

**Community Building:  
A Cooperative Learning Model  
For Reading Performance  
In A Medium-Security Prison**

**Research Findings**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

A substantial body of research has shown that when students work together in groups and are rewarded based on the learning of all the group members, they achieve consistently more than students who are in traditionally taught classes. The goal of this project was to test the effects of an innovative group process intervention technique on reading performance among a population of incarcerated adult males in a medium-security prison in Louisiana. This model, referred to as "Community Building" (CBGP), has been utilized among other ways as an intervention technique to resolve organizational/personnel problems in private, business, university, and government settings. It can involve groups of 40 - 60 participants. The research goal was to test its efficacy as an educational tool in teaching reading in an adult education program.

The research design, which can be classified as a pretest-posttest comparison-group experimental design, called for three groups of inmates randomly assigned to the following conditions:

(a) Experimental group - CBGP and SRA Reading Program; (b) Control group 1 SRA reading program only; (c) Control group 2 untreated.

The dependent variable was reading performance according to three sets of scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The independent variables consisted of the CBGP intervention and the reading program as outlined above.

Analysis-of-variance statistical technique was used to test the hypothesis (at the .05 level of statistical significance) that mean GM-gain scores would be significantly greater for the experimental group than the two control groups. Analysis of the data supported the effectiveness of the community-building technique on the reading program.

A summary of potential utilization of the community-building intervention technique in corrections and a brief discussion of psychosocial effects of the program are included in the text.

## **GROUP INTERVENTION AND READING PERFORMANCE IN A MEDIUM-SECURITY PRISON**

A substantial body of research has been collected over the last two decades on cooperative learning methods, in which students work in small heterogeneous learning groups (Slavin, 1987). In more than 50 field experiments of four to thirty weeks duration, Slavin (1983a, 1983b) established that when students work together in groups and are rewarded based on the learning of all group members, they achieve consistently more than students in traditionally taught classes.

The groups in the cooperative learning model have typically been small (8-12 members), as is also the case in group therapy programs such as those being offered by corrections systems. However, during the past several years, M. Scott Peck (1987) has developed a group process model referred to as "Community Building" that can involve up to 60 participants. Peck's approach has been used as an intervention technique to resolve organizational/personnel problems in private business, university, and government settings.

### **Overview**

Participants are gathered together in a circle for two or three eight-hour days having in mind a single goal or commitment -- to become a "true community" (Peck, 1987, p. 59). The workshop is entirely experiential; that is, the members of the group do not receive instructions on how-to become a community or how to behave in a community. Peck's reasoning is that passive learning, while easy, is almost invariably shallow; experiential learning, on the other hand, although demanding, is infinitely more profound and rewarding. In accordance with the community building model, only a few "ground rules" regarding communication and commitment are offered by the workshop leaders:

- (a) Each participant is responsible for the success of the task.
- (b) Participants should voice their displeasure with the group process and share these feelings with the entire group, not to individuals during the break.
- (c) The group must commit to "hang in" through periods of anxiety, frustration, doubt, anger, depression and even despair, which may be expected on the way to community.
- (d) The group must be committed to confidentiality.
- (e) Other procedural norms are established by the two workshop facilitators such as punctuality, the wearing of name tags, and stating one's name prior to speaking.
- (f) Participants are told by the two workshop facilitators that two of the greatest barriers to communication are speaking when one is not moved to do so and failing to speak when one is so moved.

As prescribed by the Peck model, a story, "The Rabbi's Gift," is told to the circle of participants. This is followed by three minutes of silence and the community-building process begins.

## Stages of Community

Though each group is unique, there are identifiable stages through which a group must progress to reach the stage of community:

