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Counseling in Federal Probation: The Introduction of a Flowchart into the Counseling Process *John S. Dierna*

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II *Paul W. Brown*

Experimenting with Community Service: A Punitive Alternative to Imprisonment *Richard J. Maher*
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Local Impact of a Low-Security Federal Correctional Institution *George O. Rogers*
Marshall Haimes

of Proprietary Prisons **NCJRS** *Charles H. Logan*

Isolators and the Adult Children **MAN 7 1986** *Eric T. Assur*
Gerald W. Jackson
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ACQUISITIONS

Reform, Retain, and Reaffirm .

Consequences of a Felony Convict Study of State Statutes

Prisoners Through Education.....

Problems: A Pragmatic View

U.S. Department of Justice
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This Issue in Brief

In this issue, the editors are pleased to feature three articles authored by United States probation officers. In that the manuscripts were sent unsolicited, we believe that they offer good indication of issues that are of real interest and concern to persons working in the Federal Probation System. The articles, the first three presented in this issue, discuss counseling offenders, preventing job burnout, and employing community service as a sentencing alternative—information valuable not only to probation officers but to professionals in all phases of criminal justice and corrections.

Counseling in Federal Probation: The Introduction of a Flowchart into the Counseling Process.—In many probation officer-probationer/parolee relationships, the potential problems facing clients are not addressed, often because the client does not understand or consciously accept the problem or focus area. To assist Federal probation officers and other change agents in using counseling methods and problem-definition skills, author John S. Dierna introduces a systematic framework. The tool is a flowchart—which defines a variety of processes and decisions which may be pertinent in addressing issues such as, "What is the problem?" The flowchart—which the author applies to an actual probation case—offers a flexible yet structured approach to defining problem areas and defusing the resistive barriers which initially inhibit steps toward problem resolution.

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II.—Paul W. Brown authors his second article for *Federal Probation* on the topic of burnout. While the first article (March 1986) discussed the influence of the bureaucracy on probation officer burnout, this second part emphasizes some specific approaches that management can take to reduce organizationally induced burnout. Noting that organizational behavior can influence staff burnout, Brown points out that the role of the supervisor is vital in reducing the

stress which can lead to burnout. Much can be done to provide a work environment which is healthier for the employee and more productive for the organization.

Experimenting with Community Service: A Punitive Alternative to Imprisonment.—For the past

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Counseling in Federal Probation

The Introduction of a Flowchart into the Counseling Process*

BY JOHN S. DIERNA

United States Probation Officer, Columbus, Ohio

SOcial CASEWORK encompasses a wide range of helping objectives concentrating upon assisting the client(s) in understanding problems and in implementing interventive strategies geared toward problem resolution and increased client social functioning. An important role of the Federal probation officer is one of supervision and relationship formation with a caseload of probationers/parolees. In the probation officer-probationer relationship, the role of the clinician/behavior changer is of vital importance in order that both individuals may gain an understanding of how the major practice question "What is the problem?" applies to the probationer's life. As this question is gradually answered, of equal importance is conceptualizing how problem areas affect the probationer's attitudes/behaviors and exploring the possibility that these problem areas influence the deviant behavior for which he has been indicted, convicted, and sentenced.

The main theme of this article is to introduce a concrete, helpful guide for Federal probation officers that facilitates the counseling process and assists officers in addressing the "What is the problem?" question so important to social work practice. This facilitative process features a flowchart that delineates the basic steps of problems identification and understanding. In addition, the chart's utility and flexibility will be demonstrated by applying the chart to an actual Federal probation case.

The guide contained here is based on the information provided in *The Supervision Process, Publication 106*, Chapter 4, "Probation Officer: Counselor and Broker,"¹ in which the Federal probation officer is encouraged to utilize his natural and educational resources to serve as a helper, broker, and guide to the probationer/parolee's future activities. Since the job of Federal probation officer currently encompasses a myriad of employment responsibilities, it is crucial that flexible yet helpful approaches be developed to assist the Federal probation officer in

realizing the goals and supervision requirements outlined in Publication 106.

The Counseling Process

Federal probation officers frequently are confronted with complex cases and probationer problems, yet they may not use the counseling process as often as they should. Nonetheless, when Federal probation officers assume the responsibilities of providing supervision and establishing a working relationship, they have actually begun the initial phase of the counseling process, a process that should be an active ingredient in the professional relationship. If counseling became the norm rather than the exception in Federal probation, it is possible that clients would begin to disclose more personal problems and areas of concern in their lives, and, consequently, probation officers would begin to identify, understand, and intervene in casework problems.

That the counseling process is neither highly regarded nor widely used may be due to a wide variety of reasons. Possible reasons for the decreased use of counseling methods during the supervision process may be attributed to the following: 1) overwhelming caseloads that prevent effective quality counseling; 2) time constraints (i.e., field work requirements, ongoing investigations, and countless court appointments); 3) lackadaisical attitudes toward the counseling process; 4) unclear role definitions as to the officer's flexibility and use of counseling techniques with probationers; 5) lack of motivation to address problem areas; and 6) probationer's significant fear and resistance to disclosing personal information and issues. Although these six reasons may account for the lack of counseling in probation offices, this officer believes that if concrete, manageable guidelines were introduced to the officers, representing steps in identifying and understanding problem areas, the officers would view the counseling process as a beneficial means of helping the probationer and consequently would use it more often.

