed in the study consisted of 126 members and former members of SDG. These were compiled from three lists supplied to the Department of Correction, one obtained from the Executive Director of SDG, a second from the Superintendent at Concord, and the third from a "binary" group observer. Data pertaining to each person were collected from parole summaries on file at the Department of Correction. A sample data sheet is attached to this report (See Appendix A). Information was translated into a numbers code which was subsequently punched on data cards. The cards were machine sorted; information was recorded, and set down in charts.

In order to make the SDG results more meaningful, a study[3] conducted by Metzner & Weil of Harvard University was used as a basis for comparison.

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[2]Ibid

[3]Ralph Metzner & Gunther Weil, "Predicting Recidivism: Base Rates for Massachusetts Correctional Institution, Concord" J. Crime Law, Criminology & Police Science (Sept., 1963.

Statistical information was set down under the heading "Self-Development Group" and "General Concord Population", which is the label I have attached to Metzner & Weil's 311 member sample. Numerals were translated into percentages to facilitate comparison where possible. Variables were placed under two groupings: "Background Information" and "Institutional History", the former taking in such factors as race, marital status, employment record, military record, and education, and the latter including prior arrests, prior penal commitments, age at first arrest, etc. Where blank spaces appear under "General Concord Population" and opposite certain variables, the reader will take note of the lack of information pertaining to that variable. Chi-Squares were used to determine the statistical significance of variations existing between the two groups. The Concord study was helpful in determining the types of inmates which compose the membership of SDG and to what extent they differ from the general Concord population.

An important question to be considered here also is to what degree SDG members may be considered "risks" in terms of recidivism as opposed to non-members. A study[4] conducted by Carney & Bottome was done as a means of evaluating the impact of the psychotherapeutic treatment program at Walpole. It is mentioned here for purposes of comparing and contrasting SDG membership at Concord with participants in psychotherapy at Walpole. Psychotherapy group therapy, vocational and educational programs st state institutions, are all designed to achieve the same goal - minimizing the return rate of their participants. SDG is a relative newcomer in the field of treatment. Its program offers an alternative or, perhaps, a supplement to other programs. Since the focus of this paper is primarily descriptive, there is no attempt to evaluate the performance of SDG in its rehabilitative function, but, rather, this report serves as an introduction to the types of inmates who compose its membership

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[4]Francis J. Carney & Estelle D. Bottome, An Evaluation of a Mental Health Program in a Maximum Security Correctional Institution, November, 1967

It is too soon to ascertain the success or failure of SDG as an experiment in
rehabilitation (without further research). However, it is possible to speculate
as to the ease or difficulty with which SDG carries out its function, by arriving
at an expected recidivism rate, thus determining the "risk" value of SDG participants.
The expected rate of recidivism was derived from the five base expectancy categories,
used in the Metzner & Weil's study[5] These included prior commitments, prior arrests,
type of offense, age at last commitment, and race. The Concord researchers used a
$2\frac{1}{2}$ year follow-up period as a basis for their investigation into the rate of return
of the general prison population. Thus, the figure which we arrived at as
representing the expected recidivism rate of SDG members is what the percentage of
return is likely to be, given the information now available, $2\frac{1}{2}$ years after release
from prison.

Findings

Type of Offense

In "type of offense" for which a person was incarcerated, no significant
difference existed between Self-Development group members and the general Concord
population. Crime against person[6]was the offense for which both groups were most
frequently incarcerated, with exactly one in three persons in the Self-Development
Group having committed that type of offense, and approximately one in three persons
in the general Concord population having done the same. The greatest difference in
percentages was evident in offense against property. The proportion of those
persons in the general Concord population who were incarcerated for crimes against
property was five percentage points higher than the Self-Development Group. Sex
offenses and other offenses revealed only slight variations. (See Appendix C, Table I).

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[5]For a detailed explanation of the derivation of the base expectancy categories, see
Metzner & Weil. op. cit., pp. 5-10

[6]For a breakdown of the categories of offenses, See Appendix B.