1. **Pseudo-community** is characterized by politeness, avoidance of overt disagreement, denial of individual differences, belief that a "community" already exists, an indifference/ resistance to the goal of building a community, and unexpressed feelings. The mood of the group may reflect curiosity, hopeful interest, fear and confusion but when these feelings remain unacknowledged, boring group exchanges will result.
2. **Chaos** includes both covert and open conflict. It is quite apparent when attempts are made to "heal and convert" others into adopting a particular way of thinking. Sometimes a group will begin in chaos, particularly when attendance is involuntary. In order to escape the discomfort of chaos, some groups will attempt to organize into subgroups or return to pseudo-community by narrowing the discussion to safer topics. Leaders are often scapegoated during this stage as the reason for the chaos. In a prison setting where power and authority dynamics are strong, mistrust in the leaders' motives is also common.
3. **Emptiness** is the bridge to community. Emptiness refers to the difficult task of letting go of one's barriers to community. Examples of barriers are expectations and preconceptions of community, prejudices, the need to fix or control the group, or the need to appear invulnerable. The experience of recognizing and letting go of these barriers is that of a group surrender.
4. **Community** - Once the group has experienced emptiness, it can enter community. During this stage the group dynamics change dramatically. Characteristics of community include the acknowledgment of and respect for individual differences, shared leadership, spontaneity, quietness, joy, softened conflict, commitment to embracing painful realities, and a greater awareness of the health of the groups as a whole.

The weekly maintenance groups that follow are intended to be long-term communities in which participants can acquire stronger skills in completing the tasks necessary to maintain a community and benefit from its healing effects.

## The Problem of Illiteracy

According to the Louisiana Adult Reception and Diagnostic Center (ARDC) records, 91% of all prison recidivists studied were high school drop-outs and 42% read below the seventh grade level. The rate of illiteracy is approximately 29% according to current ARDC records. While the state correctional system offers reading programs, they have had little success in reducing these rates.

At Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI), the Laubach reading program typified the effort against illiteracy throughout the Louisiana corrections system. The program utilized inmate tutors and offered inmates the opportunity not only to increase their reading skills, but also to enter the GED program. In spite of these opportunities, participation in the project was low and the drop-out rate high. Preliminary interviews with inmates and administration suggested a reason; they indicated a belief system in which revealing one's "weaknesses" in the prison setting would increase one's risk of being mentally and physically abused by other inmate and security personnel. According to those interviewed, illiteracy ranked high on the scale of such "weaknesses."

Though reading programs in prisons have been studied extensively, a review of the literature revealed none which had tested the effects of a group-process intervention technique on improving literacy in a prison setting. This study hypothesized, therefore, (a) that if community, as Peck described it, were possible among a recalcitrant population such as prison inmates, participants would have to learn and practice the concepts therein (i.e., transcendence of individual differences, and peaceful resolution of conflict), and (b) that these concepts should serve as motivation in a self-improvement program such as a project to combat illiteracy. Establishing the concepts of community-building in a self-improvement program would not only benefit individuals in the target population, but would also potentially reduce the state's 75% rate of recidivism.

Dixon Correctional Institute was chosen over other state prisons for the following reasons: (1) inmates live in dormitories of 50-60; (2) it has a known illiteracy problem; (3) educational motivation is low; and, (4) a negative subculture of educational norms prevails as well as deficit of appropriate interpersonal relations and "community".

The purpose of the study was to determine whether significant differences in reading scores would occur among the community reading (treatment) group, the group which received the reading program only, and the untreated group.

### **Sample Population**

Dixon Correctional Institute was chosen as the site for the research for several reasons which included its demographics. The facility is arranged in two separate units - on a single compound. Inmates live in dormitories housing approximately fifty in each. This group size is ideal for the community-building intervention technique (Peck, 1987, p.126). Inmates are assigned to these dormitories by the correctional authorities. Dormitories were chosen to participate in this study through random selection. Each held a population of 50 male adults, approximately 80% Black. Of these, approximately 90% were of medium-security status and were incarcerated for a variety of offenses which included drug abuse and distribution, burglary, bank robbery, rape, and murder. Of these crimes, approximately 80% had some relation to substance abuse.

## Procedure

Of the three dormitories which comprised the study, dormitory 7 was chosen, again by random selection, as the experimental or treatment group to receive the CBGP intervention technique and the SRA reading program. Dormitory A would comprise control group 1 receiving the SRA reading program only. Dormitory B, as control group 2, would remain untreated.

Each group was tested separately with Level D, Form 1 of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test to establish initial levels of reading ability. Five inmates from dormitory 7, four inmates from dormitory A, and five inmates from dormitory B, scored below the qualifying scale for level D. Level B, Form 1 was administered to these inmates, completing baseline reading performances for all participants.