*This article was written in 1985 when the author was a probation officer intern in The Northern District of Illinois, Chicago.

¹*The Supervision Process, Publication 106*. Washington, DC: Probation Division, Administrative Office of the United States Courts, 1983, pp. 21-24.

The Flowchart

The flowchart is a "diagrammatic representation of the sequence of activities (or operations) and the logic of the sequence . . . [I]t expresses graphically the logic of decision process . . . and problems in which a series of alternatives and contingencies must be taken into consideration."² The author specifically used a chart because

flow charting is useful in design and development for design problems and approaches to intervention innovation that requires analysis, synthesis and documentation. . . . Flow charting can also be an important aid in establishing procedures for interventions.³

The flowchart on pages 12-13 serves as an organization/guidance tool so that Federal probation officers may simplify the "What is the problem?" stage in counseling. This chart is particularly useful because it provides a detailed yet flexible framework that can be modified according to the probationer's needs and/or the individual style of the probation officer. The operations/sequences of activity are represented by the following symbols:

FLOW DIRECTION



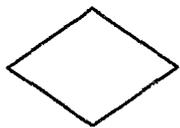
DOCUMENT: Recording or documenting during process



TERMINAL: Starting/ending point



DECISION: Denotes officer's decision regarding which alternative to choose



PROCESS/ACTIVITY



OPERATION 1: Case Overview: Gaining an Initial Sense



In Federal probation, the officer must familiarize himself with each case because of the varying types of offenses, social histories, prior records, and arrest/court records. However, the officer should not dwell on written reports before the probationer is met for the first time; intensive analysis may cloud the picture of the probationer. Oftentimes when an officer has read too much about a case, it negatively affects his listening skills and ability to understand the client's point of view.

OPERATION 2: Scheduling an Appointment



This operation is self-explanatory: An initial interview is scheduled with the probationer (i.e., preferably an office visit).

OPERATION 3: The Beginning: Initial Interview



The initial interview serves as an acclamation process in which two people (i.e., probation officer and probationer) meet with the advanced knowledge that they will be meeting for an extended period of time. During the initial interview process, the important components are as follows:

Suboperation A:

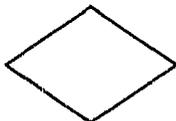


During the initial and subsequent interviews, basic steps of relationship formation are taking place. Although probationers may reject these steps, be fearful of them, or react positively to them, the officer must begin to show the client that he is concerned, interested, understanding, genuine, and available to the subject.

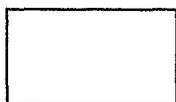
²Edwin Thomas, *Designing Interventions for the Helping Professions*, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1984.

³*Ibid.*, p. 244.

Suboperation B: At some point during the initial interview (or later in the counseling process), the probation officer may decide to implement an anxiety-reducing process, which involves the probation officer discussing the purpose, goals, and components of this professional relationship (i.e., supervision, establishment of an open, working relationship, and counseling, etc.). This process may be introduced to probationers who seem fearful, confused, withdrawn, or anxious.

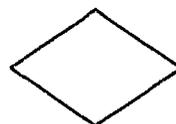


OPERATION 4: Continuous Interviews



This operation is self-explanatory, but must be included in the flow-chart in order to show that interviews/telephone contacts will continue throughout the probationary period.

OPERATION 5: Focus on Resistance—Does it need to be addressed?



After a few interviews, the probation officer should address the issue of client resistance and decide if the level of resistance is manageable and will not hinder the counseling process. If the resistance is viewed as blocking further relationship formation and/or problem disclosure, then it is important for the probation officer to be aware of the resistance and, with the assistance of the client, to begin to diffuse the barrier that exists.

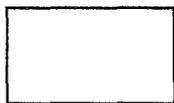
One must realize that resistance is a common obstacle that probation officers and other change agents in the criminal justice system have to confront when dealing with juvenile delinquents and adult criminals. The non-voluntary nature of the probationer needs to be addressed and diffused by reaching an effective median between the officer possessing a level of authority and an expression of genuine concern and involvement in assisting the probationer toward a successful future.

OPERATION 6: Resistance Diffusion (Client-Oriented)



This operation has no time limits, meaning that resistance diffusion could take a short period of time or continue for a majority of the "what is the problem?" phase of the counseling relationship. The resistance diffusion process includes four possible processes which the officer may choose to delete or modify. In addition, personal techniques and processes for resistance diffusion may be implemented at this time.

Suboperation A: A useful technique to diffuse resistance is to acknowledge and confirm the difficulty and awkwardness of forming a non-voluntary, long-term relationship. As the probation officer discusses this difficulty and acknowledges its existence, it is possible that the client will feel more at ease in the interview setting.



