

Cinematherapy and Incarcerated Servicemen

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After attending a seminar on using cinematherapy with grieving clients, I became incredibly interested in finding more information about this intervention and how I could implement it at my internship at the Brig at Camp Lejuene. The clientele of social work department at the brig were men incarcerated at the brig for crimes including but not limited to military specific offenses (such as Adultery or Unauthorized Absence), sex offenses, violent offense, drug offense, and larceny based offenses. After researching it more, and getting the approval of my supervisor I began to implement it in the Larceny Offender Group. Using clips from the movie *Blow* the group members were able to connect their conviction of stealing to how George Jung and his family was portrayed in the movie. Using this film in this group helped build rapport and understanding not only between other group members but also built on the rapport established between the group members and the clinician. It was also noted that by beginning to use cinematherapy in this group, participation amongst those that typically would not speak in group increased, attendance of the group members became more consistent, and more people would attend the group who had not in previous sessions.

For all these reasons, I decided to use this intervention as part of my capstone project (similar to a thesis). Working with the violent offenders group, and measuring empathy scale scores (pre and post test), we used films such as *The Hurricane*, *The Break Up*, and *Antwone Fisher* to discuss how they relate and not relate to the characters in the movie, as well as looking for ways in which the movies mimic their own lives. During this project the men of the group became more open about their feelings of anger, their feelings of being in prison, and what their hopes are for their future. Some group members also use the group as an opportunity to discuss vulnerable pieces of their past and the subsequent decisions that have led them to be incarcerated. As a clinician it was amazing to see males in a prison setting feel comfortable to discuss their past, their feelings, the their hopes for the future and receive support not just from the clinical staff but also from their peers. It was observed, that using cinematherapy with a young male population, the clients were able to make connections to the movies in relation to their own lives more efficiently than in other group settings when they make that connection from listening to other group members. Once that

connection was established within the individual, it was then observed that the individual was then able to better connect with other group members.

By using this intervention as part of my clinical experience at the brig, I was able to develop a rapport with group members and individual clients that I had not seen with other interventions. I am thankful for not just learning of this model while I was beginning my clinical career, but also for the supervisor Becky Warden at the Brig for allowing and supporting me to try something new and different. I am also thankful for the University of North Carolina at Wilmington School of Social Work faculty for supporting my use of an intervention that they had little knowledge of and encouragement to continue to learn outside of the classroom. Now, as an MSW graduate, and working in an out patient setting, I look forward to continue to use cinematherapy when applicable with future clients.