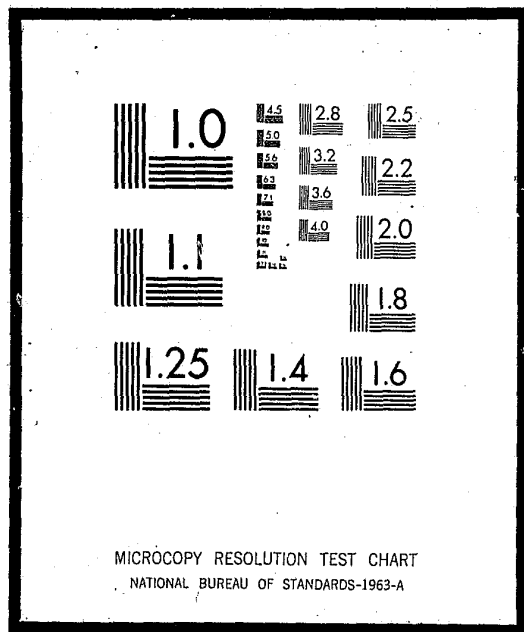


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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AS A DETERMINANT OF PRISONIZATION

An Analysis of the Consequences of Alienation

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The Metropolitan Criminal Justice Center operates the Pilot City program in Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, Virginia. Established in September, 1971, the Center is a research and program planning and development component of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Center's Pilot City program is one of eight throughout the nation funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U. S. Department of Justice. The basic purpose of each Pilot City project is to assist local jurisdictions in the design and establishment of various programs, often highly innovative and experimental in nature, which will contribute over a period of years to the development of a model criminal justice system. Each Pilot City team is also responsible for assuring comprehensive evaluation of such programs, for assisting the development of improved criminal justice planning ability within the host jurisdictions, and for providing technical assistance to various local agencies when requested.

The Pilot City Program has two primary responsibilities -- to the host municipalities and to the improvement of the criminal justice system. In Virginia, responsibility for adult corrections, except for offenders sentenced for one year or less to local jails, (and for much of juvenile corrections) rests with the State Department of Welfare and Institutions. Thus, the Pilot City Program's activities in the adult corrections area consist primarily of program planning assistance to local correctional efforts and research regarding such currently important issues in Virginia as sentencing, community corrections, and institutional programming and management, as reflected in this monograph.

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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AS A DETERMINANT OF PRISONIZATION

An Analysis of the Consequences of Alienation*

An increasingly extensive volume of criminological research has focused on both the determinants and consequences of prisonization (Clemmer, 1940, 1951; Hayner and Ash, 1940; Schrag, 1944, 1954; McCorkle and Korn, 1954; Sykes, 1956, 1958; Fisher, 1961, 1965; Garrity, 1961; Wheeler, 1961; Garabedian, 1963, 1964; Tittle and Tittle, 1964; Glaser, 1964; Ward and Kassebaum, 1964, 1965; Giallombardo, 1966a, 1966b; Wellford, 1967; Atchley and McCabe, 1968; Mathiesen, 1968; Tittle, 1969; Edwards, 1970; Thomas and Foster, 1972, 1973; Zingraff, 1973, Thomas, 1973a; Neal, Snyder and Balogh, 1974). The preponderance of this literature has shown that prisonization exerts a major influence in correctional institutions, an influence that appears counter-productive for those who seek to implement successful rehabilitation programs (cf. Thomas, 1973b). As comparative studies of prison organizations have become available, however, it has become increasingly clear that the content of the normative system into which inmates become assimilated is not necessarily either oppositional or negative, an assertion characteristic of much of the earlier literature (Grusky, 1959a, 1959b; Vinter and Janowitz,

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1959; Zald, 1962a, 1962b, 1963; Glaser, 1964; Zald and Street, 1964; Street, 1965; Sarri and Vinter, 1965; Berk, 1966; Street, Vinter, and Perrow, 1966; Cline, 1968; Mathiesen, 1971; Akers, et al. 1972). On the contrary, the orientation of the informal inmate normative system in many ways appears to be a reflection of the type of organizational structure within which such a system emerges and the types of problems which the organizational structure generates for the inmate population. Thus, the specification of the relevant organizational attributes which contribute toward these differences must be viewed as a crucial problem.