Suboperation B: It is also necessary for the probation officer to display a sense of empathic understanding toward the client and his a) difficulty in becoming involved in this type of relationship; b) quiet withdrawal or verbal hostility; and c) fears, hesitations, anxiety, or anger. In many instances, an open ear and a high level of understanding are the necessary components for increased, honest interaction and problem disclosure.



Suboperation C: In accordance with A and B, the probation officer may feel that it is an opportune time to discuss non-threatening areas of the probationer's life in order to encourage him to discuss personal topics. The officer tends to focus on client strengths and successes (i.e., job status, emotional strong points, past/present successes, personal appearance, etc.), because these areas, in many cases, are a source of pride and are usually less threatening to discuss. These types of conversations represent the probation of-



ficer's genuineness, concern for, and trust of the probationer.

Suboperation D:



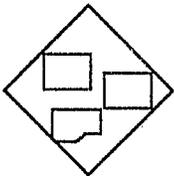
When the probation officer feels that the resistance is beginning to be diffused, then he can begin to use gentle confrontation in order to encourage the probationer to slowly discuss areas of his life that are embarrassing or confusing or problems that directly influence client social functioning.



issues that influenced the deviant behaviors. Possible issues that can be raised about the offense are:

Issue 1: It is important for the probation officer to gain an understanding of what the offense was and how it was committed (i.e., premeditated, committed on a dare, alcohol/drug-related). Such understanding may provide the probation officer with information regarding the probationer's culpability, remorse, criminal intelligence, etc.

OPERATION 7: Resistance Diffusion (Officer-Oriented)



In a profession such as Federal probation where officers work with probationers convicted of perverse, gruesome, violent, and self-destructive crimes, it is understandable that at times the officer is either resistant or lacks empathy in working with the probationer. Therefore, the probation officer should address his own resistance by using the following techniques:



Issue 2: A description of the events leading up to the offense is important because the probationer may begin to describe some of the extenuating circumstances (if they exist) that indirectly/directly contributed to the offense. Possible extenuating circumstances that are present in many probationers' lives include: a) unemployment, b) poverty, c) intense anger at spouse, employer, friend, etc., d) the influence of alcohol/drugs, e) peer pressure, f) intense desire to succeed and get ahead in life, and g) confusion and desperation.

Suboperation A: Appeal to a Higher Authority.



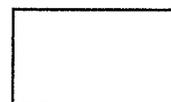
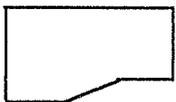
The officer may find it beneficial to discuss the resistance with his immediate supervisor in order to gain advice and guidance in working out the resistance to a manageable level.

Issue 3: This issue is an outgrowth of the preceding question and concentrates on clarifying possible extenuating circumstances and problem areas. At this point in the flowchart, the probation officer is attempting to specify the problem(s) and understand it in workable terms.

Suboperation B: The officer should also rely on past personal and professional practice experiences to aid in diffusing the resistance.

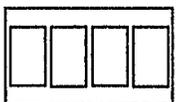


Suboperation C: It is also useful to select applicable applied and basic research studies and findings to add to the probation officer's knowledge base in dealing with resistance and lack of empathy.



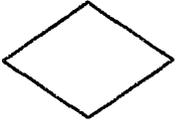
Question 4: It is also beneficial to encourage the probationer to discuss his feelings, in retrospect, regarding the offense. This introspection may enable the probation officer to observe the: a) degree of probationer remorse, b) level of anger at self and/or the criminal justice system, and c) goals that the probationer may express in regard to future behavior, etc.

OPERATION 8: Offense Description



The offense description process allows the probation officer the opportunity to understand the offense from the probationer's point of view, as well as possible problems and

OPERATION 9: Decision to Intervene?



Probation officers should analyze the information and the content of the interviews and reach a decision on whether enough information is present to answer the question "What is the problem?" If there is enough information regarding the specific problem, then the worker/client can move to step 15. If there is a lack of pertinent information, it is necessary to move to operations 10-13, which are sources used to gain further information and insight into problem identification and understanding.

OPERATION 10: Integration of Material



The probation officer continues to closely analyze court records, the presentence investigation report, medical and educational records, and interview material in order to make comparisons and linkages and hopefully to arrive at a more comprehensive view of the problem area(s).

OPERATION 11: Appeal to Higher Authority



It is also useful to consult with supervisors and/or colleagues for guidance, direction, and professional advice regarding the case and the problem focus.

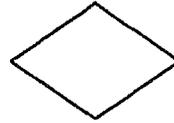
OPERATION 12: Practitioner-Research Component



For counseling to be effective in social services, practitioners need to assume an integrated role of practitioner-researcher in order to gain a practical and theoretical knowledge base of the problem. This dual role also assists other probation officers in future cases that are similar because the treatment outcome research shows effective/ineffective treatment strategies. The probation officer needs to actively seek out reading and research materials related to specific cases,

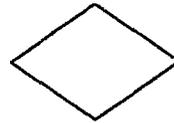
such as theories, studies, and practice guidelines.

