

**Blueprints and Bars:**  
**An Exploration into the Effects of Architecture Upon**  
**Rehabilitation in Correctional Institutions**

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Dedicated to Mike Frawley for enthusiastically teaching me about prison design as I navigated my way through this thesis.

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## I. Introduction

We filed into the cellblock one by one and stood in a small group by the door. A lock clicked shut behind us, and a prison guard shouted out a name. Across the room, a man set down a pair of massive dumbbells and walked over to us, wearing hospital scrubs and white sneakers. One tattoo—a large, ornate cross—stretched across his bulging bicep, and another emerged from the neckline of his shirt, spreading across his neck like a vine. His hair was cropped close to his head, and his piercing blue eyes scanned our group.

“High school, huh?” he asked the guard.

The guard nodded. “They’re sixteen,” he said. “Why don’t you talk to them a little, Mike? Tell them a bit about yourself. Start with how old *you* are.”

Mike was twenty-one years old, and had been at this medium-security state prison for almost two and a half years. In high school, he had gotten into drugs, trying everything he could get his hands on. One day, while he was high, he totaled a car, driving up onto the sidewalk on the wrong side of the street and crashing into a mailbox and a streetlight. The car had also hit a young woman, who spent three months in the hospital recovering. Mike, amazingly, had only broken one rib. His trial had been short, they’d sentenced him to four years, and he had been a model prisoner ever since.

“I realized I didn’t want to live that life. So I found Randy.” He motioned towards a man sitting across the room reading a worn Bible. “I got into religion pretty quickly.” Mike pulled the shirtsleeve of his scrubs up, proudly displaying the tattoo on his arm as proof.

The guards frequently have him talk to groups like us, he said, because it's something he wants to do. He wants to try to deter us from making the same choices that he made. The week before, he had been given a parole hearing, and was going to be released early. "Four more days in here," he told us. His eyes softened and sparkled with the idea of being a free man so soon. Five months after he was put in prison, his girlfriend had given birth, and he was so much looking forward to being around for the little tyke.

"No way I'm coming back here." For the last two and a half years, all he had done was lift weights, stay out of trouble, and do everything possible to get out, and now it was finally happening for him.

He left us and went into the concrete, grated, designated "outdoor" space to play some basketball with another inmate. We trooped, one-by-one, through the cellblock, observing men lifting free weights, playing cards, watching television, talking on the row of payphones in the corner. We peeked into cells, saw the thin mattresses and scratchy gray wool blankets on bunk beds, the stainless steel sinks and seatless toilets, and noted the heaviness of the doors as they clanged shut upon our exit. As we toured Mike's current home, all I could think about was how wonderful it was that he had reformed so completely while incarcerated. Exhilaration washed over me as I thought of the sparkle in his eyes when he talked about his premature release and the honest life he would live with his son starting in four days. I was aware that the prison guards would choose specific inmates to talk to visiting school groups, inmates that would make the prison appear as though it functioned effectively. Even knowing that Mike may be the

exception rather than the rule, I was delighted. The prison system was not as entirely ineffectual as I had imagined it to be.

We left the cellblock and another guard met up with our group to escort us to another part of the facility. The guards walked a few steps ahead of me, and I overheard their conversation.

“Who did the talk?”

“Mike.”

“He’s getting out of here in a few days, isn’t he?”

“Yeah. But he’ll be back. He’s so sure he’s changed; but when he gets out there, he’ll realize how wrong he is. They always come back.”

“Twenty bucks says he’s back in six months or less.”

“You seriously think I’m dumb enough to take that bet? I don’t throw away my money.”

As we continued the tour, I could only be frustrated. How did people like Mike stand a chance when even the guards with whom they were so friendly didn’t believe them capable of staying out of prison?

Crime terrifies me. As a child, I lined the outside of my bedroom windows with pennies so I would hear someone trying to climb in to burglarize my house or steal me while I lay sleeping. I dreamt of chasing thieves through my second grade classroom, and lay awake at night imagining that every creak in my ancient house was a murderer coming to get my parents. Sophomore year in college, I practiced the moves from my self-defense class when I was alone in my room so I would be ready to protect myself

from anyone who wanted to cause me harm on my walk back from the library. While I was abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland, I walked home from the gym at night with a key between my fingers that I hoped would act as a deterrent for anyone who wanted to mug or rape me.