The procedure for the implementation of the two main independent variables, the Community-Building Group-Process (CBGP) intervention and the SRA reading program, was as follows:

(1) CBGP (Experimental group only) -- The treatment group first received the group-process intervention, a two-and-one-half day intensive community-building workshop. The group's task during this time was to achieve a high level of trust, communication, and cohesion characteristic of what Peck (1987) terms "community". This workshop was to be followed by weekly on-going sessions. Attendance was required for the first two weeks; however, the program became voluntary after this time.

(2) SRA reading program (experimental group and control group 1) -- The reading program was based on a model of cooperative learning developed at Johns-Hopkins University (Slavin, 1986). According to Stevens, Slavin, Farnish & Madden (1987), there is a cycle of activities that underlies all of the cooperative learning programs developed at Johns-Hopkins:

1. Teacher instruction
2. Team practice
3. Individual assessments
4. Group recognition

This cycle was adapted as follows:

1. **Teacher instruction.** Initial instruction was given at the first reading session to both groups on (a) the use of the programmed material, and (b) the way the material would be used in the reading groups.

2. **Team Practice.** Using SRA practice materials, inmates worked in mixed-ability learning teams. Depending on the contents being studied, they worked on items and checked answers with each other, drilled each other, discussed and reached common answers, and so on.

3. **Individual assessments.** At the end of the seven-week period, inmates were individually assessed on their learning of the skills contained in the lessons with an alternate form of the G-M instrument. Raw scores were computed to compose average gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and overall scores on the ESS scale (Extended Scale Score).

4. **Recognition.** Inmates received individual certificates of achievement for participation and other awards by group for average gains in overall ESS scores.

The rationale behind this basic cycle of activities was to facilitate incentive among participants to help their teammates learn. The expected contribution of community was that inmates would be motivated to take responsibility for enhancing other's achievement as well as their own. If more literate inmates provided others with elaborated explanations of concepts or skills, they themselves would gain in achievement, Dansereau (1985) and Webb (1985).

The first reading sessions for both reading groups began by arranging participants into groups of five or six. Within each group, there was at least one member with severe reading difficulties and one who had scored very high on the GatesMacGinitie Reading Test. They were then given instruction on how to use the programmed reading material. They were asked to help the members of each group who had difficulties with the reading material, using the appropriate materials provided. Later on, in each session, they would progress to more difficult material but they were instructed to strive toward group reading at all times.

Within the community group, there were members who seemed to become instant reading instructors with the material provided. If Dansereau and Webb were correct, the reading skills of both "teacher and student" should improve. So, it would seem, should the self-esteem of both.

The control group of dormitory A was a fragmented and non-communicative group as dormitory 7 had been before their community-building experience. The mistrust within this group prevented those participants with reading difficulties from revealing that fact and asking for help. They also resisted the other group-reading activities throughout the seven-week period.

## Findings

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique was used to test the general hypothesis that mean or average GatesMacGinitie gain scores would be significantly greater for the experimental group than the two control groups. The variations in reading achievement according to certain background variables such as age, race, education and number of felony convictions was also analyzed. The hypothesis was tested at the conventional .05 level of statistical significance.

Since the sample was chosen in the way described, it was essential to compare this population to the overall population at Dixon. Table 1 presents that comparison. Described are the means, standard deviations and ranges for age, education, and convictions, and percentages for race. Education indicates the self-reported grade level completed by each individual in the study. "Convictions" represents the total number of felony convictions for each. "Race" only indicates black or white as there were no other races represented at the facility. As one can see, the participant population was well representative of the overall population at the facility.

**Table 1**

### Sample / Overall Population

Standard	Mean	Deviation	Range
<b>Age/Sample</b>	29.9	(6.6)	19-49
<b>Age/Overall</b>	29.1	(7.8)	17-55
<b>Education/Sample</b>	10.9	(1.7)	5-15
<b>Education/Overall</b>	10.4	(1.8)	5-16
<b>Convictions/Sample</b>	2.1	(1.2)	1-6
<b>Convictions/Overall</b>	2.1	(1.1)	1-9
	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>	
<b>Race/Sample</b>	83%	17%	
<b>Race/Overall</b>	79.8%	20.2%	

The goal of this study was to test the general hypothesis that mean or average G-M gain scores would be significantly greater for the experimental group than the two control groups. However the variations in reading achievement according to background variables such as age, race, education and number of convictions were also analyzed. Table 2 illustrates the final racial composition of each of the three dormitories at the time they were post-tested with the G-M instrument. Chi-square analysis presented no statistically significant difference among the groups with regard to race.