Number of codefendants

This information was not available in Metzner & Weil's study relevant to the

general Concord population. However, it is possible to draw some implications from

the data collected on the SDG group. 54.8% of the 126 SDG members were not alone

in the commission of their crimes. Of this 54.8%, ten SDG members, or 14.5% had

codefendants who were also involved in SDG and its program. The significance of

this can only be hypothesized, but, perhaps, since for the majority, crime was a

group experience, the success of a rehabilitative program depends on its also being

a group enterprise. (See Appendix C, Table 2)

Age at incarceration

A glance at the percentages set down on the table beside the above variable

reveal that the SDG membership is significantly younger than the general Concord

population (p < .05). Studies conducted in recent years have indicated that age

is an important factor in recidivism, i.e., the younger the offender, the greater

the likelihood of a return to a correctional institution.[7] Thus, it would appear

that SDG membership is composed of greater "risks" in terms of recidivism. The

task of SDG, then, in realizing its goal of reducing the rate of return of its

members once released from prison, is complicated by this fact. The success of SDG

as a rehabilitative program may be measured by the recidivism rate of its membership.

Hopefully, the study to be conducted later will determine its progress in that area,

utilizing this yardstick. (See Table 3)

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[7]Recidivism, as defined by the Department of Correction, is "the return to a state
or federal prison, or a House of Correction within 4 years of release."

Background Information

Information relating to the background of SDG members indicates that a majority are white, single, school dropouts, with poor employment records and no military experience.(Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) It was possible to compare SDG and the general Concord population on only two variables. ."Military record" showed little variation between the two groups. (p $<$.20) However, it is interesting to note the variations existing between the groups under "race". The proportion of Negro in SDG is 6.4 percentage points higher than in the general Concord population. The Walpole study is important here, for it indicates that the therapy sample had 14.8% non-whites as opposed to 34.8% in the non-therapy sample. Yet the impact of the psychotherapy program was negligible as an influence in reducing recidivism, for while the non-whites in the non-therapy samples had a return rate of 66.7%, the non-whites in the therapy sample had a return rate of 64.7%, a difference of only 2%. (see Appendix D, Table 1) The implications of this are clear. The Self-Development Group at Concord attracts considerably more Negros to its ranks than does the psychotherapy program at Walpole (24.4% as opposed to 14.8%). Yet, close to 65% of the Negros in therapy return to a correctional institution within four years of release. If psychotherapy, as these figures demonstrate, is of such minimal impact in curtailing the return rate of its non-white participants, perhaps an alternative program, such as SDG, is needed. As previously mentioned, a subsequent study will determine the effectiveness of SDG in terms of the return rate of its members.

Institutional History

Prior Arrests, Prior Penal Commitments; Age at First Arrest

In recent research, the three variables, "number of prior arrests", "prior arrests", "prior penal commitments", and "age at first arrest" have been found to be salient factors in predicting recidivism. (See Appendix C, Tables 9, 10, and 11)

The variations existing between the general Concord population and SDG under "number of prior arrests" is not significant in terms of probability (p < .20), but an examination of the percentages reveal that 66.7% of the SDG membership had six or more arrests as opposed to 55.6% of the general Concord population. 26.4% of the general Concord population had no prior penal commitments, while only 18.3% of the SDG group could claim an unblemished record of commitments. Thus, it is clear that SDG membership, overall, had longer records than the general Concord population. On "age at first arrest", the difference between the two groups proved strikingly significant (p < .05) SDG membership is composed of more inmates who were arrested for crimes at an earlier age than the general Concord population. 45.2% of those in SDG were first arrested at an age under 14 years as opposed to 37.3% of the general Concord population. This is particularly important when examined in the light of conclusions arrived at by the Walpole researchers. Carney and Bottome found that "psychotherapy per se is not enough to intervene in the criminal patterns of younger inmates with longer records (See Appendix D, Tables 2, and 3). This type of inmate did not seem to be an appropriate candidate for therapy. The crucial question, then, is what kind of program or combination of programs will be effective with this type of inmate".[8]   The implications of this finding are clear. A comparison of the general Concord population with SDG has shown that SDG membership has absorbed a type of inmate, the youthful offender with a long record, who is most difficult to rehabilitate through a psychotherapy program. Perhaps the "crucial question" posed by Carney and Bottome, then, will remain rhetorical until SDG, among other alternatives to therapy, is evaluated as a means of treating the habitual offender.