I also believe, however, that those people who commit criminal acts are, at the core, no different from any law-abiding citizen. Statistics show that crime is more prevalent among the lower classes, and prisons across the United States are filled with young black men. It isn't that those individuals who end up in prison are fundamentally, genetically, inferior to the rest of the population, and it isn't they are programmed to break the law and cause harm to others. While it is difficult to think of rapists and serial killers as fundamentally similar to myself, this is something I want to believe. Anyone can learn a skewed set of moral values, and therefore, with guidance and proper counseling, anyone can reevaluate these values and become an ethical human being, one that will not commit criminal acts. While the part of me that is terrified of crime would love to see every criminal locked up, behind bars, maybe even forever, so they don't have a chance of hurting me or my loved ones, the rational part of me believes that those people who commit criminal actions can be rehabilitated, every one of them, and therefore should be sent to prison, given programs that promote rehabilitation, and counseled in a manner that will aid them in understanding their actions and fostering a desire to live a life within the parameters of the law.

Last fall, I took part in a course called "Inside-Out," where a group of Haverford and Bryn Mawr students traveled to Riverside Correctional Facility, a women's state jail, to engage in discussion with a group of inmates on issues of the prison system, rising



rates of incarceration, and the problems with criminal justice in the United States. The women in the class were taken from the Options unit of the jail. Options, sometimes specified by judges during sentencing, and sometimes a voluntary choice by the inmate herself, is a unit where inmates are provided with a greater volume of programming and counseling than is available to the rest of the institution. The women in Options take part in computing classes, creative writing and poetry, and are the only unit offered part in the Inside-Out program. In addition, women in Options must go to one-on-one counseling several times a week. They have extremely busy schedules, often leaving the unit for full days, moving from class to class, not returning until the 10 p.m. final count. On our first day of class, as a group, we decided on rules for conduct. One of the incarcerated women, or “inside students,” volunteered the rule, “No labeling.” The women with whom I was in class fought the label “criminal”; rather than criminals they are people who have committed criminal actions. The crime should not be the characteristic that defines them; they are more than that. They are mothers, and wives, and they are trying to take care of their loved ones. They do not want to be criminals for their entire lives; they want to do their time, and then return to their outside lives. They are people who have committed criminal acts, just as I am a person who has done things I am ashamed of. But they are often labeled as criminals, and I am rarely labeled as the actions I am ashamed of. Listening to the hearty agreement of the inside students to this anti-labeling rule made it clear that these women believe the label “criminal” to be incorrect due to a strong belief that they are capable of rehabilitation. The prison system is greatly flawed, and oftentimes does not work towards this goal of rehabilitation of its inmates. Instead, inmates are locked up and spend their days doing as they please, receiving their “three

hots and a cot” without having to consider for even thirty seconds why they are behind bars. Over time, the prison system has improved greatly, although there are still serious steps that need to be taken. I believe that correctional institutions must take their names to heart and make rehabilitation a primary focus.

Through the course of this paper, I will discuss the manners in which rehabilitation and prisons have interacted, with an emphasis upon how architecture can contribute to this relationship. I will begin with a brief discussion of the history of prisons, and how they have changed in design both physical and philosophical. I will also include a history of rehabilitation, and how the idea that inmates can be reformed has been sidelined throughout time. I will delve into the debates surrounding rehabilitation in today’s prison system, attempting to figure out whether prisons in the United States can claim to have reform as a primary goal, and bringing up important questions surrounding the idea of rehabilitation in a prison environment. I will continue on with a discussion of the current prison system and how today’s institutions manage inmate life and rehabilitation, focusing on the manners in which architecture can be used to create an environment conducive to reform. Finally, I will venture to say that prisons today still lack the ability to reform inmates across the board, and will propose an ideal architectural prison design that I believe would work to solve this problem.