In this paper we wish to focus attention on a neglected though salient characteristic of custodially-oriented correctional institutions that seems central to the development of a more adequate understanding of why the inmate normative system in this type of institution is so typically described as negative and oppositional. Many researchers in both criminology and complex organization have hypothesized that the coercive structure of custodially-oriented institutions will evoke high levels of alienation among those being processed by the organization (Etzioni, 1959, 1961; Goffman, 1961; Sykes, 1958; Thomas and Miller, 1971). In such settings alienation becomes one of a substantial number of the "pains of imprisonment", and these pressures stimulate high levels of assimilation or prisonization. In other words, the greater the coercive orientation of a correctional institution, the greater the level of structurally-generated alienation that will be created; the greater the level of structurally-generated alienation, the greater the probability of high levels of assim-

ilation into the inmate subculture. Second, in addition to an examination of the relationship between alienation and prisonization, we also wish to explore the extent to which a viable distinction can be made between a general measure of alienation from the larger society and a contextual one which focuses specifically on structurally-generated alienation within the immediate institutional setting.

Conceptual Model

Two basic paradigms have been developed to account for variations in response to confinement, the "deprivation model" and the "importation model" (Cline, 1968). The former model, most clearly articulated by Sykes (1958) and by Sykes and Messinger (1960), presents a structural-functional argument in which the correctional institution is described as a closed system. Briefly stated, advocates of this approach suggest that confinement presents large numbers of similarly-situated inmates with common problems of adjustment. The emergence of an informal inmate social system and the "inmate code" which states the normative expectations of that system are viewed as an adaptive response to these common problems. Although initial formulations of this perspective could not provide an adequate rationale for the typically oppositional character of the adaptive subculture, there is at least some indication that progress is being made toward the correction of this critical flaw (Mathiesen, 1968).

The importation model, on the other hand, is considerably more process-oriented than the static conceptualization provided

by the deprivation model and, because of this, appears much less prone to the problems that are often inherent in closed-system approaches (Schrag, 1961; Irwin and Cressey, 1964; Wellford, 1967; Cline, 1968; Thomas, 1970, 1973a; Mathiesen, 1971; Thomas and Foster, 1972, 1973; Zingraff, 1973). This model emphasizes influences which originate in the preprison experiences of the inmates, the extent of their contact with the larger society during confinement, and the quality of their expectations about postrelease life-chances. Perhaps the fundamental difference between the importation model and the deprivation model is that proponents of the importation model explicitly recognize and attempt to take advantage of the fact that inmates do not enter correctional institutions without having been exposed to socialization processes and personal experiences which mediate and condition the quality of their adaptation to confinement. Moreover, quite apart from the presumed importance of such pre-prison influences, this model demands that attention be devoted to a more thorough understanding of the fact that the quality of contacts which inmates retain with the free society during the period of their incarceration may also influence the type and degree of their reaction to the immediate correctional setting. Similarly, because such individuals have a future as well as a past and a present, the model further asserts that the quality of their postprison expectations will strongly influence their response to confinement. Thus, while the deprivation model is primarily designed for the analysis of consequences that follow from reactions to problems linked to the correctional

setting, the importation model attempts to deal with the fact that not all of a given individual's problems originate within that setting. Further, even the responses to factors that are tied to that setting cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration the fairly obvious fact that such reactions are at least in part dependent upon learning experiences which occurred in the lives of the individuals prior to their confinement.

The relative explanatory power of these alternative conceptualizations is not, however, the immediate issue. Suffice it to say that both models view the organizational structure of correctional institutions as an important determinant of inmate adaptations, but the deprivation model clearly develops this point in greater detail and with greater emphasis (Sykes, 1958; Grusky, 1959; Sykes and Messinger, 1961; Goffman, 1961; Berk, 1966; Street, Vinter, and Perrow, 1966). Still, one basic distinction between the two perspectives is relevant for this discussion and the analysis which follows. The deprivation model posits a direct link between the various pressures associated with confinement and the degree of prisonization. Such an assertion does not easily fit within the implications of the importation model. Instead, influences beyond the context of the correctional setting are viewed as determinants of both the perceived pressures of confinement and the response to these pressures. The basic form of the argument would be as follows:

Proposition 1: The more coercive the structure of a correctional organization, the greater the level of structurally-generated alienation among the inmate population. (Deprivation Model)

Proposition 2: The greater the level of structurally-generated alienation, the greater the probability of high levels of prisonization among the inmate population. (Deprivation Model)

but

Proposition 3: The more positive the extraprison influences on the inmates, the lower the degree of their alienation. (Importation Model)

