A major premise of traditional institutions is that, in order to minimize the danger to both the institutional staff and the community, security should be regarded as the dominant goal. Mechanical security measures are instituted, including the building of high walls or fences around prisons, construction of gun-towers, the searching of inmates as they pass through certain checkpoints, pass systems to account for inmate movement, and counts at regular intervals.

These measures also serve the idea that deterrence requires extremes of deprivation, strict discipline, and punishment, all of which, together with considerations of administrative efficiency, make institutions impersonal, quasi-military places.

An exaggerated concern for security and the belief in autonomous institutional responsibility for handling offenders combine to limit innovation and the development of community ties. Isolated, punitive, and regimented, the traditional prison and many juvenile training schools develop a monolithic society, caste-like and resistive to change.

— President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: Corrections, 1967

INTRODUCTION

As a formal, complex organization, the prison presents unique management concerns, particularly in its efforts to balance the competing interests of custody and treatment. Although custody is the most important function of a prison or jail and more people work in security than in all other functions combined, administrative and treatment functions are also ongoing and require the services of significant numbers of staff. Correctional administrators of today recognize the impact their management styles have on their organizations; they look to the “free world” for direction on how best to manage the “unfree world” of prison. After reading the material in this chapter, you should be familiar with:

1. The prison warden’s role today.
2. The evolution of management styles to the present.
3. The importance of custody (and the lesser role of treatment) in the correctional setting.
4. The influence of the prison environment on management and custody.
5. The important themes of correctional management.
6. The methods of secure custody in prison.
7. The problems of managing custody and treatment in prison.
8. Support staff common in the American prison.

THE PRISON WARDEN TODAY

The head of an American prison is typically called a warden, a title derived from an English term for a keeper of animals. In this view, the warden is essentially a gatekeeper. In any secure prison, the warden’s chief objective is to maintain secure custody of prisoners, but secure custody involves much more than perimeter security, or merely keeping inmates confined within the walls and preventing escape.

Secure custody requires the maintenance of a safe, orderly internal environment in which inmates and staff interact with low levels of tension and conflict. Given the two-sided nature of prison life—the keepers and the kept, free people and convicts—this is not an easy balance to maintain. Secure custody is complicated by differences among inmates—racial and gang conflicts, age and cultural differences, and the prevalence of serious personality disorders—and by the public and political perception that prisons are already “too nice” or that prison life is “too easy.” For many people, just putting convicts behind bars is not enough; they would like to see criminals “suffer,” either for suffering’s retributive benefit or for its deterrent effect. Thus, the contemporary warden’s role has become one of balancing competing interests—the inmates, the staff, political officials, and the public—while maintaining physical and internal security, administering the prison, and providing positive programs to change behavior.

Elayn Hunt Correctional Center is located in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, fifteen miles south of Baton Rouge along the River Road. Hunt is a men’s prison that opened in 1979. Its warden is C. M. Lensing Jr., a native of northern Louisiana who went to work in corrections after completing a graduate degree in criminal justice at Northeast Louisiana University (now the University of Louisiana–Monroe) in 1975. After serving at other prisons and in corrections headquarters in Baton Rouge, Lensing was appointed warden at Hunt in 1989.

The prison provides this mission statement from Warden Lensing:

It is the mission of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center (EHCC) to strive to provide a controlled correctional environment in a professional manner so as to protect the safety of the general public, the surrounding community, the staff, and the offender population. Each inmate is provided basic services relating to adequate food, clothing, health care and shelter. EHCC strives to provide an environment that enables positive behavioral change through educational and rehabilitative opportunities to allow offenders to become successful citizens upon release and to enhance the ability of the offenders to live lawfully in the community. All of this is accomplished through an assortment of assessment, diagnostic, work, educational, self-help, discipline, medical, mental health, and social programs. Inmates are also provided an opportunity to make restitution and to participate in restorative justice initiatives as a mechanism to compensate individuals and communities harmed by crime. Toward these ends, the warden formulates goals and objectives for the institution annually.¹
When he speaks to college students about contemporary prison management, Warden Lensing often begins by asking if they know Warden Norton. Getting blank looks in response, he gives a big clue. “You know, the warden in The Shawshank Redemption.” This time, most of the class raise their hands. This is a very popular movie among corrections students, with good reason. Warden Norton, as portrayed by Bob Gunton, was head of Shawshank, the fictional state prison in Maine (though based on the old, now demolished Thomaston Penitentiary) where Andy Dufresne spent the nineteen years from 1947 until 1966.

“That warden doesn’t exist any longer,” Warden Lensing points out. “He was the model of the autocratic warden of the past—the warden who had complete control over his institution. The warden of today operates in a very different environment—bureaucratic rather than autocratic.”

Warden Lensing goes on to describe his role as warden as consisting of two parts: the traditional warden’s role and the role of chief executive officer (CEO). The traditional warden’s role—focused on institutional security—is now divided among several assistant wardens who oversee the prison’s different operating units. Hunt is a multilevel prison housing inmates in maximum, medium, and minimum custody. It is four prisons in one: a maximum-security prison housing over 1,500 inmates; a boot camp program, IMPACT, for short-term offenders, holding 200 inmates; the Hunt Reception and Diagnostic Center, which processes and classifies incoming state prisoners for distribution to other prisons, holding about 400 inmates; and the Hunt Special Unit, a fifty-cell housing unit for severely mentally disordered convicts. The prison has also designed a 700-bed combined hospital/mental health facility that has not yet been built because of budget constraints. Hunt has practiced unit management (or unit team management) since 1994. This approach decentralizes management authority by housing units, breaking down the centralized control into smaller operating units. The goal is to get custodial, rehabilitation, and support staff working more closely together with the inmates they supervise.

Warden Lensing’s remarks about his CEO role often draw surprised looks from students. Many people—convicts and civilians—often call his prison “Hunts,” like the tomato corporation. “Hunts is catsup.” Warden Lensing responds, and “Hunt Correctional Center’s commodity is people.” He points out that the budget of his prison in 2002 was over $40 million, over 80 percent spent on staff. The institution has 800 staff members, 582 of them correctional officers working in security. Turnover is a terrific problem for his prison, as it is in other Louisiana prisons and in most other state prisons and local jails. In one recent year, his prison hired 234 new correctional officers but lost 255 (abut 40 percent of his security staff), for a net decline of twenty positions. Most of the new hires are women. They are assigned to all security posts except those involving continuous supervision of shower and toilet areas. In the past few years, the percentage of women correctional officers at Hunt has increased from 18 percent to over 40 percent.

Students may think of wardens as scheming micromanagers who manipulate the details of their prisoners’ lives. Perhaps officials like this still exist, but Warden Lensing indicates that he spends far more time with staff matters than with inmates—and that his staff cause him far more problems than the inmates do. At Hunt, every inmate has a job, a school assignment, or both. Inmates are busy or at least occupied. Levels of violence are very low. No inmates or staff have been killed at Hunt in the fourteen years that Warden Lensing has headed the prison; serious assaults and escape attempts are rare.
When students ask Warden Lensing about his management philosophy, he responds by listing several key elements: empowerment, safety, professionalism, secure resources, and unit management. Empowerment is the foundation (see commentary 10 at the end of this chapter). He defines it as “giving people control over their own work and lives.” He applies this to inmates as well as to staff.

Safety has to do with the internal environment. People can go about their business without fear. Warden Lensing says he sees a difference in many prisons in other states when he visits as an auditor in the accreditation process of the American Correctional Association (ACA). Many prisons lack the internal order and stability for people living and working there to feel truly safe day to day.

Professionalism is a staff attitude. It is made up of several parts: standards, training, recognition, and commitment. With their utility uniforms, security officers wear Navy T-shirts with “Correctional Officer” emblazoned in big letters on the back. On the front is the prison’s logo and underneath in small letters the phrase “Striving for Excellence.” This might seem an odd slogan in a punitive southern state where new correctional officers earn less than $20,000 a year, but Warden Lensing emphasizes professionalism, particularly among his supervisory and management staff, as a necessary counterbalance to the high turnover rate among junior officers. Hunt Correctional Center is accredited by the ACA (as are the other state prisons in Louisiana), and Warden Lensing encourages his staff to become actively involved in ACA as he himself has been for many years.

Secure resources relate to the budget—the continuity of funding for staff and inmate programs from year to year. Warden Lensing stresses that Louisiana’s wardens have more management authority than wardens in some other more centralized systems. He has direct control of his budget, which he uses to ensure that inmates have access to a wide range of programs and services and that his staff get the training and career-broadening assignments they want and the extra pay that goes with taking on added responsibilities.