## II. The History of Prisons

When the first prisons were constructed, they were not meant to serve as a means of punishment or to house prisoners for any extended period of time. When people accused of crimes were apprehended, they were confined until the time when their punishment could be carried out. In those days, punishment frequently involved torture or death, with imprisonment simply a necessary manner of holding the convicts until it was possible to make them pay for their actions. Because these institutions ostensibly housed only prisoners that would eventually be put to death or subjected to severe torture, there was not much public concern about the dreadful conditions inside. It wasn't until 1790, when prisons became established fully as institutions of punishment rather than holding cells, that reform advocates began to enter the scene and demand that conditions inside these facilities improve. This movement carried particular force in England, led by John Howard.

John Howard first became introduced to prison reform when elected High Sheriff in Bedford, a position that required him to inspect the prison environments in his county. Appalled to see the conditions in which prisoners were kept, Howard began visiting neighboring prisons to determine the scope of this problem. He compiled his findings on the health of prisoners and conditions of prison life, and submitted it to the British House of Commons in 1774. In response, the British Parliament passed the 1774 Gaol Act, which offered goalers, or prison guards, manners in which they could improve the health and sanitation of prisons. Howard repeatedly visited prisons and provided the goalers with copies of this act, yet the suggestions were largely ignored.

Howard branched out, hoping to find prisons in other parts of the world that could serve as a superior model for British prisons. He visited many institutions across Europe, but found that, on the whole, prison facilities were run in the same unsanitary and corrupt manner as those in England. He did, however, come across one exception: the Maison de Force in Ghent, France. The Maison de Force is known for being the first correctional institution to “bring architecture to the air of the penological philosophy in a sophisticated and skillful manner” (Johnston 2000: 39). Architecturally, it was designed in an octagon, and separated into slices that allowed for the separation of inmate groupings, a revolutionary idea that focused on providing individualized services to each category of inmates.

In the early 19th century, a group of British prison reformists created the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline that compiled a list of six ideal goals for which every prison ought to aim, including:

- “Punishment
- Security from escape and defense from outside force
- Systematic supervision of both guards and prisoners
- Prevention of corruption arising from prisoner’s mutual contact
- Good health of occupants
- Reformation by means of labor, religion, and possibly education” (Johnston 2000: 44).

The society worked to achieve all six of these measures inside prisons across the United Kingdom, without ranking with respect to importance, but found, as Howard had before them, that prison officials were largely unreceptive to the idea of reform.

Meanwhile, Quaker groups in Britain were also taking interest in the poor conditions of correctional institutions. In 1817, Elizabeth Fry and several other Quakers formed the Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate, with the hopes of achieving significant reform by concentrating their efforts specifically on one prison. Fry visited the women incarcerated at Newgate prison frequently, and eventually was able to bring the inmates clothing—oftentimes, they were imprisoned naked-- and instate a school as well as a chapel inside the institution. Despite having already achieved significant measures while working towards the improvement of Newgate prison, Fry was not content. Wanting to have an impact upon prison conditions as a whole, she began to press Parliament to take further action. In 1823, the second Gaol Act was passed. This act provided several measures to improve the quality of life and potential for rehabilitation inside prisons across the country. It included: a requirement that prisoners be given regular visits by priests or chaplains; the prohibition of irons; and the instatement of female wardens to watch over female prisoners. The act also officially sanctioned the classification of inmates into groupings (known today as classification by inmate typology) with respect to gender, age, and severity of crime committed, thereby creating cellblocks of similar inmate types, rather than confining every inmate to constant solitary confinement. Unfortunately, this second Gaol Act was as ineffective as the first, as Parliament failed to create the position of Inspector, making it impossible to enforce

these new standards. It was not until 1853 that a group of inspectors was instated to enforce the provisions of both Gaol Acts.

The United States also employed prisons early on as holding cells for inmates awaiting punishment. It was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that prisons began to be used as a form of punishment in America, precipitating a massive burst in prison construction. Lagging slightly behind the United Kingdom, it was not until the 1930's that the United States, led by Massachusetts, began to use inmate typology classification (Gill 1962: 314). Finally, in 1970, the Federal Bureau of Prisons in the United States came up with a set of four required characteristics for any newly constructed Metropolitan Correctional Center, including,

- “Individual rooms for inmates
- Living units that house fewer than fifty inmates
- Direct supervision of inmates by officers
- Restricted movement within the facility” (Tartaro 2002: 219).