OPERATION 13: Evocative Unfolding



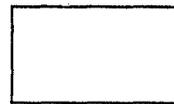
Evocative unfolding is a psychotherapeutic process geared toward encouraging the client to speak about the offense and events leading up to its commission in a way which evokes the original stimulus situation felt at that time. This vivid remembrance enables the client to reexperience and explore his own inner reactions and subjective feelings of relevant aspects of the situation. Use of such technique enables the probation officer and the probationer to further specify and understand the problem. This technique may provide mutual insight into previously hidden, unconscious feelings, attitudes, and behaviors.

OPERATION 14: Use of Various Settings



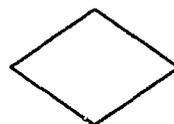
A decision should be made at some point of the "What is the problem?" stage of counseling involving the use of various settings to interview the probationer and significant others. Home visits are an excellent choice because the probation officer can verify information from family members and observe the probationer's behavior and his verbal/non-verbal cues in the family setting.

OPERATION 15: Continued Problem Focusing



The probation officer and probationer continue to share information and ideas about the problem and work hard to conceptualize the problem into real and workable terms.

OPERATION 16: Self-Evaluation of Knowledge and Skills Regarding Probationer Problem



This is a critical period in the flowchart and the overall process because it is at this time that the probation officer must decide if he possesses the required knowledge

about the problem and the necessary skills to intervene, evaluate, and ultimately assist the client to effect change in the problem behavior. If the probation officer is unable to handle the case, he must refer the case to an agency that will assist the client in problem resolution. Upon completion of the counseling referral, the probation officer and probationer will resume the supervision process, with the understanding that the client can disclose problem areas in the future to the probation officer.

OPERATION 17: Double-Check Process



After a decision has been made, it is important to discuss with your supervisor the decision and what the plans are for future work.

OPERATION 18: Probation Officer-Probationer Discussion on Intervention



This operation signifies the end of the "What is the problem?" phase of counseling. From this point on, the probationary relationship will concentrate on implementing appropriate interventive strategies.

The detailed description of the operations in this flowchart enables the reader to gain a sense of possible routes the Federal probation officer can take in the counseling process. As stated earlier, many probationers have problems that need to be addressed in order to reduce the possibility of them committing future criminal offenses. Probation officers can effect change in probationers if they use the flowchart guidelines and mobilize the motivational characteristic of helping professionals.

Although the flowchart and specific steps discussed above are important tools in understanding problems confronting the client, it is important to stress that the flowchart should be used on a selective basis for those clients that appear to be experiencing a problem or resistive barrier which may need to be addressed. The flowchart can be implemented or discontinued at any time based on the client's responsiveness to the processes. Keeping this in mind, the practicality of the newly designed flowchart will be shown by describing its usefulness in the "F" case.

Flowchart Applied to the F Case

Mr. F is a 27-year-old male who was born in the Middle Eastern country of Jordan and moved to the United States in 1974 with his mother, three brothers, and five sisters. Mr. F's father had come to the United States earlier to earn and save money and thus ensure a comfortable lifestyle for his family members.

Mr. F arrived in the United States at the age of 16, and 2 years later graduated from the Chicago public school system. He attended college classes for 2½ years but had to withdraw due to rising tuition costs. Mr. F has held many jobs over the last 6 years and presently co-owns a video cassette rental store in Chicago with his fiancée. Although the business was doing fairly well and it seemed as if life for Mr. F was stable, the events that led up to the committed drug offense are intriguing and involve issues of self-concept, family expectations, cultural values, and tragic circumstances.

Mr. F provided the author with a wealth of knowledge regarding the cultural heritage practiced by his family. The cultural values of Middle Eastern families, such as the F family, include the roles of the father of the household, who is revered by family members and demands respect from all relatives living in the home. The man of the household is in charge of all financial, emotional, and decisionmaking responsibilities that affect his family and those individuals and families that fall under his power. Mr. F stated that his father was not only the ruler of his immediate family, but he was also the chosen man of power and respect of many relatives and families close to the F family. Tragically, in November 1984, Mr. F's father was murdered in front of his grocery store by a group of males who belonged to a neighborhood youth gang. Unfortunately, these youths have not been identified, and, therefore, no arrests have been made, although the case is still being investigated. The principle outcome of this tragic event was that Mr. F, being the eldest son, replaced his deceased father in the familial hierarchy, and thus became burdened with the responsibilities and ultimate power of the head of a Middle Eastern family.

Mr. F admitted to the author that he was, and still is, unable to fulfill the role and responsibilities expected of him because he lacks the financial resources, emotional maturity, and actual knowledge necessary for this new role. This inability to fulfill expectations and to incorporate roles into actual behavior resulted in role conflicts and role ambiguity for Mr. F. These are sociological concepts used

to describe an individual's lack of knowledge about a role or his incapability in assuming prescribed roles. These role conflicts experienced by Mr. F increased his level of stress and solidified his low self-concept.

In January 1985, less than 2 months after his father's death, Mr. F was contacted by a friend who asked him if he would like to earn almost \$70,000 by selling three kilos of heroin. Mr. F initially refused the offer because he knew it was against the law. Mr. F admitted to the author that as time passed and his family became agitated at his increasing ineptness in providing for his family, he agreed to find a buyer for the heroin. Mr. F contacted a friend to validate his interest in the sale; unbeknown to Mr. F, however, this man was a Federal informant who contacted the Federal authorities. Eventually Mr. F and three others were arrested for selling heroin to an undercover DEA agent. Mr. F was convicted of the offense, and after a period of incarceration, he was placed in this officer's caseload.