Unit management fixes responsibility among supervisors and managers at the level of execution. It frees Warden Lensing to practice his version of “MBWA,” Management by Walking Around, which takes him out of his office to visit each of the compounds that make up his prison. He deals with what he calls his “management team”—the deputy wardens who act as division heads and the assistant wardens who run the housing units—on a regular basis, but he makes it a point to get out and see people in the units most days that he is in his office.

The warden’s role today is not simply a matter of running his own prison, Warden Lensing points out. He is a part of the corrections bureaucracy at the state level; as such, he is called to meetings, social events, and planning sessions relating to statewide corrections matters. He often meets with state legislators and members of the executive branch of state government regarding changes to laws and policies.

Warden Lensing says that the interest in rehabilitation and the individual criminal offender has turned around 180 degrees in recent years as victims have come to the forefront in criminal justice. Where attention was once focused on rehabilitation and recidivism, it is now directed more toward public safety and reducing victimization. The programs may still be the same in many instances, but the focus is less on their effects on the individual criminal and more on their outcomes once the criminal is back in society. Thus, everything related to rehabilitation has to be argued in the context of the criminal in the community.
Warden Lensing also deals with media representatives who are interested in particular inmates or prison programs. He has contact with family members, victims, and outside groups interested in particular inmates or in groups of inmates, such as clubs or religious organizations. He is always looking for more work assignments or charitable causes to involve his inmates in, first because it keeps them busy and, second, because it gives them a greater purpose than just “doing time.” Finally, in his spare time, Warden Lensing is also a part-time faculty member at the Baton Rouge Community College, a growing junior college in downtown Baton Rouge. His specialty, as you might expect, is corrections.

**PRISON MANAGEMENT THEN AND NOW**

Correctional administrators draw from a wide range of sources as they manage their employees and perform their correctional functions. Correctional “institutions” run the gamut of size, purpose, and approach—from highly specialized treatment facilities where a handful of offenders live together to an old, overcrowded county jail to a maximum-security penitentiary holding 5,000 inmates, in effect a small town behind bars. There are as many different management styles in operating these several thousand separate organizations as there are personalities and philosophies of the people who run them. But management theory, as a science, is based on the construction of typologies in which approaches are grouped, compared, and contrasted. Management theory is always simpler than management practice because human beings constantly defy efforts to manage them scientifically—a characteristic that fits the people who work in prisons equally as well as it fits the people locked up there.

When management first began to develop as a science a century ago, one of the first major schools of thought was in fact called scientific management. As described in Frederick Taylor’s *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), the ideal manager was a skillful manipulator of basically uncooperative, deficient human beings. (Sounds like the perfect job description of a prison warden, doesn’t it?) His job was to arrange things to overcome human flaws and limitations in producing his organization’s product. Human relationships were reduced to structure—the formal organizational chart. People needed to be constantly supervised, corrected, and time managed.2

The scientific management model, which still has influence in factory and assembly-line settings, was supplanted by the human relations movement of the 1930s. Human relations viewed human beings not as obstacles to be overcome but as social beings who wanted to work and produce; the manager’s job was to do something not to them but with them. The human relations movement focused on the informal organization, on human relationships and morale as determinants of productivity.

Douglas McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960) proposed two contrasting theories of human behavior, Theory X and Theory Y.3 Theory X assumed the following:

1. The average person has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it whenever possible.
2. People must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened with punishment if they are to be motivated to achieve organizational objectives.
3. The average person prefers to be directed, avoids responsibility, has little ambition, and prizes security.4

**Theory Y**, in contrast, assumed that people are characterized by the following:

1. They are motivated by an inherent need to work.
2. They will voluntarily commit to working toward objectives without being subjected to external control and threat of punishment.
3. They will exercise self-direction and self-control if the work environment is supportive of these qualities.
4. They will accept and seek responsibility.
5. They have the ability to exercise a high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems.
6. They have intellectual potentials that are only minimally utilized by Theory X managers.5

Another perspective on management approaches was found in Rensis Likert’s *New Patterns of Management* (1961).6 Likert suggested that organizations were either authoritative—in exploitative or benevolent ways—or participative—in consultative or group ways. Prisons, earlier and more recently, could be placed in the two authoritative models. Smaller, community-based programs and some treatment programs occurring within larger prison settings were more participative. Many correctional theorists today believe that small-group processes are far more effective in changing behavior than anything that is done in a mass setting. Some of the programs that have been identified as being most effective in reducing recidivism are those that create therapeutic communities, where like offenders are grouped together in pure, self-sustaining communities—controlling each other through internal forces rather than relying on external agents of control, such as guards or parole officers. Even with more openness in correctional management recently, the participative-consultative and participative-group models are rarely found in contemporary public corrections organizations.

Edgar Schein’s *Organizational Psychology* (1965) described four views of people, each with a corresponding management style applicable to a correctional setting:

1. A rational and economic view, in which material rewards, incentives, and control provided the direction people need
2. A social view, in which human feelings and interaction were seen as the basis of making work satisfying
3. A self-actualizing view, in which management’s task was to help workers achieve and find meaning in their work
4. The complex, or flux, view, in which the manager must constantly diagnose and adjust to meet different human needs and changing circumstances7

Prison managers refer to the **autocratic style** of earlier prison wardens. They were Theory X managers in the extreme. The dictionary definition of *autocrat* is “an absolute ruler.” The warden of the 1800s and early 1900s had absolute authority if he chose to use it. He was not responsible to the courts or
the public; his only allegiance was to the governor who appointed him and the state legislators who approved his budget.

The autocratic wardens were often not career prison officials. They came from other lines of work and sold themselves to political authorities on their ideology, leadership, and productivity. The prison was a factory, not a treatment unit, and it was the warden’s job to see that the work got done. The autocratic warden practiced strict rules and strong discipline, and he demanded absolute obedience from people under his authority—both prisoners and staff. No civil service, no prisoners’ rights, no court intervention, no reporters poking around—for a warden, these were the good old days.

The prototype of the autocratic warden was undoubtedly Captain Elam Lynds, the warden of both Auburn and Sing Sing prisons in New York in the 1820s. Lynds was a former military officer who used his political connections to become principal keeper at Auburn in 1818. He instituted a system of strict control (discussed in chapter 2) that emphasized three principles: “industry, obedience, and silence.” He built Sing Sing (originally called Mount Pleasant) on the same model.

Lynds’s methods were not popular with inmates or with many reformers outside. His vigorous use of the cat-o’-nine-tails in imposing physical punishments in particular often generated dissent within the prison and criticism from without. By the time Beaumont and Toqueville arrived in 1831 to interview him for their penitentiary book, Lynds was no longer a warden. He was running a hardware store, his career in prisons done. Scott Christianson has written about this visit:

Lynds was an archetypal autocrat, who in many ways resembled and modeled himself after the two “great men” of his age, Napoleon Bonaparte and Andrew Jackson. Like them, he was a military man, rigid and erect; he was extremely disciplined and he required discipline from everyone below him. He also demanded absolute authority to do whatever he deemed correct and fiercely resisted sharing any power whatsoever. He prided himself on being a self-made man, a man of determination and iron will, strength, and courage, and he was totally convinced of the moral rightness of his cause.

When asked to explain his secret of prison discipline, Lynds replied, “The point is to maintain uninterrupted silence and uninterrupted labour; to obtain this, it is equally necessary to watch incessantly the keepers, as well as the prisoners; to be at once inflexible and just.”

In illustrating the meaning of “incessant” and “inflexible,” the story was told of Lynds’s order that three convicts be flogged. When three guards in succession refused the order, each was fired on the spot, until finally a fourth man was found to carry out the flogging.

If Lynds had read McGregor’s The Human Side of Enterprise or The Professional Manager, he would likely have scorned the behavioral science approach to “persuasive” management. Many other early wardens would have agreed with Lynds about the need for absolute authority in running a prison. Even such a progressive reformer as Zebulon Brockway, the founder of the reformatory, believed in extreme discipline and regimentation as the basis of reform; as you may recall from chapter 2, he retired as Elmira’s warden after criticisms of excessive use of physical punishments.