With these regulations, the construction of prisons took a distinct turn, and it is from this point that the study of prisons in the United States, particularly with respect to rehabilitation, can begin.

### III. What is a Prison?

Before we can properly discuss the design and intentions of prisons, we must understand what a prison is. Erving Goffman, in his set of essays entitled *Asylums*, defines prisons as a type of “total institution.” Total institutions are not only intended for punishment; Goffman, like many others, believes in a strong correlation between locations of religious training and prison facilities, and therefore includes in his definition of total institutions other facilities such as monasteries. Goffman defines these institutions through the isolation of and the control exerted upon those people inside the institution, regardless of whether they are there voluntarily (such as in a seminary or monastery) or involuntarily (as is the case for prisons). Goffman defines the total institution as “a place of residence where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman 1961: xiii). Two characteristics make these institutions similar to each other and different from the remainder of society: their isolation from individuals outside, and their high levels of control exerted by those inside the institution with authority.

Total institutions are social hybrids, as they embody not only both the residential and working lives of the individuals inside the institution walls, but also any spare time given to these individuals. Their entire lives are lived within a bubble of sorts, making total institutions a breed of their own. They base their function, Goffman writes, on the breakdown of barriers that separate activities such as sleep, work, and play for individuals outside in the free world. Whereas a free individual is able to maintain

separate spheres for their professional lives, their home lives, and their social lives, those people inside total institutions do not have this luxury. Not only are they forced to work, sleep, and play in the same enclosed environment, but they are forced to do so while surrounded constantly with the same group of individuals, and with the same figures of authority dictating their moves. It is as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in his play, *No Exit*: “Hell is other people.” Individuals inside monasteries live within these guidelines to the same extent that those inmates inside prison walls do, creating the common connection between monastery life and the lives of the incarcerated.

In addition, total institutions rely upon an extreme power dynamic between those individuals inside the institution (in the case of prisons, the inmates) and those people in positions of authority (the guards and other correctional staff). In order to be effective, Goffman writes, inmates must feel a constant sense of humiliation while inside the institution. Guards must demand a sense of humility from inmates, and when this is not given, punishment must be swift and severe. Guards must be able to order inmates to do any action, no matter how demeaning and the inmates must submit to these orders immediately. This idea of degradation creates a sense of inferiority and bitterness in inmates, which is essential to the proper running of a total institution. Rather than seeing themselves on an equal plane to staff members, individuals inside a total institution must be made to understand that they are below staff members, and must defer to the staff at all times. This necessary deference and humiliation serves different purpose, I believe, in different types of total institutions. In all total institutions, an important aim is the removal of all privacy, autonomy and self-respect from the individuals inside, thus reducing them to the same base, creating a population of moldable, identical humans.



Yet this functions differently in voluntary and involuntary spaces. In total institution such as monasteries, where the individuals inside the walls have entered voluntarily, the mandated deference is not as much a humiliation as a welcome part of training and life. Those inside a monastery wish to lead lives that are excluded from the outside world and full of prayer and simplicity. The fact that they have, by their own will, entered into an all-encompassing lifestyle, makes them immediately more willing to submit to the authority of those above them in rank, and lessens the bitterness and disgrace of living under the guidelines of those authority figures. In a prison environment, on the other hand, the inmates are incarcerated against their will, and therefore the power dynamics between correctional officers and inmates are different than those present in monasteries. Inmates are less likely to desire to submit to the whims of the staff, and guards are more likely to view inmates as despicable and deserving of all types of humiliation. The combination of these factors makes for a situation where inmates are more likely to feel the bitterness Goffman describes.