**Table 2**

**Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Race, by Group**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Whites: Freq.</b>	<b>Whites: %</b>	<b>Blacks: Freq</b>	<b>Blacks: %</b>	<b>X2</b>
<b>Community</b>	4	12.9	27	87.1	16.4
<b>Control - 1</b>	6	18.2	27	81.8	
<b>Control - 2</b>	5	20.0	20	80.0	

Freq. = Frequency  
 p< = n.s.

The entire experimental population is represented in Table 3 which summarizes the means and standard deviations for age and reported grade level by group. Grade levels shown are those self-reported by inmates and represent the level of formal education they claim to have completed. One must keep in mind that illiteracy represents within this stratum of society a personal weakness, and that revealing such a deficit can and does place an inmate at risk for being humiliated or otherwise physically and mentally abused. Therefore these self-reported levels might be expected to be higher than actual levels.

One-way analysis of variance presented no statistically significant difference between the "community" group and the two control groups with regard to age or education.

**Table 3**

**Means and Standard Deviations for Age and Grade Level, by Group**

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Reported Grade Level</b>
<b>Community</b>	31	30.4 (8.3)	10.8 (2.0)
<b>Control – 1</b>	34	28.7 (5.1)	10.7 (1.7)
<b>Control – 2</b>	26	30.6 (5.9)	11.1 (1.1)

Pretest observations of the three groups on the GatesMacGinitie (G-M) Reading Test combined are shown in Table 4. Raw scores for this table have been converted into grade equivalent (GE) and extended scale scores (ESS) for vocabulary, comprehension, and overall performance. The values indicated represent the means and standard deviations for each category. Preliminary analysis revealed no statistically significant difference among groups on pretest scores with regard to the three major criterion variables.

**Table 4**

**Gates-MacGinitie Pretest Observations of the Three Groups**

<b>Combined</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	GE	6.28	2.75
	ESS	519.77	70.69
<b>Comprehension</b>	GE	5.93	2.57
	ESS	508.36	78.23
<b>Overall</b>	GE	6.06	2.50
	ESS	513.65	69.37

**ANALYSIS**

The following tables summarize the effects of the two major independent variables on reading performance. Gains in reading achievement were measured according to three sets of scores on the G-M test: Grade Equivalent (GE) and Extended Scale Scores (ESS) for (a) Vocabulary, (b) Comprehension, and (c) Overall performance.

A summary of average pretest, posttest, and gain scores for grade equivalents and extended scale scores is presented in Table 5. Each of the mean scores is categorized by group, with standard deviations for each in parentheses. A different trend between the experimental group and the two control groups is evident. The data shows that gains for the "community" group appear significantly higher than for the other two groups. For instance, the "community" group averaged a 1.04 grade equivalent gain during the seven week period. Though control group 1 received the same reading program, they posted no gains on the Grade Equivalent Scale nor were gains posted for control group 2.

**Table 5**

**Mean and Standard Deviations for Overall Gates-MacGinitie Grade Equivalent (GE) and Extended Scale Scores (ESS), by Group**

<b>Observation</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Control – 1</b>	<b>Control – 2</b>
<b>Pretest GE Means</b>	5.74 (2.48)	6.10 (2.93)	6.40 (1.86)
<b>Posttest GE Means</b>	6.78 (2.82)	5.96 (2.63)	6.39 (2.08)
<b>GE Gain Means</b>	1.04 (1.15)	-0.14 (1.00)	-0.01 (1.02)
<b>Pretest ESS Means</b>	506.13 (65.44)	509.17 (84.62)	528.46 (49.05)
<b>Posttest ESS Means</b>	530.05 (68.30)	508.55 (75.62)	523.15 (57.91)
<b>ESS Gain Means</b>	23.93 (24.82)	-0.62 (24.41)	-5.31 (25.66)

Table 6 presents the mean gains for the three categories mentioned above on the GE and ESS scales by group. For the purpose of statistical analysis, however, only the ESS scale was utilized to compare growth in achievement of the treatment group with the growth of the other two groups.