The summarization of background material provides the reader with a basic understanding of Mr. F and the problems and extenuating circumstances that affected his life and to which, to a large degree, contributed to the offense he committed. Since the first supervision interview with Mr. F, there has been increased problem disclosure and insight, and the implementation of the flowchart, which has enabled this officer to gather specific social history information and insight into specific problem areas that Mr. F wants to resolve. In order to show the effectiveness of the operationalized flowchart (modified to fit this particular case), the author has transcribed the operations that have occurred thus far in the "What is the problem?" phase of the counseling process.

OPERATION 1: Supervisor Consultation--Case Overview



Due to the fact that this officer was a probation officer intern at the time this article was written, all incoming cases were screened by my supervisor to see if they were appropriate for my supervision. After selecting a case, we would discuss the social history, court and arrest records, and conditions of probation/parole in order to familiarize me with basic issues of the case.

OPERATION 2: Self-Understanding of Case



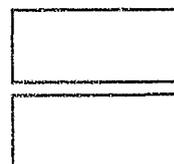
The next step for me was to review the case without advice or guidance from others. This self-analysis and understanding enabled me to gain insight and link information on my own.

OPERATION 3: Scheduling an Appointment



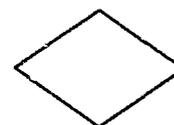
An initial interview was scheduled.

OPERATIONS 4 AND 5: Initial Interview and Relationship Formation



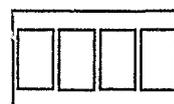
It was during the initial interview that beginning steps of relationship formation took place, although Mr. F was visibly anxious and withdrawn.

OPERATION 6: Resistance Focus--Does It Need to Be Addressed?



After time was spent with Mr. F in office interviews and telephone contacts, it was important to assess the level of resistance that Mr. F was expressing during our conversations. The interviews, to this point, had been informative, yet it was evident that Mr. F was masking feelings regarding his family situation and the problems associated with these relationships. Mr. F also refused to disclose information about the offense and his personal life. Therefore, I assume that Mr. F's resistance was blocking effective problem disclosure, identification, and understanding.

OPERATION 7: Resistance Diffusion (Client-Oriented)



The overall process of resistance diffusion in the F case involved four basic steps/processes that took place during two office interviews. The

utilization of these techniques proved to be effective in diffusing Mr. F's resistance.

Suboperation A: Mr. F stated that he felt helpless in the probation officer/probationer relationship and that although he wanted to talk and discuss problems, he was fearful and hesitant. I acknowledged his fears and feelings of helplessness and tried to introduce a non-threatening environment and the notion that I wanted to understand in order to relax the probationer and open the doors of communication.

Suboperation B: A useful technique that diffused Mr. F's resistance and proved to be an important step in ultimately understanding the question "What is the problem?" was to spend considerable time listening to Mr. F as he explained his Middle Eastern upbringing and the beliefs accompanying this way of life. This proved to be a non-threatening subject for Mr. F to talk about and it enabled him to feel more comfortable. It also afforded me the opportunity to gain an understanding of the norms and cultural values of the Jordanian people

Suboperation C: My process notes, and my general feelings from interviews with Mr. F, indicated that he was highly anxious during our sessions. Therefore, I felt that it was important to mobilize motivation in order to reduce Mr. F's level of anxiety. The mobilization of motivation allows energy to be redirected toward open discussion, problem understanding, and ultimate resolution, instead of being trapped in a highly anxious state. An excerpt from process notes represents Mr. F's anxiousness:

Probation Officer: It seems as if the offense has had a large effect on many aspects of your life Mr. F.

Mr. F: Mr. Dierna, it's draining me. All I want to do is clear this record. I don't want my kids to see it someday. I don't want people talking behind my back about me. But what can I do?

Probation Officer: I wonder if you see yourself as being helpless.

Mr. F: (silence . . . Mr. F lights a cigarette and puffs on it nervously) Yes . . . Yes, I'm nervous. I'm scared. I'm helpless, don't you think?

The fear and anxiety that Mr. F expressed early in the counseling process actually inhibited the relationship formation and counseling activities. Janet Moore-Kirkland states

excessive fear may immobilize a person who deeply desires help . . . As a result, the client may totally avoid the person or situation associated with this anxiety.⁴

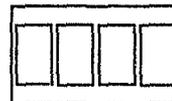
It is important to realize that Federal probation officers directly contribute to the probationer's anxiety and resistance. This is because Federal officers assume a dual role in the professional relationship. They possess the authority to recommend revocation of probation/parole, yet the officer is also encouraged to assume roles of supervisor, advocate, counselor, and concerned listener for these adults. Therefore, it is understandable that many probationers enter the supervisory period expressing fear, helplessness, and anxiety.