Not all early wardens were Theory X autocrats. Thomas Mott Osborne, who became warden of Sing Sing in 1914, was a prison reformer before he be-
came warden. In the summer of 1913, he spent a week inside Auburn prison as an ordinary inmate, seeking, as he said at the time, to “break down the barriers between my soul and the soul of my brothers.” Warden Osborne ended the silent system at Auburn and inaugurated a plan of inmate self-government known as the Mutual Welfare League. He liberalized prison rules and established a token economy. The convicts apparently loved his Theory Y approach, but conservative political officials did not. He was indicted for neglect of duty and resigned his office in 1916.

Management historians commonly say that the autocratic management style of early penitentiaries yielded to the bureaucratic style of today after World War II. The change in styles was closely tied to the development of centralized state corrections bureaucracies and other changes outside of prisons that took away the independent authority wardens had previously enjoyed. This does not mean that autocratic wardens immediately went the way of the dinosaur.

James B. Jacobs’s Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society chronicles fifty years in the life of Stateville Penitentiary, Illinois’s largest maximum security prison. From 1936 to 1961, Stateville was under the control of Warden Joseph Ragen, a former sheriff who became known as “Mr. Prison” in Illinois. Ragen had absolute autonomy in directing every detail of the Stateville routine, which Ragen bragged made it “the tightest prison in the United States.” Ragen’s approach was charismatic, highly personalized, and authoritarian. He demanded complete loyalty from the people who worked for him, and he was well known for his distrust of “outsiders,” which meant anyone who did not work directly for him. But he was also highly aware of the role of the news media; his reputation as America’s foremost prison warden was enhanced by a steady flow of positive articles written by journalists Ragen courted and favored with “inside” stories.

Robert Freeman has discussed the correctional manager as operating within both internal and external environments. The internal environment (what Warden Lensing refers to as the prison’s personality) consists of three primary influences:

1. The inmate social culture
2. The prison’s physical environment
3. The prison staff culture

The contrasting external environment is made up of outside forces that interact with the internal environment. The principal external influences would include the following:

1. The department of corrections, which makes policies and requires accountability
2. The media, which influence public perceptions of the prison
3. The state political network, which includes the governor’s office, key legislators, and other officials
4. The civil service department, which makes the rules for employees
5. Employee organizations and unions, which represent their members’ interests
6. State and federal courts, which decide prison-based litigation
7. Rehabilitation advocates, such as those sponsoring particular behavioral science, educational, or religious interventions inside the prison.
8. Victim and prisoner advocacy groups, who may take contrary positions on prison conditions and programs
9. Families of prisoners, who are interested in visitation and prison life issues
10. Representatives of special needs inmates, such as the mentally ill, the mentally retarded, or the elderly

In 1988, seven state and federal prison wardens gathered in Boulder, Colorado, at a National Institute of Corrections workshop to define the contemporary warden’s duties. As reported in Warden Pamela Withrow’s article “What Is a Warden?” the group identified 142 specific tasks in twelve major duty areas:

1. Manage human resources
2. Manage the external environment
3. Manage litigation
4. Manage change within the institutional environment
5. Manage the office
6. Manage inmates
7. Review/inspect institutional operations/physical plant
8. Maintain professional competence and awareness
9. Manage security processes
10. Develop long- and short-term goals and objectives
11. Manage emergencies
12. Manage the budget

The twelve duty areas were arranged in no particular order, except they agreed human resources should be first, as the most complex responsibility. Withrow wrote, “The quality of staff and the training they receive are major factors in safe and effective prison management.”

The earlier autocratic wardens, through the tenure of Warden Ragen in Illinois, maintained their positions by maximizing their control over the internal environment and minimizing external influences. In effect, the prison was an island with the external influences flowing around it; everything entering the island flowed through the warden’s office, and nothing entered without his permission. By the 1960s and 1970s, it was clear that the prison was no longer an insular institution. External influences became more dominant, and prison management became less of a one-man show and more of a team game.

Some people may imagine that contemporary wardens are hard-line conservatives—former guards who have been promoted because of their toughness and pessimistic views of human nature. This is not the case. Most correctional administrators today are college-educated professionals. Backgrounds in the behavioral sciences (criminal justice, sociology, psychology, and social work) predominate. Most wardens did not start as guards, or, if they did, their guard career was for a short time to finance their education or wait for a staff position to open up. Wardens are more likely to have held previous positions in case management, classification, treatment, administration, or probation and parole before moving into the prison managerial ranks.
Prison wardens today are usually products of the system, people who have moved around from one institution to another and have no particular ties to any institution. Their personalities and philosophies do not mean as much as they did at an earlier time. The centralized bureaucracy defines important policies, procedures, and practices; the state legislature and the governor’s office provide political guidance; and the courts provide the customers.

The management of the contemporary prison is likely to be organized in a hierarchy. The formal structure has managers at the top, supervisors in the middle, and operating staff at the bottom. Management is more broad based and diffused, involving more specialists in different areas. The warden is more likely to see himself as a CEO who works with a large number of division managers and specialists on his management team than as a general commanding an army of privates, some of whom are inmates and some of whom are guards, as would have been the case in the nineteenth-century autocracy.

A 2002 ACA profile of over 2,000 wardens and superintendents in state prison systems provides this picture of top-level correctional managers today. The numbers of women are increasing steadily, about 25 percent in the most recent survey. Almost 20 percent of the wardens surveyed were black, and another 10 percent were Hispanic or other ethnic minorities. And about one in four wardens were cross-gender managers—no, not their style of dress but rather men managing women’s prisons or, much more commonly, women managing men’s prisons.16

In public policy circles, the prison wardens of today have often been accused of wanting to be invisible. They are rarely well-known public figures. They have tended to define themselves as administrators rather than leaders; they see themselves in primarily ministerial roles, as civil servants carrying out rather than making policies. They seldom speak out on issues, so we seldom hear what they have to say.

Why don’t wardens assume a more visible role in society—write more, speak up more, and attempt to influence public policy more than they do? A few correctional officials have become both well respected by their peers and well regarded publicly as leaders of correctional reform. George J. Beto, the former Lutheran minister and college professor who in midlife became the director of the Texas Department of Corrections, was one such figure. Beto developed the “control model” of corrections, emphasizing work, discipline, and education in a rigorously controlled prison setting. This was an important transitional model between the autocratic and bureaucratic styles.17 Although many elements of his model were later dismantled in the Ruiz v. Estelle federal lawsuit against the Texas prison system, his influence is still felt in many state systems today.

James V. Bennett, who headed the Federal Bureau of Prisons from the 1930s through the early 1960s, is another such figure. Bennett advocated “individualized treatment” of inmates, an idea that, if actualized, would mean that each prisoner would have his or her own personalized treatment regimen to guide the process of change that is supposed to take place in confinement. He built the federal prison system into a model that the states often borrowed from in trying to improve their own systems.

In Louisiana, Ross Maggio was called “Boss Ross” for the authoritative public style that characterized his two terms as warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola in the 1970s and 1980s. Far from fighting against change, Maggio used the power of a federal court order to clean up Angola after a period of internal violence and disorder in the early 1970s. His straightforward,
no-nonsense approach was reminiscent of earlier autocratic wardens, but he was instrumental in building a professional management team (with federal court support), something that previous wardens had been unable to do. He also minimized political intervention in prison affairs.

Correctional administrators are still struggling with the same problems they have always faced, aggravated by contemporary problems such as overcrowding, gangs, longer sentences, and violently unstable younger inmates. They are probably much better at managing their staff today; improved working conditions and more professional standards have made corrections a much better place to work. They remain uncertain, however, about what to do with inmates. Correctional administrators want to believe in change, and surveys indicate that they are far more understanding of criminals (and far more cognizant of the futility of much that goes on in their own prisons at present) than one might expect, but in the current climate it is not hard to understand why many of them would want to throw up their hands and ask, “Why bother?”

Perhaps surprisingly, a recent survey of wardens indicates high levels of career satisfaction. They like what they are doing and believe they are successful at it. This may be a good thing, or it may indicate only that their focus is so much inside the prison—on maintaining the secure custodial environment—that they are not much attuned to the problems of the criminal in the larger society.