From Goffman's description, I am given the image of an institution that focuses on punishment rather than rehabilitation. Inmates inside a total institution prison are belittled at every given opportunity. They are consistently shamed, and forced to defer constantly to prison guards. They lose their self-respect, their privacy, and their ability to make decisions; essentially they lose the items that define them as human beings. If this is achieved, Goffman believes the total institution to be a successful one. This is an image of an institution that does not believe it possible to be rehabilitated—instead, these prisoners must be taught that they are not worth the label of human. The total institutions

that Goffman describes do not contain any reference to rehabilitation; it is as if the idea of prisoner reform is laughable, and does not deserve a forum in a serious institution.

I understand Goffman's descriptions of prisons as total institutions, and I believe that he is correct in saying that, currently, prison facilities do frequently function as total institutions. I believe that this is due to a combination of economic factors and characteristics defining prison guards. The Bureau of Justice is given an incredibly small budget, which makes it difficult to allot needed funds to institutional management and inmate care. The Bureau of Prisons gives approximately 5 billion dollars to prison facilities per year, 1.7 billion of which is spent on inmate care and programs. There are approximately 2 million inmates incarcerated at any given time in the United States. This means that only between 2 and 3 dollars is spent per inmate per day. The federal budget has nowhere near enough money to spend on incarcerated Americans to provide every inmate with programming, counseling, and a respectful atmosphere. Instead, economic concerns leave inmates with the bottom of the barrel. Taxpayers are much more concerned with schools and national security than they are with the wellbeing of convicted criminals; therefore, inmates are rarely provided for adequately.

In addition, one must consider the prison administration, and particularly the correctional officer staff, when viewing the realities of prison life. Correctional officers and inmates often come from the same backgrounds; as Gresham Sykes writes in his book, Society of Captives, a study of a New Jersey maximum security prison: prison "guards and inmates are drawn from the same culture and hold many of the same values and beliefs. They share a common language and a common historical experience" (Sykes 1958: 33). Yet there an important distinction: correctional officers are law-abiding and in

control, while inmates are those who go outside of the law to live their lives, and are controlled as a result of these behaviors. This creates a dichotomy where it becomes vital for the correctional officers to create a firm distinction between themselves and the inmates, to prove that the difference is legitimate, despite their many similarities. While they may not openly admit to a desire to punish inmates, Sykes believes that “the ‘basic’ motive of the officials...is hatred of the confined criminal” (Sykes 1958: 32). Prison guards are paid little and given even less respect outside the walls of the prison. In the 1950’s, they were paid only a little over \$3,000 a year, which calculates currently to approximately \$24,200. Correctional officers are given a job to do where they risk their safety and their dignity on a regular basis, and are paid barely enough to live on. In addition, the outside world does not grant them any respect; while police officers and firefighters are lauded for keeping the public safe, correctional officers are pushed to the back of our minds and never given any public recognition. The combination of these factors creates a difficult atmosphere for prison guards, where they feel a need to prove themselves, are only able to do so inside the prison walls, and can only manage to do so by punishing inmates to assert their dominance.

It is important to note, as well, that it is incredibly important for prisons to maintain order. Sykes writes that while prisons frequently aim for several goals, including rehabilitation of inmates, “for the moment, it is sufficient to point out that the New Jersey State Prison—like all prisons in the United States—is called upon to pursue not one task but several and that these tasks are not easily balanced in a coherent policy...The officials, in short, know on which side their bread is buttered” (Sykes 1958: 12, 18). The institution may aim for rehabilitation as well as control and custody of

inmates, but these are difficult goals to simultaneously maintain. The prison administration knows well that if they lose control of the institution, the taxpayers will be nervous and displeased, and therefore it places control of the inmate population higher on its priority list than rehabilitation. Ideally, they would be focusing on both equally; realistically, one must realize that prison officials are more interested in satisfying the general public and saving their jobs than assuring the reformation of the criminals they watch over.

Looking at the correctional officer population and the prison administration in general in this light, it is easy to understand how prisons become total institutions. An obvious and seemingly easy way to maintain control over the inmate body is to consistently humiliate them, degrade them, and isolate them from the remainder of society. This way, guards are able to assert their authority and feel worthwhile, and the prison is able to keep the taxpayers satisfied and the inmates in custody. Prisons become total institutions simply while maximizing the most desirable ends for the prison administration and its correctional officer staff. The current prison system is limited by a number of outside factors; economics and the composition of the corrections staff are simply two of many, yet they are two extremely important factors. Because of these items, prisons today frequently do function as total institutions, based on the ideas of isolation from society and the humiliation of those incarcerated inside. In this respect, Goffman is correct.