Grade equivalents are given to offer terms more familiar to the average reader. They could not be used in the analysis of the data, however, because of the lack of adult norms being established by the authors of the G-M instrument. Table 6 indicates that the mean gain scores in all three categories (vocabulary, comprehension, and overall) and on both scales (Grade Equivalent and Extended Scale Scores) appear greater for the treatment (community) group than for either of the two control groups. A discussion of the way these results relate to the research hypothesis follows on two levels of analysis: (a) analysis of variance for all three groups involved in the experiment and (b) a t-test analysis of the scores from the two groups which received the SRA reading program.

**Table 6**

**Mean Gains for Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Overall Gates-MacGinitie Scores, by Grade Equivalent (GE) and Extended Scale Scores (ESS), by Group**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Control – 1</b>	<b>Control – 2</b>
<b>Vocabulary – Grade Equiv.</b>	0.76	0.06	0.25
<b>Vocabulary – ESS</b>	19.67	2.88	4.73
<b>Comprehension – Grade Equiv.</b>	1.29	-0.33	-0.26
<b>Comprehension – ESS</b>	28.19	-6.73	-11.42
<b>Overall – Grade Equiv.</b>	1.04	-0.14	-0.01
<b>Overall – ESS</b>	23.93	-0.62	-5.31

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

A one-way analysis of variance of ESS gain scores in Table 6 revealed significant differences between groups. Relating the significance to the following hypotheses resulted in the following:

(a) Ho1: Vocabulary: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is accepted ( $F=2.84$ ;  $df=2,88$ ;  $p > F=0.0638$ ).

(b) Ho2: Reading Comprehension: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is rejected ( $F=8.33$ ;  $df=2,88$ ;  $p > F=0.0005$ ).

(c) Ho3: Overall Scores: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is rejected ( $F= 11.9$ ;  $df=2,88$ ;  $p > F=0.0001$ ).

One-way Analysis of Variance: Dormitories 7,A,B (Community, Control-1, Control-2) (refer to Table 6)

H1. ESS Voc	( $F=2.84$ ; $df=2,88$ ; $p > F=0.0638$ )
H2. ESS Comp	( $F=8.33$ ; $df=2,88$ ; $p > F=0.0005$ )
H3. ESS Overall	( $F=11.9$ ; $df=2,88$ ; $p > F=0.0001$ )

## t-Test

Given the, experimental design, it is logical to compare the experimental group and control group 1 independently with t-test analysis as these two groups both received the SRA reading program. The third group remained untreated throughout the experiment. The summary of mean gains in Table 6 confirms the t-test analysis that a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level exists between the two "SRA reading groups" in all three categories. Therefore:

(a) Ho1: Vocabulary: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is rejected ( $t=2,05$ ;  $df=63$ ;  $p=0.0436$ )

(b) Ho2: Reading Comprehension: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is rejected ( $t=3.45$ ;  $df=63$ ;  $p=0.0011$ )

(c) Ho3: Overall Scores: The null hypothesis of no difference at  $p > 0.05$  is rejected ( $t=4.02$ ;  $df=63$ ;  $p=0.0002$ ).

t-test Dormitories 7 and A only (refer to Table 6)

H1. ESS Voc	( $t=2.05$ ; $df=63$ ; $p=0.0436$ )
H2. ESS Comp	( $t=3.45$ ; $df=63$ ; $p=0.0011$ )
H3. ESS Overall	( $t=4.02$ ; $df=63$ ; $p=0.0002$ )

The final analysis (Table 7) consisted of a multiple regression analysis of the independent effects of selected independent variables on overall ESS gains controlling for race, education, age and number of convictions. These variables are operationalized as follows:

- (a) Group: Community Group = 1, Control Group = 0
- (b) Race: Black = 1, White = 0
- (c) Education: Self-reported years of school completed
- (d) Age: Years of age
- (e) Convictions: Number of felony convictions.

The analysis confirmed that none of the independent variables had a statistically significant independent effect except for group: (F=3.54; df=5,55; p>F=0.0076).

**Table 7**

**The Effects of Group on Overall ESS, Controlling for Race, Education, Age, and Number of Convictions: Two Group Model (One-Way ANOVA - Community vs. Control-1)**

Variable	Df	F Value	PR>F (probability)	Significance
Group	1	12.66	0.0008	Significant
Race	1	2.01	0.1621	No Significance
Education	1	0.07	0.7897	No Significance
Age	1	0.02	0.8960	No Significance
Convictions	1	0.64	0.4286	No Significance

(F=3.54; df=5,55; p>F=0.0076)

## Summary of Findings

In Tables 2 and 3, analyses of the data presented no statistically significant difference between the experimental (community) group and the two control groups with regard to age, education, and race.