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[8] Carney & Bottome, op. cit., p. 17

Behavior Disorders, Institutional Conduct

SDG members were not arrested significantly more or less on charges of drunkenness or drug abuse than the general Concord population. Institutional conduct, when measured in terms of "good time credits", showed little variation between the groups. (See Appendix C, Tables 12 and 13)

Counseling Service

The important fact which emerges from an examination of Table 14, is that 40% of the SDG membership is involved in individual, group therapy, or both. However, the majority of SDG membership (60%) is not involved in either of these treatment programs. The following study will consider the question as to whether or not SDG, without the supplementary force of psychotherapy and its concomitant professionalism, is sufficient to alter well-established patterns of criminal behavior.

Number of SDG Meetings Attended Inside, Time in SDG or Outside Prison Associates in SDG

The records on "number of meetings attended inside" were incomplete, so the figures must not be accepted as completely accurate. The minutes of the SDG meetings revealed that the majority of SDG members have attended 20 meetings or less. Only five have attended more than 50 (Table 15). However, the large proportion of SDG members with no record of attendance eliminates the possibility of correlating attendance at meetings and rate of return. Approximately half of the total 126 SDG members have attended meetings once released. (Table 16) In the Walpole therapy Sample, 23.7% continued treatment after release. Perhaps the difference in the degree of participation in SDG on the other hand, and therapy in after-care clinics on the other can be explained by the shortage of professional personnel trained in psychotherapy and the consequent inability of all those in need to receive treatment. The very nature of SDG as an organization controlled by non-professionals and of the same breed as the clientele itself make it more readily accessible to the released offender.

Almost 41% of SDG members have friends or close prison associates in SDG. This fact may or may not contribute in part, to the group cohesiveness of SDG and its ultimate success as a rehabilitative program. (Table 17)

Time Served and Type of Release

The general Concord population, as a whole, has served less time in prison than have the 126 members of SDG for, proportionately, the same types of offense.(Table 18) The impact of "parole" as a factor in determining the length of sentence served, as indicated by the figures (p $<$ .70) is negligible. Neither can the number of parole violators in each group be used as a basis for comparison. As yet, the reasons for the existence of this fact are unclear and any conclusions which might be arrived at depend upon future research.

City Released To

Better than 3/4 of the SDG members were released to urban areas. Almost 1/3 were released to Boston, the only city, besides Springfield where an ex-convict may attend SDG meetings. Of the 40 who lived in Boston once released, eighteen in fact, resumed attendance at SDG. Most of the remaining 25 who continued membership in SDG on the outside came from the Springfield area or suburban Boston. (Table 20)

Summary and Conclusions

An analysis of the types of inmates who compose the membership of SDG has shown that they do not differ appreciably from the general Concord population with two exceptions. On the variables, "age at incarceration", and "age at first arrest", two two groups varied significantly. The relative youthfulness of SDG members is a factor which must be noted, for it points to a problem which the SDG program must solve if it is to be rated successful in achieving its purpose of reducing recidivism - rehabilitating the young offender, the major target for concern. "Race" and "total time incarcerated", while not statistically significant still varied sufficiently to be worthy of consideration. The fact that more Negros make up the SDG membership than that of the general Concord population on the Walpole therapy sample, and that SDG members, in general, serve longer sentence for proportionately the same type of offenses is an indication that the Self-Development Group is taking in greater "risks" in terms of recidivism. In order to substantiate this conclusion, an expected recidivism rate for the 126 SDG members was derived from five base expectancy categories employed by Metzner & Weil in determining the recidivism rate of the 311 members of the general Concord population. The Concord researchers found a 56% rate of return 2½ years after release for the general Concord population. (See Appendix E, Table II) The expected rate of return of the SDG membership, is 60% a difference of 4% (Appendix E, Table I) Thus, the success or failure of SDG in terms of rehabilitating the habitual offender may be measured by the degree to which the actual recidivism rate deviates from the expected recidivism rate.