TREATMENT VERSUS CUSTODY

Correctional administration has come a long way from the days of the early penitentiary. Remember that the reformers who met to found the National Prison Congress in Cincinnati in 1870 had to vote on a proposal to agree that “reformation and not vindictive suffering” should be the purpose of penal confinement. It took the lifetime efforts of such correctional administrators as Sanford Bates, the man who is called the father of modern penology for his work as director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and other professional achievements covering half a century, to move prisons from the punitive to the rehabilitative era. The way has not always been clear. As Harry Allen and Clifford Simonsen have long pointed out, a “model muddle” has persisted for more than half a century, since the decline of the industrial prison, in regard to prison management. What is the prison supposed to do? How does the manager get the most out of the institution’s staff? How democratic can prisons be in allowing participation by both staff and inmates? While custody must be maintained at a reasonable level, what can be done to enhance the effectiveness of treatment services within the prison setting?

We often use “treatment” and “rehabilitation” as synonymous terms. In the narrow definition, treatment would be the services—such as counseling, casework, and therapy—offered by the professional staff to change the behavior of prison inmates. Treatment is one part of rehabilitation, along with academic education, vocational training, recreation, religion, outside visitors, and inmate self-help activities. In its broadest definition, treatment can be anything positive that happens to an inmate in prison, even if neither the institution nor the inmate knows what it is or how important it is at the time. There has been a kind of skepticism about the effectiveness of treatment in the correctional
setting for more than two decades. “What works?” Robert Martinson and his colleagues asked in reporting their research findings in 1974. “Nothing works,” they replied, or at least, “Nothing works consistently enough to apply it across the board with any reasonable expectation of success.”

We say that institutions then gave up on treatment, but in fact treatment had always been incidental to secure custody in prison. Treatment got what was left after custody, administration, and work programs took their share of the budget. This typically amounted to no more than 5 to 10 percent of the institution’s budget, which is hardly a firm commitment to change, and even though we say we have given up on treatment, the portion of the budget devoted to rehabilitative services is greater in many prisons today than it was two decades ago. The medical model, as the most extreme form for the application of treatment, may be dead; correctional administrators’ hopes for the possibility of changing criminal behavior into law-abiding behavior are far from dead. They are still seeking the right avenues for treatment, even if they do not talk about it as much as they once did.

Treatment is still custody’s weak sister. Secure custody gets more resources and staff than all other functions added together. Security must be maintained at all times. You cannot shut down the guard towers that provide perimeter security just because you do not have enough guards or because there is a flu epidemic. You call in off-duty guards or extend the hours of guards already on duty to fill the essential positions, pay them overtime, and take the money out of treatment services. The inmates will never miss the transactional analysis sessions they did not have, the extra computer classes, or the job skills training for prerelease inmates. “You have to keep them in prison,” the warden can point out, or nothing else matters, and the quickest way for him to get fired is to let some of them escape; no prison warden has ever been fired for failing to rehabilitate inmates. Indeed, after two centuries of locking up felons to serve prison terms, no one has a good idea as to whether prison wardens can rehabilitate inmates.

CLASSIFICATION AND ASSIGNMENT IN STATE PRISONS

In the complex, multilevel state prison system of today, incoming inmates usually go to a specific facility for classification on entry into the system. These facilities are called by various names—reception centers, diagnostic centers, reception and evaluation centers, or classification centers, for instance—but what they have in common is a process. Inmates are tested, interviewed, and monitored; their criminal history files are reviewed and prison records brought up to date. The prison attempts to determine the state of their physical and mental health, their educational and program needs, and any specific skills they may possess. Most of all, the initial classification is geared toward determining the level of security the inmate should be placed in. Is he an escape risk? A protection case? Is he dangerous to himself, to other inmates, or to staff?

Classification was originated as a tool to match the institution’s programs to the needs of the prisoner, but it became over time more a device of security—to match the inmate to the institutional needs of the prison. Classification takes only a few weeks in most state systems (about four weeks in Warden
Lensing’s Hunt Reception and Diagnostic Center (HRDC) at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in Louisiana, but to the prisoner the outcome is tremendously important. It determines what prison he will be sent to, what security level he will be housed in, what his work assignment will be, and what programs he will be allowed to take part in. Classification determines which road you will be allowed to follow in prison; take a wrong turn, and it may be impossible to ever get back on the right track.

CUSTODY AS A WAY OF LIFE

From their origins as small, highly individualized institutions intent on salvation and humane penance, penitentiaries evolved into large, highly structured formal organizations intent on applying measures of bureaucratic control to hundreds or thousands of human beings. The modern prison is a prime example of Max Weber’s characteristics of bureaucratic organization: hierarchical authority, job specialization, and formalized rules.

The person in charge of custody has long been the key figure in day-to-day prison operations. In some states, the deputy warden for custody was the mainstay of institutional continuity. Not only did he have more employees under his authority than any other prison official below the warden, but he was more likely to be a long-term employee. Wardens in several states, especially in the South, were considered political hacks, meaning that they were political appointees who got their jobs without any particular skills or interests or without any expectation that they would actually perform as wardens. They were paid to be figureheads. The security warden ran the prison. Wardens came and went; security was forever.

The custodial staff, then as now, relied on a variety of devices and techniques to maintain secure control of inmates. Among these measures are the following:

1. The count. The most important task of the custodial staff, most authorities acknowledge, is counting inmates to determine their whereabouts. The count goes in to a control center, and it must be verified. Until it is, prison life stops. The frequency of counting varies with the prison and the custody level.

2. The sally port. Basically a double gate, a sally port is used to control vehicle and pedestrian traffic into a prison. The sally port is like an airlock on a spaceship. Only one gate can be open at a time; in theory, prison security is always maintained.

3. Prison rules. Usually provided the newly arrived inmate in a handbook during classification or orientation, the rules define categories of offenses, disciplinary actions, and grievance procedures. Prisoners in violation of the rules may get a report, sometimes called a “write-up” or a “ticket.” Serious incidents, such as “use of force” encounters involving physical confrontations, always warrant a report for the file.

4. Control of contraband. Contraband is anything not authorized by prison rules, including items that are allowed but of which the prisoner has too many: six spare batteries when only four are allowed or four cartons of cigarettes instead of two. Contraband may come in through the mail, or it may be carried in by visitors or other inmates. Most contraband comes into prison
through guards. Common contraband items smuggled in would include drugs, alcohol, pornography, weapons, and money.

5. Searches. Three basic searching techniques prevail in prisons. The frisk search is most common. It is a pat-down search of the inmate’s outer clothing. The strip search requires the inmate to remove his clothing so that both his body and the clothing can be inspected more closely. Inmates suspected of hiding contraband in their rectum—a practice called “keestering,” meaning to hide in one’s keester—may be subjected to a body cavity search, which is supposed to be done by medical personnel rather than a guard with a fat angry finger. Some prisons have begun to use machines that do full-body scans to make these invasive searches, though if something shows up on a screen, it must still be retrieved.

6. Tool and key control. This prevents inmates from gaining access to items that could be used as weapons or as tools of escape. Inmate trusties or orderlies who once had keys, which allowed them to control access to other inmates and to supplies, no longer have them in the modern prison.

7. Shakedowns. A shakedown is a search of an area, such as a cell or tier of cells, a dormitory, a workplace, or a communal area, such as the library, the dining hall, or the chapel. Any contraband item can be hidden anywhere in the prison. Prisons have shakedown crews of guards whose job it is to carry out thorough searches. Shakedown crews do not find everything, but they do contribute a lot of useful anxiety to prisoners with contraband in their possession.

8. Walls and fences. Old prisons have walls, and new prisons have fences, usually double fences topped with razor wire. Guards armed with rifles man towers that surveil stretches of wall or fence. Several states, led by California, are using electrified fences, which can be as lethal as a rifle shot. This is called perimeter security to distinguish it from internal security within the walls.

9. Lockdowns. A lockdown means that one or more inmates, from a cell block to a dormitory to an entire prison, are confined to their living quarters for a period of time. This may often be done after an incident of violence or when trouble is anticipated. It is seen as a preventive measure, though with punitive consequences. Extended lockdown is used to hold the most troublesome inmates in long-term isolation.

Not on this list but of even greater importance to the old-style security war- den were snitches and trusties. Snitches cultivated by guards were said to be the key to knowing what was going on in the old penitentiary. Wardens said that despite the credence given to the inmate code, virtually all inmates would snitch out other inmates in the right situation if the rewards were great enough. Trusty work assignments were one of these rewards. In most prison systems at one time, favored inmates were given direct control of other inmates, including making assignments, charging fellow prisoners fees for services and special favors, and, most commonly in the South, guarding them with guns.