In the one-way analysis of variance of the ESS gain scores, the null hypothesis regarding vocabulary could not be rejected in that the results ( $p > F = 0.0638$ ) only approached significance. However, at the 0.05 level of significance, the data did not support the null hypothesis for comprehension of overall performance on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Therefore, Ho2 and Ho3 were rejected.

In t-test analysis, a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level was shown between the two groups which received the reading program. The experimental (community) group clearly out gained control 1 in all three categories (vocabulary, comprehension, and overall gain). Therefore, all three of the null hypotheses were rejected. Multiple regression analysis of the independent effect of selected independent variables (age, race, self-reported grade levels, number of felony convictions, and group) confirmed no statistically significant independent effect except for group (community).

Generally, the analysis of the data supported the effectiveness of the Community-Building Group-Process (CBGP) intervention technique on the reading program.

## Discussion

Analysis of the data obtained in the experiment supports the effectiveness of Peck's community-building model in producing significantly higher gain scores for the treatment group. This was not surprising given the environment which developed in the treatment group once it had taken on the characteristics of community. Security officers, for instance, reported that for the first time in their careers, they were seeing inmates carry on meaningful conversations. This was apparently a new phenomenon in dormitory 7 (the community group) where the pervasive atmosphere, until the time of this experiment, had been one of fear and mistrust.

Administrative personnel reported a considerable reduction in rule infractions and a near absence of physical violence in dormitory 7 since the time of its community-building workshop. An examination of disciplinary records for extra duty and isolation appeared to support this trend comparing randomly-selected dormitory E to dormitory 7 and, later on, to dormitory A following its community-building efforts (see Tables 8 & 9).

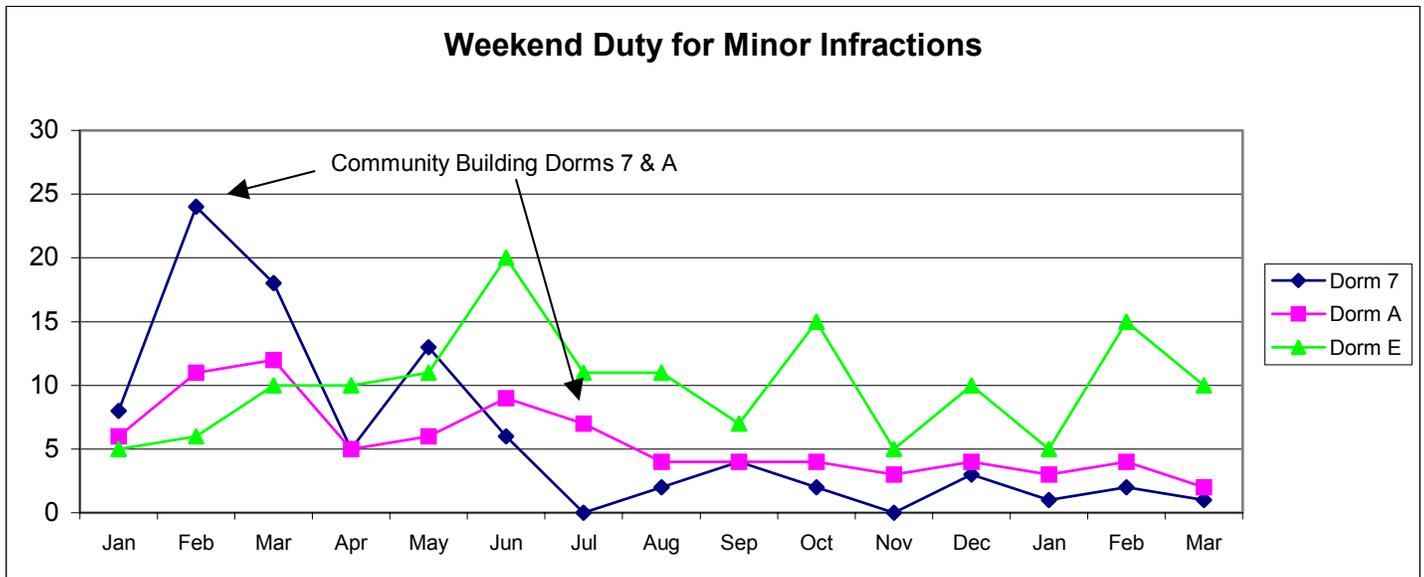
Table 8 presents the results of data collected from DCI records regarding the weekend extra-duty list. Extra duty is used at the prison as punishment for minor infractions of the rules such as defiance and disobedience. This study covers a fifteen month period from January, 1990, to March, 1991, and compares the extra-duty list from two "community" dormitories and a randomly-selected dormitory which was not a "community". For example, in February, 1990, dormitory 7 had a total of twenty-four men on weekend extra duty compared to eleven from dormitory A, and six from dormitory E. A trend of improvement in the two "community" dormitories is apparent.