Proposition 4: The more positive the extraprison influences on the inmates, the lower the degree of their prisonization. (Importation Model)

Because one dimension of our problem is the distinction between a contextual and a general referent for alienation, a further problem must be dealt with before we present our analysis. If, on a conceptual level, we can discriminate between structurally-generated alienation (a contextual measure) and some more general type of alienation that is not a direct response to the immediate institutional setting, what type of relationship would we expect between two types of alienation? Unfortunately, the prior literature on prisonization provides us with virtually no answer for this question. Still, we would certainly argue that the two types of alienation are related to one another, and there is considerable support for this expectation in the findings of research conducted within other types of organizations (cf. Dubin, 1956; Middleton, 1963; Blauner, 1964; Aiken and Hage, 1966; Miller, 1967; Bonjean and Grimes, 1970). Whether or not one of the types of alienation is causally related to the other

is a much more difficult problem. Given the pervasive control which correctional institutions have over the inmate population, however, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that structurally-generated alienation would promote increased levels of general alienation even were the inmates alienated from the larger society prior to the point of their confinement. This yields two additional theoretical propositions that are examined in our analysis.

Proposition 5: The greater the level of the structurally-generated alienation, the greater the level of general feelings of alienation among the inmate population. (Deprivation Model)

Proposition 6: The more positive the extraprison influences on the inmates, the lower the level of general feelings of alienation among the inmate population. (Importation Model)

Research Methodology

In order to operationally test the implications of the propositions stated above, data were obtained from 267 boys who were institutionalized in a Virginia juvenile institution in 1972. This sample represents 78.5 percent of the total population. Although an attempt was made to obtain data from the total population (N=340), twenty (5.9 percent) refused to complete the questionnaire, six (1.8 percent) were AWOL at the time of the study, and four (1.2 percent) were hospitalized. Thus, 310 questionnaires were actually administered. Of these, five (1.6 percent) were improperly completed and thirty-eight (12.3 percent) could not be matched with the permanent institutional records from which additional data on each juvenile were obtained.

Information on the operational measures of the major variables reported in the analysis is provided below:

Powerlessness. Of the several dimensions of alienation which have been discussed in the previous literature, powerlessness appears to be particularly relevant for research in correctional settings. This variable is conceptualized as a generalized feeling that one has little influence over one's behavior or destiny. A six-item Likert scale was derived from the measure reported by Neal and Rettig (1967). As was true with each of the other measures we developed, items for this scale were selected by correlating item scores with summated scale scores. Unless the item to total scale score correlation was both significant at the .001 confidence level and equal to or greater than .35, the item was deleted from the scale. When items were deleted, the summated scale score was recomputed as were the item-to-scale score correlations. Each scale was then broken down into trichotomies for the analysis. Medium levels for each variable were operationally defined as all cases falling within one-half of one standard deviation from the mean of the scale. Thus, a high score was defined as any score greater than one-half a standard deviation above the mean and a low score was defined as any which fell more than one-half a standard deviation below the mean of the scale. The items used in this and the other measures are reported in Appendix A.

Organizational Powerlessness. The notion of powerlessness also provides the empirical referent for the contextual measure

of alienation, and its conceptual definition is much like that of the general measure with the exception that it is viewed as a much more specific type of alienation. A four-item Likert scale provides the operational measure of this variable.

Postprison Expectations. Those committed to correctional institutions show considerable variation in their attitudes toward their probable postprison life-chances. Indeed, earlier research has shown that such expectations exert a considerable influence on inmate adaptations (Thomas and Foster, 1972). A twelve-item Likert scale was developed as a measure of this variable.

Prisonization. This variable is defined as the extent to which an inmate has adopted the tenets of a basically oppositional and hostile normative system. A ten-item Likert scale was developed to measure this variable.