For over half a century, Louisiana’s Angola penitentiary relied on armed inmate guards (called “khaki backs” for their uniform shirts) to perform security duties. Former wardens from the 1950s and 1960s, such as Maurice Sigler and Murray Henderson, have told of their experiences arriving at the prison to take over as warden—and having their car searched at the front gate.
by inmates with guns. The prison had few free people employees; up to 20 percent of the inmates were trusties assigned to security duties (and living away from other inmates in relatively unsupervised dormitories).

In a contemporary prison, the security staff (free people only, inmates no longer given direct authority over other inmates) will be divided among shifts (usually three or four) and several types of job assignments:

1. Inmate living quarters, a critical assignment given experienced officers who get along well with inmates because it involves the most direct contact
2. Work sites, another assignment involving lots of direct contact with inmates
3. The yard, important as the site of the most open social interaction among inmates
4. Towers and walls, often viewed as a monotonous, undesirable assignment for new officers or officers who do not get along well with other officers or inmates (sometimes a disciplinary assignment)
5. Gates, which control movement within the facility
6. Visiting, important as an entry point for contraband
7. Dining hall, another important group congregation area
8. Hospital, treatment units, and recreation areas, all controlled access areas
9. Escorts and transports, which move inmates around or take them outside the prison for legal or medical visits
10. Training and administration, often assignments for officers believed to have management potential
11. Roving security patrols and Corrections Emergency Response Teams (CERT teams, like SWAT teams outside) that deal with uncooperative inmates, hostage incidents, riots, and other crises.

To the custodial staff, the two most serious events in prison are assaults and escapes. Assaults are serious for two reasons—first, someone may be hurt and, second, the notion of “secure custody” is threatened. According to The 2001 Corrections Yearbook, about 50,000 assaults of inmates and staff (two-thirds inmates, one-third staff) were officially reported in American prisons in 2000. About 19 percent required medical attention (at least an examination). In the same year, fifty-five inmates but no prison staff were killed in assaults by inmates. The murder rate within prison, incidentally, was about 4.5 per 100,000 in 2000. This is considerably lower than the national homicide rate for the same year (5.6 per 100,000). Thus, prisoners are generally much safer from serious injury or death from assaults in prison than they were on the street; this is particularly true when prison violence rates are compared to the high-crime neighborhoods that prisoners come from on the street.

Escapes are also serious for two reasons—first, they reflect an obvious breach of security in some form, and, second, they reflect badly on the administration of the prison. Over 7,000 prison escapes were reported in 2000, but 90 percent of these were from open, nonsecure facilities, primarily involving work release, prerelease, and furlough inmates. These are often called walkaways rather than true escapes. Almost half of these escapes occurred in just three jurisdictions: Michigan, Missouri, and the District of Columbia.
Fewer than 800 escapes from secure prisons took place, and most of these were low-end institutions. In the old days, when there were fewer guards and inmate trusties were often involved in helping maintain security, prison escapes were common. They are not common now. About 65 to 70 percent of walkaways and escapees are recaptured quickly, picking up new criminal charges on recapture. If these inmates were in open- or low-security facilities before, their new home is almost certain to be a maximum-custody or lockdown unit.

Prisons, especially maximum-security penitentiaries, are total institutions. They take away individual responsibility and autonomy, which is what we need to operate in the outside world, and attempt to make the inmate completely submissive to prison authority and totally dependent on prison routine. Prisoners enter most prisons naked, without any possessions of their own. They are as dependent as newborn babies.

The opening scene of the film *Escape from Alcatraz* vividly brings home this point. Clint Eastwood, as the newly transferred inmate Frank Morris, is brought over to Alcatraz at night through a rainstorm. No one is talking. He is examined, photographed and fingerprinted, stripped of his clothing, and issued his prison uniform. A guard then walks him naked down Broadway, the main corridor, to his cell. The door slams shut behind him, lightning flashes, and the guard speaks, “Welcome to Alcatraz.” Morris looks out through the bars. Without the melodrama, welcome to prison, any prison, even today.

Babies grow and mature, but prisoners will still be treated like babies—like very bad babies—years later. This infantilization of inmates is a serious limitation of the custodial approach in corrections. Inmates do not progress much while they remain infantilized.

The inmate subculture, at whatever strength it remains today, divides the prison into the keepers and the kept. The subculture opposes the dominant culture imposed by custody; it tries to work around the rules and procedures and maximize the inmates’ pleasure and control over their own lives. They seek through the subculture what they are denied by the formal organization.

The social system of the prison has been significantly affected in recent years by two circumstances. First, prisons in most states are at or over capacity. Overcrowding aggravates the natural conflicts that would occur in prison, it escalates tensions and the potential for violence, it gives prison officials fewer choices about how to place individual inmates (especially the ones who cause trouble), and it makes the task of keeping the prison safe and secure more difficult. Second, the rise of prison gangs has divided the social system into competing (sometimes warring) factions and further heightened the violence potential. Prison gangs are a problem mainly in the Southwest, where Hispanics are found in prison in greater numbers. The most influential gangs are the Hispanic gangs with such names as the Mexican Mafia, Mexikanemi, Texas Syndicate, and Nostra Familia. Whites, in the omnipresent Aryan Brotherhood, and blacks, in gangs typically associated with Crips and Bloods street gangs, often organize to protect their own interests in the conflict with the Hispanic gangs. Prison gangs demand a lifetime commitment, and death is said to
be the only way out. Most prison violence occurs for personal reasons that have nothing to do with gang affiliation, but those states that have serious gang problems recognize that intergang and intragang conflicts make the problem of prison violence worse.

The history of custody in American prisons is the history of the paramilitary model. Guards wear uniforms and use military rank and like to imagine they are imposing military discipline. Of course, if the guards are the military force in charge of the prison, then what does this make the prisoners? One of the traditions of this model is that custodial staff remain separate and apart from inmates—the enemy forces. In American prisons, this has led to two enduring principles of prison operation:

1. **Custody rules.** All facets of prison life, including treatment, are subordinate to the custody function.
2. **Custodial staff only do custody.** They guard; they don’t help, advise, counsel, treat, or express any interest in the inmate as a human being. To them, he is an alien with a number, and all they are interested in is the numbers adding up to the right total.

Contemporary prisons have explored different approaches to getting the custodial staff and the staff providing rehabilitation, recreation, and other programs to work more effectively together. One approach pioneered in the federal prison system and now used in one form or another in many state systems is called **unit team management** (comparable to the unit management approach used in Warden Lensing’s Hunt Correctional Center). This approach breaks the prison up into quasi-autonomous parts, usually based around residential quarters. All the staff working in the unit report to one administrator. The idea is to break down barriers between specialists and get staff to take a broader role with inmates. Some correctional officers take well to this concept; many, schooled in the narrowest possible definition of their function, want no part of it. Custody and treatment remain more often adversaries than allies.

**CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS**

The people who work in security run the prison. Generally, the higher the security level of the prison, the lower the ratio of inmates to **correctional officers**. State averages of inmates to COs range from about 3.5 to 1 up to 8 to 1 (with a national average of 5.4 to 1 in 2000), but these numbers have to be taken with a grain of salt. Some states include noncustodial staff, while others take out uniformed supervisory and management staff. The numbers of people in security are obviously influenced by the structure of security levels in the prison system—maximum, medium, minimum, and so on. In addition, because security is an around-the-clock operation, the number of officers is always divided among shifts. The basic mathematical calculation is that each security post requires from five to five-and-a-half people to man it continuously year-round because of sick days, holidays, training, and other assignments. Thus, if a big prison has a thousand security officers, about 160 to 200 would be scheduled to work at any given time (other than the day shift, which is top-heavy with administrative staff).
In the old days, the head of security was often called the Captain (see the films *Brute Force* and *Cool Hand Luke* for different representations of this figure). While the warden was a mythical political official on about the same level as God, the captain ran the prison day to day. He interacted with inmates, made assignments, disciplined and punished, and saw to it that the work got done. No one was sure what the warden did, but everyone saw the fruits of the captain’s labor. Guards in the old-style prison had total power over inmates—and used it. The inmate nicknames for the guard—“screw,” “bull,” or “hack”—express the adversarial nature of the guard–inmate relationship in the maximum-custody penitentiary (and they express as well the contempt for the guards that marked the inmate subculture).

Prisons were typically located in rural areas. The guards were often farmers working in the prison to make ends meet. The convicts were most likely to be street criminals from the big city. These cultural differences were often heightened by differences of race and ethnicity as well. The old-style convict and the old-style prison guard were different in just about every way except for two points: they were both on the bottom level of society, and neither of them planned to end up in prison.