**Table 8**

**Number of Men on Weekend Extra-Duty Punishment List by Month, 3 Dormitories**

Months	Dorm 7	Dorm A	Dorm E
Jan	8	6	5
Feb	*24	11	6
Mar	18	12	10
Apr	5	5	10
May	13	6	11
Jun	6	9	20
Jul	0	*7	11
Aug	2	4	11
Sep	4	4	7
Oct	2	4	15
Nov	0	3	5
Dec	3	4	10
Jan	1	3	5
Feb	2	4	15
Mar	1	2	10

\* = Community-Building Workshop



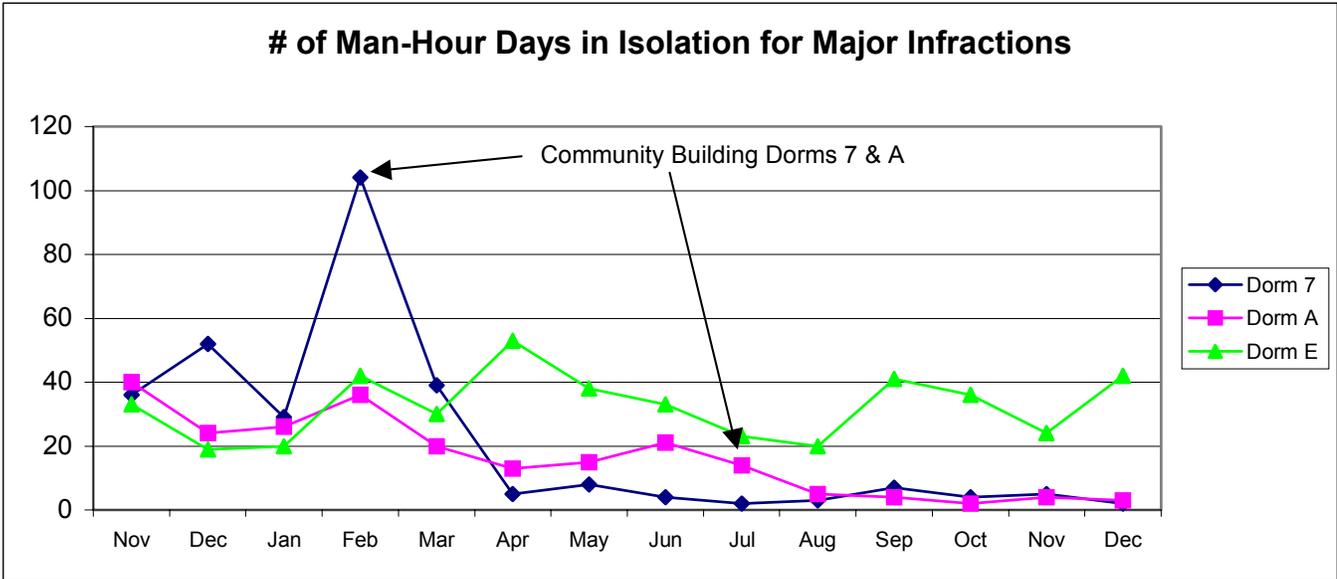
A second study surveyed DCI records in the isolation cellblock where inmates are sent for major rule infractions such as violence and aggravated disobedience. Data from two "community" dormitories and a randomly-selected dormitory which was not a "community" are compared in Table 9 with regard to total number of man-hour days spent in isolation each month (one man-hour day equals one man in isolation for one day). For instance, in February, 1990, inmates from dormitory 7 spent a total of 105 days in isolation compared to 42 in dormitory E and 37 in dormitory A. A trend of improvement in the two "community" dormitories is evident. Dormitory E showed no improvement in either of the two surveys.