Analysis and Findings

The initial segment of our argument is straight-forward. The deprivation model implies that both powerlessness variables will be correlated with the degree of prisonization. The importation model implies that both the alienation variables and degree of prisonization will be associated with the quality of postprison expectations. Tentative confirmation for both sets of implications would follow if the zero-order correlations provide the requisite support. A summary of the pertinent statistical findings is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
 INTERCORRELATION MATRIX (GAMMA)

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
X ₁	1.000	.422	.337	.426
X ₂		1.000	.269	.285
X ₃			1.000	.229
X ₄				1.000

X₁ = Organizational Powerlessness
 X₂ = Powerlessness

X₃ = Postprison Expectations
 X₄ = Prisonization

As predicted, moderate levels of association were found between both measures of powerlessness and prisonization (gamma = .285 and .426). Our contextual measure of structurally-generated powerlessness, however, is clearly a better predictor of degree of prisonization than is the more general measure of powerlessness. Similarly, postprison expectations were correlated at a moderate level with powerlessness (gamma = .269), organizational powerlessness (gamma = .337), and prisonization (gamma = .229). Again, it is important to note that the relationship between postprison expectations, our measure of a particularly significant extraprison influence, and the organizational powerlessness is stronger than the association between postprison expectations and general powerlessness. At any rate, these four bivariate propositions are supported, but controlled analysis is required if we are to better understand the interrelationships between the four variables.

The intent of the controlled analysis is to provide answers to several important questions. First, are the two alienation variables directly associated with prisonization or does their influence operate indirectly through the intervening link provided by postprison expectations? Second, is the association between postprison expectations and prisonization direct or does it only affect prisonization through its linkage with the two alienation variables? In other words, are each of the four hypothesized linkages direct or are they in one or more cases indirect?

The first question may be resolved by correlating both measures of alienation with prisonization when the postprison expectations variable is held constant. If the effects of the two independent variables are direct, the introduction of the postprison expectation as a variable should not significantly alter the zero-order associations. If, on the other hand, either of the partial correlations are reduced considerably, the conclusion would be that postprison expectations are a link through which one or both alienation variables effects prisonization.

As can be seen from the information provided in Table 2, the initial levels of association remained stable when the postprison expectations variable was held constant. This supports the original prediction that both general powerlessness and organizational powerlessness are directly associated with degree of prisonization.

TABLE 2

ZERO ORDER AND PARTIAL CORRELATIONS (GAMMA) BETWEEN
POWERLESSNESS, ORGANIZATIONAL POWERLESSNESS, POSTPRISON
EXPECTATIONS AND PRISONIZATION



CONTROLLED ANALYSIS

$X_1X_4 \cdot X_2 = .377$	$X_2X_4 \cdot X_1 = .213$	$X_3X_4 \cdot X_2 = .141$
$X_1X_4 \cdot X_3 = .392$	$X_2X_4 \cdot X_3 = .211$	$X_3X_4 \cdot X_1 = .162$

X_1 = Organizational Powerlessness
 X_2 = Powerlessness

X_3 = Postprison Expectations
 X_4 = Prisonization

The logic of the analysis required for an answer to the second question is quite similar to that of the **proceeding** section. Specifically, if postprison expectations are directly linked to prisonization, the introduction of the two powerlessness variables as controls should not result in a reduction of the original association between postprison expectations and prisonization. Were the initial correlation greatly reduced, we would have to conclude that the effect of postprison expectations on prisonization is operating indirectly through the alienation variables. As can be seen in Table 2, although the partial gamma coefficients do not reduce to zero, they do show a considerable reduction when compared with the comparable zero-order associations. This suggests that while a direct link between postprison expectations and prisonization does exist, a good deal of that association is accounted for when alienation is held constant. Our interpretation of this finding is that postprison expectations are both directly and indirectly related to prisonization, but the primary effect appears to be indirect.

Finally, it is necessary to turn to the analytical problem created by our use of both specific and general measures of powerlessness. Earlier we suggested that the situationally specific measure was a more meaningful index than general powerlessness and the magnitude of the correlations shown in Table 1 tend to support this suggestion. Still, those associations do not allow us to determine the form of the relationship between the two alienation variables. If our assertion that organizational

powerlessness leads to both a general sense of powerlessness and prisonization is correct, then a control for organizational powerlessness should greatly reduce the association between general powerlessness and prisonization. Of course, the reverse might also be the case. In other words, inmates may enter the institution with high levels of alienation as measured by our general powerlessness variable. This might predispose them to both high levels of organizational powerlessness and prisonization. Although we predicted the former causal order, we can find little support for either argument in the relevant criminological literature. Table 2 contains the necessary statistical information required for an appropriate decision. When organizational powerlessness is held constant, the association between general powerlessness and prisonization remains stable.