The correctional officer of today is a different kind of animal from the guard of a hundred years ago, at least in theory. Correctional officers are men and women, white, black, and Hispanic. In 2001, 23 percent of correctional officers were women, 21 percent black, and 6 percent Hispanic. These numbers are increasing steadily; of the new correctional officers hired in 2000, 35 percent were female and 39 percent minorities. Two states, Mississippi and Arkansas, already have more women than men correctional officers, and several other southern states are moving in this direction. Men’s prisons staffed (and managed) by women? Elam Lynds must be spinning in his grave.

More than 250,000 correctional officers worked in state and federal prisons in 2001. Their average starting salary was just under $24,000 per year; New Jersey’s starting salary of $36,850, the highest in the country, was more than twice that of Louisiana, the lowest, at $15,324.

Correctional officers in several states are unionized. Unionization has not been as strong in corrections as it has been in other public sector vocations, but it has thrown the fear of worker solidarity into prison administrators. Prison employee groups have sometimes used sick-outs or attacks of blue flu to support their demands for recognition or improved working conditions. Prison employees are not allowed to strike.

Prison administrators, for their part, want correctional officers to be better trained and more legally aware. They do not want to lose lawsuits and incur the wrath of politicians and public because of inept, brutal guards. Forty-eight of the fifty states have some requirement for preservice training for new correctional officers (the state average is 262 hours, more than six weeks), forty-seven have a probationary employment period averaging about ten months, and requirements for in-service training have increased steadily also, averaging almost forty hours per year.

Despite the increasing professionalization of the correctional officer’s role, the turnover rate for COs remains high. The simple truth is that the prison environment, while not as oppressive and dangerous as it once was, is still highly structured and closed in; many people cannot handle the work hours, the bureaucratic procedures, and the relationships with inmates or other staff.
A lot of new officers are fired or resign during their probationary periods. Others use the prison job as a stopgap. When a free-world job paying 5 cents per hour more comes along, they quit the prison.

The average annual turnover rate for prison custodial officers was about 16 percent in 2000, averaging between 12 and 16 percent for the decade of the 1990s. Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania had turnover below 5 percent (considered a desirable standard for private industry). Some states had much higher rates, led by Louisiana, Kentucky, and Wyoming with rates above 33 percent. It is difficult to maintain a stable security force when turnover rates are this high, but such rates can actually be good news for correctional officers: the faster the turnover, the better the opportunity to move up. Advancement opportunities in corrections, with the comparatively high turnover rate and the continuing expansion of the system to deal with overcrowding problems, has made corrections an attractive career field for the time being.

Are today’s correctional officers, with all their training, higher salaries, and professionalism, really different from the prison guards of earlier times? The prison guard of the past was custody oriented. His institution was the maximum-security penitentiary. He counted inmates, he worked them, he moved them around, and he beat them when necessary. An absolutely authoritative security force ran the early penitentiaries; later, as conditions of confinement became less severe, an alliance of guards and trusty inmates maintained order in the prison through most of the twentieth century.

The late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century prison is a different environment. Only about one in four inmates is in maximum or close custody. Interaction with inmates and management of inmates are more important than authority and coercive power; lower security prisons strive for “normalcy.” Some researchers have called attention to the more visible presence of female correctional officers from the 1970s on. They suggest that a more “feminine” or caring style has emerged in this era. Others suggest that this style is not gender based but simply a result of relaxing security standards—cooperation replacing compulsion.

Some management researchers argue that male officers can also talk to inmates and care about them as much as females might; their focus is not on a feminine correctional role but on a “human relations” role that applies equally to male and female officers. This role would expect that officers would be more empathetic with inmates, more interested in their problems, more involved in rehabilitation programs, and more suited to serving as role models. Prison guards saw prisoners as objects; correctional officers are supposed to see them as people. Most prison staff working in security today prefer to be known as correctional officers. “Don’t call me guard,” they say. But which are they? Is a correctional officer just a more politically correct term for a guard, or is there a genuine role difference?

**PRISON: BASIC SERVICES**

Prisons of all security levels, even maximum security in which custody is most emphasized, provide inmates with many services and activities beyond simply being locked up. Politicians and people on the street sometimes grumble about
services provided inmates. Why are convicts entitled to these “special programs”? they ask, with images of “convict coddling” and “country club prisons” fresh in their minds. “They have it better in prison than they did on the street,” they might add. Correctional managers have four ready responses:

1. Convicts are not on the street any longer. When they give up their freedom, the state assumes the responsibility for their welfare and safety.
2. Prisons are obligated to maintain constitutional living conditions. To do otherwise would invite costly lawsuits and court intervention.
3. Prisons at one time did not provide many of these services and activities, at least not at present levels. Inmates spent all their free time trying to exploit each other and escape. Giving prisoners more positive activities reduces their involvement in misconduct and makes the institution easier to manage.
4. The special programs may actually make inmates better human beings. Isn’t it worth spending a little more if criminality is reduced as a result?

The level and quality of prison services to inmates varies greatly from one state to another, depending on the philosophy of corrections officials and how much the state is willing to spend to “help criminals.” Some states have a tradition of doing a lot; others provide only minimal services. There are three basic services—medical, religious, and education and training—and a wide variety of staff positions allocated to provide these and other necessary and optional services. The custodial staff still dominate in numbers and in their influence on inmates (the influence of correctional officers in the housing units and on work sites is particularly important), but many inmates have been helped and redirected by a prison teacher, a counselor, a psychologist, a vocational instructor, or a chaplain. There is no formula that prescribes exactly how one person reaches another; in the prison environment, anyone, even the food service manager in the dining hall, may be the one responsible for starting an inmate down the road away from a criminal lifestyle.

All prisons must provide medical services to inmates. This has become an increasingly expensive obligation, with the sicker inmates of today (see the discussion of medical care in chapter 8). More inmates are substance abusers, more are elderly, more are mentally ill, and more come in with serious infectious diseases—HIV; hepatitis A, B, and C; rubella; and tuberculosis, including multidrug-resistant tuberculosis among inmates with other ailments.

Religion is an important prison activity. Some inmates fake it—to get to go to church and hang out with their buddies. Others who never took the time to seek out religion when they were running the streets find that prison religious programs change the whole direction of their lives. Many prisons have thriving religious communities, from Black Muslims to Eastern religions to every variety of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. Free-thinking prisoners are always inventing new religions and then demanding that prison authorities let them practice them (sometimes asking for such supplies as plastic inflatable dolls, altars, incense, and candles, all of which authorities deny). Inmates direct many of their own religious activities because it is hard to get free people to come into prison to work with inmate groups. The prison chaplain has been a staple of the institution since the days of the Walnut Street Jail. Some prison chaplains are dedicated, highly regarded men and women who
have a special calling to work with prisoners; others are viewed as uninspired hacks who are little more than snitches for security.

The chaplain is one of many specialized careers required by prisons that people on the street rarely consider. People are aware of guards, administrators, and maybe the psychologists who work in treatment, but they fail to think of many other positions necessary for the day-to-day operation of the prison. These would include such positions as the following:

- **Facility manager.** The person responsible for maintaining the prison’s buildings and grounds. The director of the physical plant.
- **Food service manager.** The person responsible for procuring food supplies and supervising the kitchen and dining facilities. Meal preparation is very important to inmates. This position is usually filled by a registered dietician.
- **Health system administrator.** The manager of the institution’s health care and medical programs. Usually, he or she is an administrator, not a physician.
- **Industrial specialist.** The person who supervises the inmates working in a prison industry. Generally, this is someone who has special training or work experience in the specific work supervised.
- **Medical officer.** A doctor licensed to practice medicine in the state, either a general practitioner or a specialist.
- **Ombudsman.** A person who receives and investigates inmate (and sometimes staff) complaints. Only a few states have this position, though most have some type of grievance officer or investigator who looks into complaints.
- **Recreation specialist.** A specialist in physical or other forms of recreational activities. Because most prisoners are young men, recreational programs are very important in prison.
- **Teacher.** A person certified in education. Prisons need teachers with certifications from lower elementary through high school.

The role of the academic teachers and the vocational training instructors is particularly important. Education does not cure crime, but recidivism studies have found that better-educated ex-offenders (beyond GED or high school) are less likely to return to prison. Likewise, an inmate with no employment record and no job skills is more likely to recidivate than someone who can get and hold a good job.