**Table 9**

**Number of Man-Hour Days in Isolation by Month, 3 Dormitories**

Month	Dorm 7	Dorm A	Dorm E
Nov	36	40	33
Dec	52	24	19
Jan	29	26	20
Feb	*104	36	42
Mar	39	20	30
Apr	5	13	53
May	8	15	38
Jun	4	21	33
Jul	2	*14	23
Aug	3	5	20
Sep	7	4	41
Oct	4	2	36
Nov	5	4	24
Dec	2	3	42

\* = Community-Building Workshop



As levels of trust increased within the group, inmates with the most severe problems in reading apparently sensed that it was safe to reveal this deficiency and ask for help. Interaction also developed in ways other than that which approached a teacher/student relationship. For instance, as inmates became better acquainted, some would discover that their families (mostly low-income level) lived close to each other and could car-pool to the prison on visitor's day. This discovery reportedly facilitated some visits that would otherwise not have occurred. In one such instance, a black inmate's family which lived near the prison hosted a white family from Virginia so they could afford to visit their son at DCI. Inmates commonly spoke of renewed relationships with family as a result of changes in the nature, style, and frequency of their communication. In general, inmates and security personnel alike reported a lower level of stress within the everyday environment of dormitory 7.

### **Community and Addictions**

Chemical dependency affects a large percentage of the prison population. Invariably in Peck's community model, inmates would share their experiences with alcohol and other drugs. This ranged from reminiscing about the good times to sadly recalling the resulting deterioration of their lives and thinking about their recovery. The effects of the group when it was in Peck's community model proved very effective in addressing the defense mechanisms so inherent in the disease of addictions. Community members learned to discriminate between what was helpful (open listening, sharing brokenness, compassionate confrontations) and what was not (giving unsolicited advice, preaching a "right" way to heal, being judgmental, etc.). For some, there was an experience similar to that of a First Step in a 12-step program: admission of powerlessness and unmanageability.

The healing effects of belonging to a community appeared to offer support for more of the "real self" to emerge and replace the denied self. This openness typically allows for the development of greater trust in oneself and others and in a power beyond one's ego. This process can overcome the initial resistance of many addicts to a specific addictions recovery program or to the difficulty many alcoholics/addicts have with the spiritual nature of these traditional programs. Community building is not addictions treatment but can (and did) have a powerful therapeutic effect in initial intervention, easing the path towards acceptance of addictions treatment. As a concomitant program of treatment, it also appears to offer the possibility of enhancing the effectiveness of treatment and the quality of participation in the 12-step programs.

### **Psychosocial Survey**

A psychosocial survey was administered to 268 inmates to determine if there were any significant differences in the way community members responded compared to "non-community" inmates. The survey is the synthesis of questions derived from a variety of standardized instruments measuring such things as generalized contentment, social relations/support, social anxiety, self-esteem, and loneliness. The results indicated that a significant difference (at the 0.02 level of confidence) does exist between the two groups of participants. The statements which were individually significant seem to fall into several categories indicating more positive responses from community members in relation to self respect, less depression, and enhanced intimacy with others (such as shared feelings and problems, having friends, trust in others). Also, community members answered "true" to the statement, "Fighting is necessary to survive in here," only half as often as "non-community" participants.

## Summary of Potential Utilization of CBGP Intervention in Corrections

In this research project, the community-building intervention proved effective in the enhancement of participation and achievement in Dixon's education program. The experience also demonstrated to researchers that the technique could be employed:

- (a) to initiate a non-directive opportunity for inmates to begin dealing with denial of chemical dependency, acceptance of further treatment, and the need for a long-term recovery program;
- (b) as a management tool for safer institutional environments;
- (c) to enhance probation/parole support in community aftercare groups;
- (d) to support mental health services for inmates through increased opportunities for therapeutic interaction;
- (e) to be used as a conjunctive component in any intensive rehabilitation or pre-release program;
- (f) to motivate personal growth activity;
- (g) to be used as an administrative/management tool for corrections personnel.

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