Appendix A

DATA SHEET FOR SDG STUDY

1. Name_____

2. Institution Number_____

3. Offense_____

4. No. of Codefs._____

   - No. in SDG_____

5. Date of Incarceration_____

6. Date of Birth_____

7. Age at Incarceration_____

8. Race_____

9. Marital Status_____

10. Military Service_____

11. Good Time Withheld_____

12. No. of prior arrests_____

   - for Drunkenness_____

   - for Narcotic Offs._____

13. Age at 1st Arrest_____

14. No. of prior State or Federal

   Comms._____

   - No. of parole viols._____

15. No. of H. of C. or Jail Comms._____

16. No. of Juv. Incarcerations_____

17. ,Education (highest grade

   completed)_____

18. Employment Record_____

   _____

   _____

19. Family Interest_____

   Visits_____

   Letters_____

20. Other Outside Interest_____

   Visits_____

   Letters_____

21. Counseling Service ?_____

22. Mushroom Experiment ?_____

23. Length of Time in SDG on Inside

   _____

   No. of meetings_____

24. Time in SDG on Oytside_____

   No. of meetings_____

25. Associates (in Concord)_____

   No. in SDG_____

26. AGCT_____

27. Date released_____

28. Time served_____

29. Type of release_____

30. City released to_____

31. Further Commitments_____

   Offense_____

   Date_____

32. Parole Violation_____

   Arrest ?_____

   Date_____

OFFENSE AGAINST PERSON

Murder, 1st degree
Murder, 2nd degree
Manslaughter
Armed Robbery
Unarmed Robbery
Aggravated Assault
Other Assaults
Abortion
Kidnapping

OFFENSE AGAINST PROPERTY

Burglary
Larceny
Forgery, Uttering
Cemmon & Notorious Thief
Arson
Possession of Burglarious Tools
Receiving, Selling Stolen Goods
Extortion

SEX OFFENSE

Rape
Carnal Abuse
Indecent Assault & Battery
Open & Gross Lewdness
Incest
Sodomy
Adultry
Unnatural Act
Polygamy

OTHER OFFENSES

Narcotic Offenses
Unlawful Use of Auto
Weapons Offense
Deriving Earnings From Prostitute
Escape & Assisting Escape
Hit & Run

Appendix C

	SELF-DEVELOPMENT GROUP		GENERAL CONCORD POPULATION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent

1. TYPE OF OFFENSE

against person	42	33.3	87	31.0
sex offense	9	7.1	25	8.9
against property	26	20.6	72	25.6
other	16	12.7	28	10.0
parole violaters	33	26.2	69	24.6

$$X^2 = 2.05$$
$$df = 4$$
$$p < .80$$

2. NUMBER OF CODEFENDANTS

none	57	45.2
one	37	29.4
two - three	28	22.2
four and over	4	3.2
codefendants in SDG	10	7.9

3. AGE AT INCARCERATION

12 - 19	42	33.3	76	24.4
20 - 24	54	42.9	121	38.9
25 - 29	23	18.3	77	24.8
30 and older	7	5.6	37	11.9

$$X^2 = 8.22$$
$$df = 3$$
$$p < .05$$

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. RACE

White	94	74.6	252	81.0
Non-White	32	25.4	59	19.0

$$X^2 = 2.28$$
$$df = 1$$
$$p < .20$$

5. MARITAL STATUS

Single	95	75.4
Married	16	12.7
Divorced-Seperated	15	11.9
Other	0	0

	SELF-DEVELOPMENT GROUP		GENERAL CONCORD POPULATION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6. EMPLOYMENT RECORD				
never employed	3	2.4		
regular	3	2.4		
irregular	13	10.3		
casual	101	80.2		
student	3	2.4		
no data	3	2.4		
7. MILITARY RECORD				
none	90	73.2	191	61.4
dishonorable	1	.8	22	7.1
honorable	21	17.1	64	20.6
undesirable	11	8.9	34	10.9

$$x^2 = 4.68$$
$$df = 3$$
$$p < .20$$

8. EDUCATION				
6th grade or less	14	11.1		
7th and 8th	52	41.3		
9th - 11th	40	31.7		
high school grad or beyond	7	5.5		
special or ungraded classes	12	9.5		

