

Subcommittee Report On 'Behavior Modification' Is Termed Bizarre

By WILLIAM RASPBERRY
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — If you wonder why "behavior modification" has such a bad name, read the report recently published by Sen. Sam Ervin's subcommittee on constitutional rights.

What you will find is an unnerving assortment of bizarre, science fiction, mad-scientist horror schemes for "curing" people who don't wish to be cured of various mental

Allments they don't think they've got.

Name a manifestation of antisocial behavior — from murder to drug abuse to unspecified "rage" — and you can find in the 651-page report some scheme for curing it, as often as not without the truly informed consent of the "patient."

There are "aversion" therapies — nausea — inducing drugs, for instance, or injections that paralyze all the

muscles of the body and temporarily stop breathing — to break inmates of such bad habits as aggression, lying, using abusive language or even smoking against the rules. There is psychosurgery, using either scalpel or electrical impulses to sever connections of the brain.

There are even proposals for implanting computer-controlled transmitter-receivers in the brains of criminal offenders in order to

monitor and control their behavior.

And yet, as bizarre as some of these "therapies" are, I was particularly struck by a far less mad-scientist type experiment in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., called the Seed.

Essentially a nonresidential drug-abuse treatment program for teen-age abusers, the Seed is based on the notion that since it is peer pressure that frequently leads young people into drug abuse, peer

pressure can be used to lead them out. But one man's peer pressure. It turns out, is another man's brainwashing.

First, listen to this description from a request for HEW funding for the program:

"For the first three days, the client is placed in the first row. During this period he is not permitted to talk or relate his feelings and his experiences. He is watched closely by the group and staff with detailed notes recorded regarding his

behavior.

"On the fourth day the client moves back a few rows. He is permitted to participate in group discussion. His attitude begins to change, with a softening of facial features, attention focused on discussions and loss of hostility . . .

"It is the Seed's experience that the initial interview with the client does not reveal an accurate picture of (drug) usage, as the client will not tell

the truth of his usage. At the end of two weeks, the client tells the truth — because he wants to."

Now hear a clinical psychologist speak of his experience with several "Seedlings," as the Seed's graduates are called.

"Almost on a daily basis I learn of incidents in which children have been mistreated, threatened and have suffered ill consequences pursuant to their involvement in

the Seed program . . . I have been told of numerous practices by the staff of the Seed which I feel are psychologically destructive to the children in their care.

Children have reported to me that when they wanted to leave the Seed program they were threatened with commitments to State School. Further, in some instances, they were locked in rooms by themselves and denied food for days. They also reported that they were made to sit in chairs without speaking while listening to others berate them for hours."

If the technique sounds like brainwashing, so, according to some observers, do the results. A guidance counselor had this to say:

"I know many returned Seedlings; there are many here at the high school. When they return, they are 'straight,' namely, quiet, well-dressed, short hair and not under the influence of drugs compared to their previous appearance of (being) stoned most of the time.

"However, they seem to be living in a robot-like atmosphere, they won't speak to anyone outside of their own group. They sit in a class together, and the classes become divided of Seedlings opposing non-Seedlings . . . Whenever a class or part of the student body is scheduled for a field trip or an outing of some type, the Seed students refuse to participate until they have received permission from the Seed . . .

"Seedlings seem to have an informing system on each other and on others that is similar to Nazi Germany. They run in to use the telephone daily, to report against each other to the Seed, and it seems that an accused Seedling has no chance to defend himself, because if enough persons accuse him of something, he is presumed guilty. The Seedlings also make numerous false accusations about drug behavior concerning non-Seedlings."

Not all the testimony is negative, by any means. Some parents of Seedlings positively swear by the program. Here's one:

"My wife and I both feel that it is the most wonderful and worthwhile endeavor that we have ever had the privilege of being a part of . . . The Seed has a cure rate of approximately 90 per cent, which I believe is by far the best of any drug program in the country. The children in this program basically learn to live the Golden Rule. They also learn what is good and bad for themselves and to work hard in school or in whatever job they may have."

One alumnus doesn't think it's so wonderful. "They keep on and on until you finally start believing it," he told a reporter for the St. Petersburg Times. "They just drill it into your mind. If somebody tells you something, and the other kids tell you enough, you start believing it."

" . . . They tell everybody if they don't make it in the Seed, it means death. They're brainwashed to think not in really bad, that it will kill them."

Art Barker, president of the Seed, decided early this year not to seek renewed HEW funding for his program.

"The Seed's rejection of the federal grants and the subsequent elimination of the excessive demands, harassment and bureaucracy created by these numerous agencies provide the necessary autonomy for the Seed to continue its innovative and dynamic leadership in fulfilling its only purpose — saving kids!"

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Law Class Is Spending Time In Jail

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A group of Stanford law students has started spending weekends as inmates at San Francisco county jail.

"It's to see what life is like on the inside," said Dr. David Rosenhan, Stanford professor of psychology and law. "We'll be learning a lot more, and a lot faster, than by reading about jails in books."

Rosenhan had arranged with Sheriff Richard Hongisto and the Sheriff's attorney Carol Ruth Silver to utilize the jail as a "campus."

"It's in line with the Sheriff's philosophy to open the jail to the public, so it is aware of what's going on in public institutions," Miss Silver said.

The course is for male students only.