Similarly, when general powerlessness is held constant, the relationship between organizational powerlessness and prisonization remains stable. Given the fact that the intercorrelation between the two measures of powerlessness is moderate to strong, the slight reductions noted in both partial coefficients are difficult to interpret. Indeed, because the model we are dealing with contains only four variables, we are at something of a loss as to how to provide more than a speculative explanation for these findings. Nevertheless, the fact that a control for one type of powerlessness does not significantly affect the association between the other powerlessness variable and prisonization certainly raises the possibility that they are the products of

quite different causal factors. Still, because of the item content of the organizational powerlessness scale, we believe that variations in this measure reflect a response to the immediate institutional setting. General powerlessness, however, would appear to be a product of factors not included in this abbreviated model.

Conclusions

The intent of our analysis has been to examine the utility of a contextual measure of alienation as a predictor of prisonization. The theoretical logic behind our expectation of an association is simple. Custodially-oriented types of correctional institutions typically create such a distinction between staff and inmates that the latter are isolated at the bottom of the organizational structure. Given that position, they have little control over a broad spectrum of factors that affect even minor details related to everyday life. This type of situation can be expected to alienate a significant proportion of the inmate population, and alienation has often been viewed as a pressure which produces high levels of prisonization.

While our attempt to specify the causal order of general and organizational powerlessness failed, the findings of the analysis are instructive. First, we believe that we have shown the utility of moving toward the use of contextual measures of alienation. Second, the findings do show that factors external to the correctional setting can have a direct effect on the response which inmates make to confinement. Third, if our measure

of organizational powerlessness does reflect a structurally-generated product of the coercive institutional setting, the available literature would suggest that the very structure of the institution reduces the potential of the organization to act as an effective agent of change.

APPENDIX A

The operational measures of the major variables are listed below. The coefficients noted at the end of each scale item represent the item-to-scale-score correlations.

General Powerlessness

- *1. People can do almost anything in this country if they work hard enough. (.524)
- *2. The average citizen has a good deal of influence on the things that happen to him. (.410)
- 3. The world is run by a few people in power and there's not much people like me can do about it. (.530)
- 4. Whether you like it or not, chance plays an awfully large part in what happens to all of us. (.392)
- 5. You can't help feeling helpless when you see what's going on in the world today. (.470)
- *6. An average citizen can have an influence in things like government decisions if he makes himself heard. (.477)
- 7. It is only wishful thinking to believe that a person like me can have an influence in the world today. (.436)

The mean of this measure is 21.348 with a standard deviation of 4.423.

Organizational Powerlessness

- *1. We're allowed to make a lot of decisions for ourselves here. (.664)
- 2. You can't help feeling like a caged animal in a place like this. (.493)
- 3. None of us have any influence on how we're treated here. (.674)
- 4. There's really not much I can do about what happens to me here. (.674)

The mean of this measure is 13.472 with a standard deviation of 4.025.

Postprison Expectations

1. Nobody at home cares whether I live or die anymore. (.424)
2. So many bad things have happened to me that the future doesn't look good for me when I go home. (.589)
- *3. I'm confident that things will be better for me when I leave here. (.520)
4. My family and friends have just about given up on me. (.471)
- *5. The people I knew before I came here will still respect me when I go home. (.429)
- *6. I don't think that having been here will hurt my chances for getting a good job after I get out. (.570)
- *7. I think people will give me a fair chance when I leave _____ as long as I stay out of trouble. (.490)
8. People on the outside believe that anyone who has been here is bound to get into trouble again. (.364)
9. Being sent here has ruined my whole life. (.601)
10. I'm afraid to face the people I knew on the street when I get out. (.480)
11. Most people on the outside don't give someone who has been here a fair chance. (.447)

The mean of this measure is 22.506 with a standard deviation of 7.407.

Prisonization

1. The other boys are right when they say, "Don't do anything more than you have to". (.465)
2. It's better to tell the staff what they want to here than to tell them the truth if you want to get out soon. (.536)
3. It's a good idea to keep to yourself here as much as you can. (.467)
- *4. I probably spend more of my free time talking with people on the staff than most of the other boys do. (.386)
5. Anyone who talks about his personal problems with people on the staff is weak. (.512)

6. I try to stay out of trouble but nobody is going to push me around and get away with it. (.494)
- *7. I have more in common with people on the staff than I do with most of the boys. (.387)
8. When a boy deals with staff, he should stick up for his own beliefs and not let the staff tell him what's good and what's not. (.447)

The mean of this measure is 27.064 with a standard deviation of 5.654.

* Indicates reversed item scoring.

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