Teachers are among the most numerous of the treatment staff working in prisons. It is not easy to teach in prison, where the students often have long records of failure at both school and work. About two-thirds of prison inmates lack a high school diploma. Many are functionally illiterate; a good number (ranging from 7 to 25 percent in different studies) are learning disabled. But some inmates make remarkable progress in making up for their educational deficiencies. A number of prisons have formed relationships with nearby colleges to provide college courses behind the walls; Project Newgate was the prototype of a prison college education program, starting in prison and then taking the offender out into the community to attend classes on campus. Some states continue to allow inmates to go out on educational furloughs to get vocational training or college courses, though, in the present political climate, furloughs are used much more cautiously than they once were.
Vocational training is more important in most prisons than academic education. Some prisons have so many types of job training for inmates that they resemble technical schools behind bars. One of the problems with giving inmates job training has been that since the decline of the industrial prison in the 1930s, real work for prisoners has been limited. Prison industries in the federal system and in most state systems concentrate on making products to be consumed by other units of government, such as state offices and institutions. If prisoners cannot do “real work,” if they can only be trained and given busy work to do that does not make use of their skills, it is difficult to get them to see the connection between training and employment. Congress passed the Prison Industries Enhancement Act in 1979 to encourage greater private sector involvement with state penal industries. About twenty states have subsequently authorized private business to establish different types of business operations within prisons. The number of inmates participating in real-world work (and earning real-world wages) is very small; the prison remains a mostly untapped labor force.

The delivery of treatment services in the more narrow sense may involve the participation of several kinds of professionals from the behavioral sciences. These would include the following:

- **Psychologists**, who do testing and measurement of inmates, construct personality profiles, and provide counseling.
- **Psychiatrists**, who are few in number and not highly regarded in prisons. Their long-term therapies are often seen as being out of place in a secure-custody environment. They do more diagnosis and prescribing of medication than treatment in most prisons.
- **Sociologists**, who do research and monitor the effectiveness of treatment programs rather than treating offenders directly.
- **Social workers**, often called caseworkers, whose tasks include assessing needs, assigning and conducting programs, and evaluating progress.
- **Counselors**, who are sometimes known by other titles within the prison job structure. This is a kind of generic job title for a person who often lacks the specific higher education in the behavioral sciences the other professionals possess. Counselors and other trained therapists do apply a number of treatment modalities—such as reality therapy, transactional analysis, behavior modification, and guided group interaction—in prison, but counseling in prison implies a more commonsense approach as opposed to a rigorously therapeutic treatment regimen.
- **Case managers** or classification officers, usually assigned by housing units. Their job is to look after the inmates’ overall welfare and progress through the prison system, paying attention to any personal matters that affect life in custody. The case manager is the inmate’s intercessor in the prison bureaucracy.

**IS PRISON TREATMENT POSSIBLE?**

The greatest debate among treatment professionals over the past two decades or more is whether treatment, in the broadest sense, is either possible or desirable within the prison setting. The institutional model keeps large numbers of inmates locked up in secure institutions; treatment programs are built into...
the custodial routine. Many behavioral scientists would much prefer to see a reemphasis on the reintegration model, which sends offenders out into the community for treatment programs. They quarrel with the prison administrators of today who say they are following the reintegration model but strictly within prison walls. That is not reintegration, they say; it is just a slicker version of the old institutional model, and prisoners can tell the difference.

Treatment within prison is more likely to appear incidental to custody; treatment in the community is more likely to feel like the real thing. If the intent is to keep prisoners isolated and focused on the prison experience, we should continue as is; if we want them to look beyond the boundaries of the prison, we should explore every possibility of contact with the outside world. Treatment within prison can probably be improved, but it will always be under the domination of custody. Treatment in the community is much closer to how we want the offender to live for the rest of his life.

KEY TERMS

warden
secure custody
perimeter security
Elayn Hunt Correctional Center
C. M. Lensing Jr.
Warden Norton
unit management
empowerment
Management by Walking Around (MBWA)
scientific management
human relations
Theory X
Theory Y
autocratic style
Elam Lynds
Thomas Mott Osborne

bureaucratic style
Joseph Ragen
internal environment
external environment
George J. Beto
James V. Bennett
Ross Maggio
treatment
“nothing works”
initial classification
institutional needs
political hacks
count
sally port
contraband
frisk search
strip search

body cavity search
shakedown
razor wire
electrified fences
lockdown
snitches
trusties
inmate guards
yard
towers and walls
gates
escorts
Corrections Emergency Response Team
assaults
escapes
walkaways

total institutions
infantilization
overcrowding
prison gangs
unit team management
correctional officers
the Captain
blue flu
turnover rate
custody oriented
prison chaplain
ombudsman
counselors
case managers

NOTES

5. Ibid., pp. 284–85.


10. Ibid., p. 207.


12. Ibid., pp. 30–34.


15. Ibid., pp. 1–3.


20. Ibid., pp. 33–34.

21. Ibid., p. 175.

22. Ibid., p. 165.


24. Ibid., p. 166.


**FURTHER READING**


**WEB AND VIDEO RESOURCES**


*Correctional News* (www.correctionalnews.com) is a useful entry into the business end of corrections, calling itself “the online source for design, construction, management, and operations” in corrections.

The American Correctional Association Bookstore provides a good collection of training, management, and learning materials at www.aca.org/store.
Management and the Organizational Culture

by C.M. Lensing, Jr.

Nothing is more important to the successful operation of a prison or jail than management. Poor inmate quality of life, use of excessive force, unsafe living conditions, deficient education and rehabilitative programs, disturbances, and escapes are all products of poor prison management. I have never believed that a warden could shift blame for a poorly run institution to internal or external factors, such as gangs, “politics,” budget constraints, architectural designs, and/or overcrowding. These factors—difficult, exhausting and thankless—are limiting, but never impossible to manage.

To manage a prison, the warden must come to terms with its organizational culture. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual. Like human culture, organizational culture is generally passed from one generation to the next. It is there when you arrive, and it will be there when you leave. Your objective, as a leader, is to make it better than you found it. If you don’t want to try to make it so, you should not be in a leadership position.

A strong management culture within an institution is one that is persistent with a patterned way of thinking about the tasks to be accomplished. I have on numerous occasions referred to a correctional operation as a “people business,” meaning that I think human relationships are the core of the culture. If you create the right organizational culture, combining correctional leadership with the institutional make-up, certain interlocking patterns will become apparent. John Dilulio’s No Escape: The Future of American Corrections (1991) discusses these patterns at greater length.

How do correctional managers go about the task of leading? One accepted definition of leadership is “the ability to influence people to work willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of established goals.” Today we understand that people should be guided and motivated, not coerced and threatened, into pursuing our goals.

Leadership within a correctional facility is relatively simple. It is the establishment of a very clear direction that is designed to continuously improve the culture of the facility. This direction has to be principle-centered, and it must emphasize a commitment to values and respect for other people. Good correctional leaders are men and women with positions of influence who work primarily in the pursuit of one objective; to these leaders, principles and respect for others mean more than power and authority. Stress is inherent in the correctional setting; it need not be compounded by gossip and unprofessional behavior. Substitute a strong social and moral workplace for these poor practices. Leadership should strive to bring people together to create a positive environment.

My approach has been one of empowerment with an emphasis on listening. Empowerment requires people to make decisions. In the correctional setting, it means including the right people at the right levels of the organization in decision making. It reinforces the fundamental team concept. A prison can be strengthened by applying the best that each employee can contribute towards improving its operation. To successfully use the concept of empowerment, you must constantly encourage and challenge the staff. This will leave a culture that reaffirms that good ideas come from every level within the operation.

The warden does not have all the answers. Empowerment closely relates to listening. To empower, you must be willing to ask for input. I have seen too many managers within a correctional facility believe that the quality of management is measured by how loud they can yell. They believe they aren’t really doing their duties unless they are screaming at someone or chewing someone out. I believe, to the contrary, that good managers are good listeners and that listening behaviors should be reflected by all good executives. In my own management approach, I have always believed that prison executives should be fair, avoid playing favorites, expect rejection, be consistent, and keep promises. Loyalty to the organization, as opposed to certain individuals, has always been a keen point with me. Acknowledging the importance of staff, a good follow-through mechanism, giving credit, and taking responsibility are all areas that make a corrections executive fulfill his or her potential.