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

9. PRIOR ARRESTS				
none	4	3.2	23	7.4
1 - 5	38	30.2	115	37.0
6 - 10	50	39.7	109	35.0
11 - 20	29	23.0	57	18.3
over 20	5	4.0	7	2.3

$$x^2 = 6.36$$
$$df = 4$$
$$p < .20$$

10. PRIOR PENAL COMMITMENTS				
juvenile	15	11.9	24	7.7
jail or H of C	20	15.9	55	17.7
state or federal	7	5.6	20	6.4
combination	61	48.4	130	41.8
none	23	18.3	82	26.4

$$x^2 = 5.30$$
$$df = 4$$
$$p < .30$$

	SELF-DEVELOPMENT GROUP		GENERAL CONCORD POPULATION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent

11. AGE AT FIRST ARREST

	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 14	57	45.2	116	37.3
15 - 19	56	44.4	141	45.3
20 - 24	9	7.1	41	13.2
25 and over	0	0	13	4.2

$$x^2 = 9.70$$
$$df = 3$$
$$p < .05$$

12. BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Drunkenness	35	27.8	65	20.9
Narcotics	7	5.6	12	3.9

$$x^2 = .023$$
$$df = 1$$
$$p < .90$$

13. INSTITUTIONAL CONDUCT

	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
no good time withheld	96	76.2	235	75.6
withheld	30	23.8	73	23.5

$$x^2 = .40$$
$$df = 1$$
$$p < .70$$

14. COUNSELING SERVICE

	Number	Percent
none	76	60.3
group therapy	31	24.6
individual therapy	13	10.3
both	6	4.8
mushroom experiment	4	3.2

15. NUMBER OF SDG MEETINGS ATTENDED INSIDE

	Number	Percent
1 - 10	44	34.9
11 - 20	20	15.9
21 - 50	11	8.7
over 50	5	4.0
no record of attendance	46	36.5

16. TIME IN SDG ON OUTSIDE

	Number	Percent
none	83	65.9
some	43	34.1

	SELF-DEVELOPMENT GROUP		GENERAL CONCORD POPULATION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent

17. PRISON ASSOCIATES IN SDG

none	52	41.3		
some	51	40.5		
no associates	11	8.7		
no data available	12	9.5		

18. TIME SERVED

one year	54	46.2	173	55.6
more than 1 year	63	53.9	138	44.3

$$x^2 = 3.06$$
$$df = 1$$
$$p < .10$$

19. TYPE OF RELEASE

parole	90	71.4	236	75.6
discharge	25	19.8	76	24.4
other	3	2.4		
still serving	8	6.3		

$$x^2 = .33$$
$$df = 1$$
$$p < .70$$

20. CITY RELEASED TO

Boston	40	31.8
urban (25,000-499,000)	53	42.1
town (100 to 24,999)	8	6.3
Half-Way House or Hospital	6	4.8
unknown	4	3.2
outside Massachusetts	7	5.6

21. TYPE OF RETURN

New Commitment	6	4.8
Parole Violation	33	26.2
Total	39	30.9

22. LENGTH OF TIME BEFORE RETURNED

1 - 6 months	13	10.3
7 - 12	17	13.5
13 - 18	5	4.0
19 - 24	4	3.2
25 and over	0	0

Appendix E

Pregnostic Configuration Table for 126 Men

in the Self-Development Group

No prior commitments N=23 33% Return		
	No prior arrests N=4	22% Return
	Some prior arrests N=19	37% Return
Scme prior commitments N=103 64% Return Expected Recidivism Rate 60%	Offense: Sex Offenders on Parole Violation N=38 49% Return	Age at commitment 24 or less N=27
		60% Return
		Age at commitment more than 24 N=11 30% Return
	Offense: against person, against property, combination N=65 68% Return	Whites 45 N=45 67% Return
		Other; 20 N=21 80% Return

Table II

Prognostic configuration table for 311 men

released from Concord during 1959

No prior commitments	No prior arrests	
	N=23	22% Return
N=82		
33% Return	Some prior arrests	37% Return
	N=59	

Some prior commitments	Offense: sex offenders or parole violators	Age at commitment 24 or less N=44 60% Return
N=229	N=71	
	49% Return (Group "Y")	Age at commitment more than 24 N=27 30% Return
64% Return		
Recidivism Rate 56%	Offense: against person, against property, combination N=158	Whites N=137 67% Return
	68% Return (Group "X")	Others N=21 86% Return