In the case of Mr. F, I utilized the activities described by Moore-Kirkland in her chapter on mobilizing motivation, which stated:

Worker empathy and sensitivity to the client's feelings should enable him or her to identify and tolerate these anxieties, help the client verbalize them and accept them while providing realistic assurance and clarification of the worker's purpose and expectations.⁵

Suboperation D: The preceding techniques (A, B, and C) enabled Mr. F and me to move smoothly to technique D, which was to begin to discuss the fears and anxiety and how they inhibited the probation officer and probationer from building an open, honest relationship. The genuineness and concern shown by probation officers are necessary components in assisting the probationer to discuss feelings and problem areas.

OPERATION 8: Offense Description

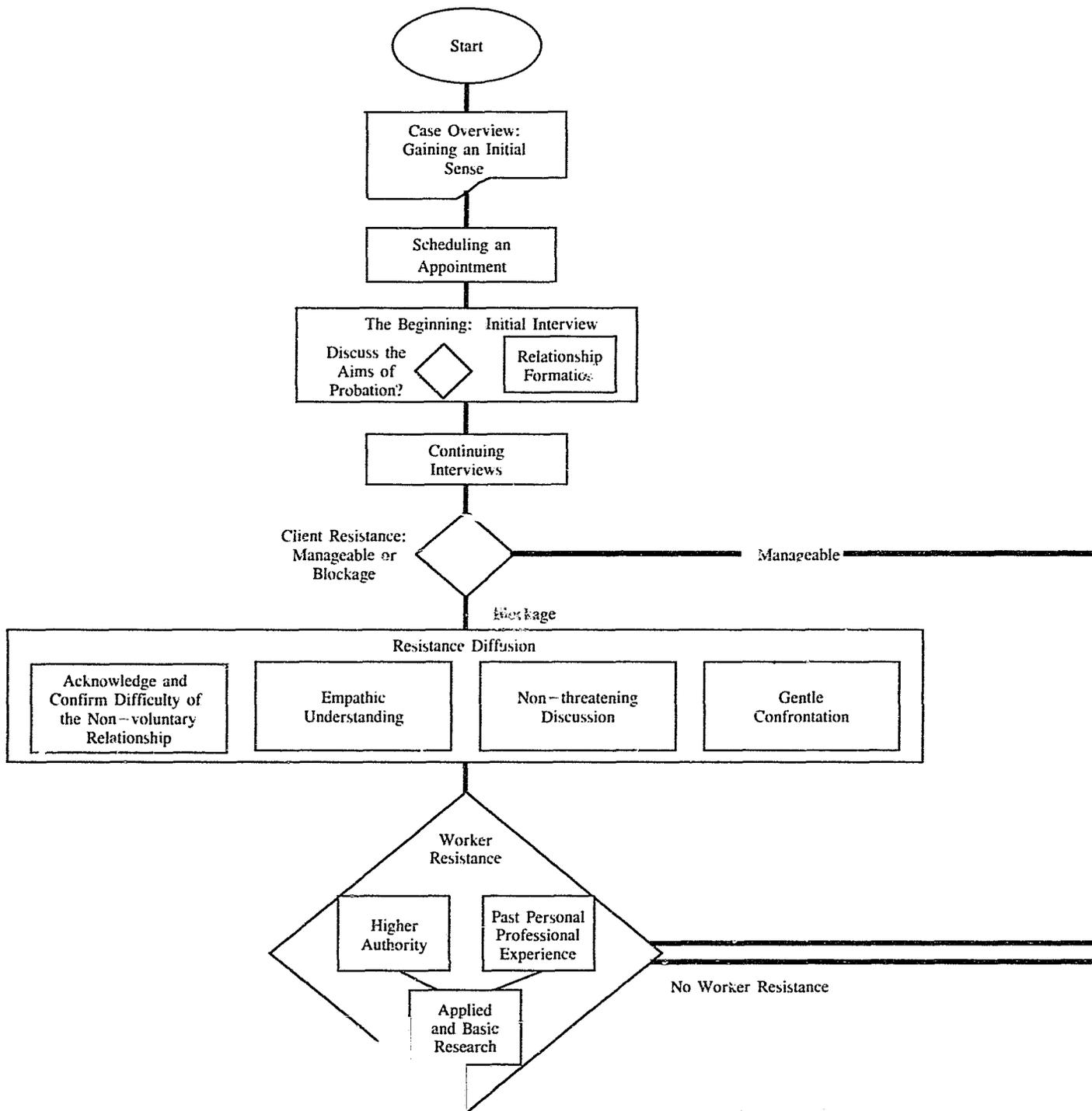


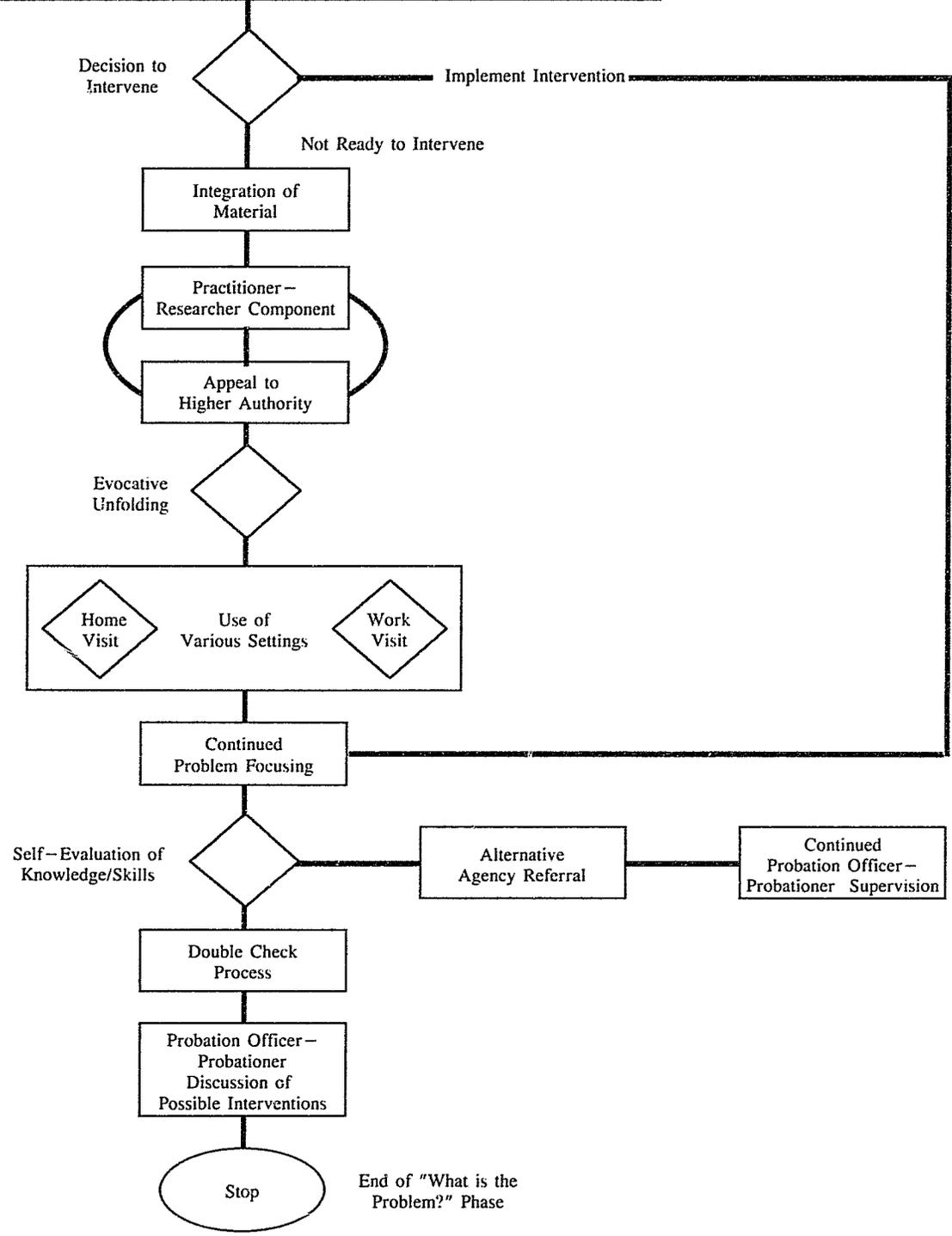
As the resistance dissipated and Mr. F's high anxiety was lessened, we began to discuss in detail a) the

⁴J. Moore-Kirkland, *Mobilizing Motivation: From Theory to Practice* In A. M. Maluccio, ed., *Prompting Competence in Clients*, New York: The Free Press, 1981, p. 35

⁵Ibid, p. 37.

FLOWCHART FOR FEDERAL PROBATION OFFICERS





End of "What is the Problem?" Phase

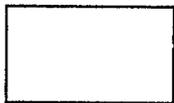
offense, b) the events leading up to it, c) possible reasons for the offense being committed, and d) Mr. F's attitudes and feelings toward the offense as he thinks about it in retrospect. The honest and introspective answers that Mr. F divulged provided me with a wealth of information regarding specific problem areas and Mr. F's personal feelings, attitudes, etc.

An excerpt from case notes represents Mr. F's honesty in discussing the reasons for the offense and represents a significant problem area affecting Mr. F:

Mr. F: I'll tell you Mr. Dierna, I won't do a thing like this again. It is not worth it! At that time I was so low and desperate. I felt like I was nothing, like, you know, dirt on the ground. I can't be like my father, not now at least. I'm not ready. The people say, hey—sell the drugs. I thought yes—it is wrong, but I would finally be worth something in the eyes of my family. They would be on my side again.

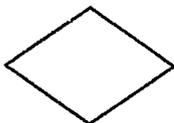
This honest conversation proved to be one of the most important expressions of feelings for Mr. F. Mr. F had begun to answer "What is the problem?" and the foundation had been set for future problem identification.

OPERATION 9: Integration of Material



All interview material was studied and compared with documents such as arrest records, investigation reports, and social history. An interesting finding was that Mr. F had begun to discuss new information, feelings, and problems which needed to be specified.