This cannot be done from an office. I must be out walking around, asking questions, discussing issues with staff, watching them doing things right (and wrong) and giving constructive criticism. It is my culture, and I have to see it to know it. This is my formula for success in correctional management.
A third-generation migrant worker, Elaine White began picking fruits and vegetables from fields throughout Florida, Michigan, New York, and North Carolina when she was just six. Her family moved from place to place in pursuit of available work, staying no more than four months in one location, which made it difficult for White, as it is for most migrant children, to develop roots and a sense of place.

During her childhood, White was exposed to the depressed, substandard conditions that are rampant among migrant camps. Living in a world largely forgotten by society, she was surrounded by despair. Many people drank alcohol and took drugs to keep themselves going; others were in and out of jail. Education was not required, nor important, and workers were not held accountable. It was a difficult life in which they were at the mercy of the weather and the landowners, who at times, did not pay the migrant workers.

However, White’s mother wanted something better for her family. Although no one was checking to ensure migrant children attended school, she enrolled her children in the local schools each time they arrived in a new town—even if it was for just a week. “Most migrant parents would say, ‘Oh we’re only here for two or three weeks,’” says White. “My mom would say, ‘You’re going.’”

As a result, White—the seventh of 13 children kept up with her studies and was the first in her family to go to college. A straight-A student, she graduated from Haines City High School in Florida in 1976 with a four-year academic scholarship to Florida State University, where she studied correctional management. Upon graduation, White put her degree to work and searched for a correctional agency that was actively seeking women and minorities. What she wanted most, however, was a permanent place to call her own. She longed for what many take for granted: stability and a retirement, which no one in her family had ever had. “When I graduated from college, I was looking for an opportunity to belong to something,” explains White. “On a migrant camp, there is always a feeling of worthlessness and diminished self-esteem.”

White got her start in corrections when she was hired by the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office in Florida as a deputy sheriff. She has been with the agency ever since—nearly 20 years. Throughout her distinguished career, White, now a major, has worked her way through the ranks, holding every supervisory position in the department, and was promoted five years ago to division commander of the Orient Road Jail, which is the largest facility in the system, with 1,714 beds.

White is a hands-on supervisor, preferring to handle things directly, bypassing memos for face-to-face interactions. To her, the most important aspect of her job is ensuring that staff are well-trained. From her migrant days, she also understands the importance of teamwork and expressing to staff how important they are to her and the successful operation of the jail. “I try to remember every day that my staff make me look good. It’s not just ‘me’ thing.”

White is a leader both at work and in the community. Two years ago, she created an Orient Road Jail fund—raising committee to involve her staff in projects that benefit the community as well as promote the sheriff’s office. Together, they sponsor a number of projects each year, one of which is called Foster Angels. During the holiday season, the committee compiles a wish list from children living in area foster homes or orphanages and puts the information on the back of blue angels for boys and pink angels for girls and hangs them on a Christmas tree at the jail. Staff pick one or two angels, buy the gifts, wrap them, and deliver them to the children. Several months ago, they hosted a fund-raiser to benefit a 14-year-old girl with terminal cancer. And in October, they participated in a benefit breakfast in conjunction with a local church to support an aftercare program for women recently released from the Hillsborough County jail system.

White’s passion is people. She likes to be out in the community, interacting with people and positively representing women in the sheriff’s office. To that end, White tries to give about 50 speeches per year to different community groups, including schools and churches, and conducts tours of her facility. With everything she does, White includes her staff. “We’re proud of our facility and I also want the staff to always know that they are important,” she says.

In addition to helping the community, White hosts seminars for staff, such as smoking cessation and financial planning workshops. Using her connections in the community, she provides a seminar for staff approximately every six weeks. White also started a chapter of the public speaking group, Toastmasters International, at her facility to help improve staff’s communication skills.
and, ultimately, their self-esteem. Further, she and the fund-raising committee organized a job fair last spring, which included facility tours, application materials, information about each position and mentor assignments to help prospective employees work through the hiring process.

White also is a migrant advocate and helped develop the Professional Migrant Advocates, a 15-year-old private organization for professionals who come from migrant backgrounds. In that capacity, she has been involved in several projects statewide to help generate public understanding of the plight of migrant children.

Several months ago, one such project was held in Hillsborough County called, “Project Zapatos,” which is Spanish for shoes, and successfully collected new shoes for migrant children. After nine months of hard work, White, who started and has been running a similar program for 10 years, gathered 2,000 pairs of new shoes. Instead of just giving out the shoes, the organizers, which included some staff, set up a makeshift store at the YMCA, complete with racks for the shoes, greenery for decoration, and cashiers. The children picked out their shoes, “paid” with a voucher and received a shopping bag and a receipt that read, “Believe in yourself.”

“It was magical for me,” says White, who received her first pair of shoes when she was in the eighth grade. “It was overwhelmingly successful....; I wanted the kids to come into a store setting, something most of them never have an opportunity to do.”

Although her mother did not understand White’s decision to go into corrections when she graduated college, and for a time, was even disappointed because of the experiences she had had with law enforcement as a migrant worker, White could not be happier with her career or the way her life has turned out. “I love the people, the interaction. I love the fact that although I’m the only black person on the sheriff’s staff, the only woman, and the only tall person, I’m just accepted. I work with about 25 of the top supervisors in the sheriff’s office, including the sheriff. I’m kidded and the whole nine yards like everybody else,” says White. “Had I not taken this job, I know my family’s path would have been different.”

White thinks about how far she has come every day. A lot of people in her family, people with whom she grew up, people with whom she went to school, are dead, in prison or living on the streets, never having experienced the luxury of a stable job or the feeling of belonging. “I was looking for acceptance when I took the job,” she says, “and I got more than I ever expected.”

**Correctional Shock: Ten Rules for Therapists in Prison**

by Steve Rybolt

Way back when, I was a therapist in the country’s first adolescent heroin treatment center (Riverside Hospital, North Brother Island, New York City). It’s been a circuitous route to my present work with the Missouri Department of Corrections. For two years now, I’ve been engaged in developing chemical dependency services in the correctional system for maximum- and medium-security offenders.

What a change in perceptions the intervening years have brought. The concern I’m addressing to “outsiders” who are trying to provide services in the criminal justice system is what I’ll call “correctional shock.” Here are ten factors that need to be addressed, matters that you outsiders must pay attention to if you intend to provide effective addiction treatment services to the nation’s correctional systems.

1. First and foremost, you’re going to be dealing with a complicated system dedicated to security, control and punishment. That’s because modern prisons—places where we pretend to rehabilitate people without souls—have revolving doors and no space. One in, one out.

2. Decision-making and getting a task accomplished often require many layers of review until a final judgment is rendered. Remember, you are dealing with a system with goals of confinement, control, security, and punishment. Every level expects to have a say in the outcome of anything that changes the operation of the institution.

3. Addiction and the disease model are foreign to most persons who deal with offenders. You often
will hear responsible persons say, “Well, if he only would use a little willpower,” or, “They simply have no morals”—statements indicating no comprehension of the complexities of working with persons in trouble with chemical dependency.

4. Addictive drugs are available, for a price, for those in prison who want them. Even those who believe in what you’re trying to do will tell you that until you can stop the drugs from coming into the institution, you’ll always have a problem.

5. Violence, fights and threatening behavior accompany prison drug usage. An addict who buys in prison must pay dearly for his habit; when he gets in debt over his head he will be dealt with severely. He can even be reached if he “turns himself in” to protective custody.

6. Where seldom is heard a rehabilitative word, you’ll wonder if there are any people who support your efforts. You may discover that those who are most encouraging are those who somehow get “clean and dry.”

7. You may experience more program resistance from the staff than from inmates.

8. Parole violations for substance use only reinforce the correctional system’s cynicism.

9. Your professional credentials will not matter much to offenders. Your own recovery will mean a great deal, however. It’s the phenomenon of “until you’ve walked in my moccasins.”

10. Finally, don’t look for or expect commendations from the system. The rewards of your effort and competence will have to be found in the outcomes of the lives of those persons who manage to turn things around.

The lines seem to be drawn in our system: stiffer penalties, more prisons, longer sentences. There are those of us who believe in the humane treatment of offenders in trouble because of chemical dependency. But much of the corrections community remains resistant to change.

It will be difficult in the short term to demonstrate convincing evidence that chemical dependency programs will work, that they can and do make a difference. But those who intend to serve the nation’s prisons must address these issues professionally, believing firmly in rehabilitation. They must be able to demonstrate that change can produce results—that’s the bottom line.