OPERATION 10: Decision to Intervene?



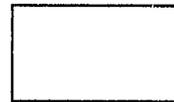
The identification information was further assessed, and I decided that many problem areas had been discussed by Mr. F (i.e., low self-esteem, role ambiguity, unfulfilled expectations, and emotional instability). Yet I felt that a specific problem needed to be chosen and further analyzed before specific intervention strategies were introduced.

OPERATION 11: Appeal to Higher Authority



Supervisor consultations are vitally important in the field of social services, and they have proven to be quite beneficial to me in dealing with complex cases. I asked my supervisor how he felt the F case was progressing and was advised to learn more about the importance of roles in the case through the use of continued interviews and applied and basic research.

OPERATION 12: Sources of Information



This was a critical operation in the flowchart, because it was at this point that I began to form a knowledge base regarding the importance of roles and the consequences of unfulfilled role expectations, status role frustration, and role ambiguity. In order to reach a basic understanding of the problems, frustrations, and confusion that Mr. F had been experiencing, I began to read theories and research studies focusing on role conflict and subsequent deviant behavior. Talcott Parsons states:

Role conflict is the exposure of the actor to conflicting sets of legitimized role expectations, such that complete fulfillment of both is realistically impossible.⁶

Parson's statements are applicable in the F case because Mr. F was overwhelmed by sets of legitimized role expectations, such as father figure to the family, ruler of the household, economic provider, and emotional strength of the family.

These roles may have been legitimate role expectations, but Mr. F was, and still is, unable to fulfill the expectations of each role. Mr. F experienced role conflict in which he was confused and physically and emotionally unable to successfully achieve the expect-

⁶ Bruce J. Biddle and Edwin Thomas, eds., *Role Theory: Concepts and Research*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966.

tations and responsibilities that his family had placed upon him since his father's death. Parsons states:

Exposure to role conflict is an obvious source of strain and frustration in that it creates a situation incompatible with a harmonious integration of personality with the interaction system . . . and causes the genesis of deviant motivation and behavior.⁷

The readings on role theory enabled me to gain an understanding of Mr. F's problems, and this theoretical knowledge was supplemented by interviews with Mr. F that concentrated on the problem of unfulfilled role expectations in his life and how this influenced the subsequent illegal offense. Robert Kahn et al. states:

The person who is confronted with a situation of role conflict must respond to it in some fashion. One or more of the role senders are exerting pressure on him to change his behavior, and he must cope somehow with the pressure they are exerting. . . Coping will also take the form of attempts to avoid the sources of stress, and the use of defense mechanisms, which distort the reality of a conflictual or ambiguous situation.⁸

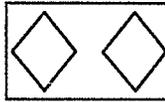
Mr. F behaved in a fashion similar to that explained by Kahn et al. because Mr. F avoided his family and refused to discuss with them the overwhelming feelings he was experiencing due to the role conflicts. Instead, Mr. F tried to fulfill each role until his ultimate failure forced him to engage in deviant behavior in order to fulfill the role expectations and to reduce the anxiety that he was experiencing.

The gathering of information enabled me to conceptualize Mr. F's problem and assist him in understanding it in a more specific, concrete way.

The practice question "What is the problem?" had been further an-

swered through the use of literature, research findings, past personal and professional experiences, appeals to higher authority, and the probation officer-probationer relationship.

OPERATION 13: Use of Various Settings



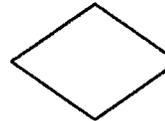
Home visits were conducted in order to observe the Middle Eastern family and to attempt to gain further information regarding the family's effect on Mr. F and their views on the problems Mr. F is faced with.

OPERATION 14: Presenting Problem Focus



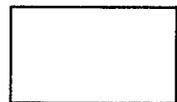
Mr. F and I further specified the role-related problem and began to discuss the ineffective coping strategies used by Mr. F in an attempt to rectify the situation.

OPERATION 15: Self-Evaluation of Necessary Skills



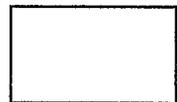
At this point in the counseling process, a personal decision had to be made whether I possessed the necessary knowledge of the problem and the appropriate counseling skills needed to effect change. It was decided that I would continue the counseling process as clinician/behavior changer.

OPERATION 16: Appeal to Higher Authority



I advised the supervisor of the decision to continue counseling Mr. F.

OPERATION 17: This operation serves as the departure point for the discussion and implementation of interventive strategies in the case of Mr. F.



The specific flowchart used in the F case provided me with a helpful, simplistic guide in identifying and further understanding problem areas present in the life of Mr. F. The flowchart made me conscious of the complexities of the professional relationship and added a sense of professionalism and sensitivity to the counseling

⁷ Ibid., p. 275-276.

⁸ Ibid., p. 278.

process. The flowchart is analagous to a game plan used in football in which plays and strategies (flowchart operations) are conceptualized, yet the quarterback (clinician) possesses the ability and flexibility to audibilize and change the formation (modify/change flowchart operations). Although the flowchart has been introduced and discussed, it is of utmost importance to test the operationalized success of the experimentally designed flowchart structured for Federal probation officers.

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