My problem with Goffman stems from a sense that he seems to be satisfied that this is the correct intention of prisons, and that this atmosphere ought to be maintained. While I agree that prisons today function as total institutions, I do not believe that this is

the way that prisons should be run. Realistically, I understand that they may not change, but ideally, I believe that the total institution is not the most effective manner in which to run an institution. We call them “correctional facilities,” and yet they function as “punitive/incarcerative institutions.” In order for this title to be accurate, Goffman’s ideas must be thrown out the window, carrying with them the current prison system. Prisons ideally should not be total institutions, as a primary goal of any correctional facility ought to be the rehabilitation of the inmates inside. Rather than assuming that they are subhuman, and subsequently humiliating them to the point where they believe this is true, prisons ought to believe inmates are a part of the larger society, a part that needs guidance in order to be able to rejoin the outside community. Goffman may be correct in his analysis of the modern criminal justice system, but he is wrong in believing that this is the way that prisons ought to be run.

After reading Goffman’s description and being dissatisfied that the answer to the question, “What is a prison?” is, “A prison is a total institution based upon isolation and humiliation of inmates,” I was forced to look elsewhere for an answer. There are really two separate questions, each with its own answer. First, “What *is* a prison?” and then, “What *should* a prison be?” Contemporarily, prisons are institutions responding to taxpayers rather than inmates. They are based on isolation because taxpayers believe that the inmates inside are dangerous and constantly plotting, desirous of escape. Prisons today are holding cells where people arrested, but not necessary convicted of crimes, spend months on end waiting for trial appointments. Prisons are institutions full of those people too poor for a good lawyer. They’re full of people that are hungry and steal to support their families, and people that are low enough down on a power chain to be

expendable. Prisons are institutions where drug addicts are locked up instead of being sent to rehab centers, only to become addicted to the prescription medications given to them daily by prison doctors to calm their jumpy nerves. Prisons are full of those people that the police can arrest and convict without there being mass outrage, people that the government can then use as statistics to show that they are cracking down on crime, people that are used to appease taxpayers who want to sleep easy at night.

What a prison *should* be is an entirely different question, with an entirely different answer. Prisons should be institutions based upon the philosophy that everyone deserves a second chance, and that everyone is capable of reform. Prisons ought to be correctional facilities, not holding cells, full of those people who have committed truly reprehensible offenses. Prisons ought to be institutions of education for inmates, and they should be facilities designed with a reduced rate of recidivism in mind. In the final section of this paper, I will attempt to offer a description of what a prison should be, working to eliminate the negative aspects of current penological institutions and the stifling influence of the general public to create an idealistic, rehabilitative model.

#### IV. The Definition of Rehabilitation

When considering the subject of rehabilitation in correctional institutions, it becomes important to define what rehabilitation is. What constitutes rehabilitation? How do the goals and methods of application vary according to the different populations involved? To better understand this, I will pose a hypothetical example.

Sally is a mother of two who cannot manage to support her children and hold a steady job at the same time, and therefore considers less legal options. She begins stealing credit cards and forging checks to use in grocery stores and clothing shops to feed her children and keep them warm. Eventually, she is caught, charged with a felony, and sentenced to eighteen months in prison.

Those committed to the smooth operation of the correctional system are invested in lowering the rate of recidivism, as prisons are almost universally overpopulated. Keeping this in mind, what are the options available once Sally has been incarcerated? If the individuals involved in the prison system do not want Sally to return to prison upon her release, she could be enrolled in institutional programs that give her the skills necessary to live an honest life outside the prison walls. Many institutions recognize that women such as Sally often commit crimes because they have limited job skills, and have been taken advantage of by the men in their lives. For women like this, criminal actions and incarceration become a cycle that can only be broken when correctional institutions attempt to give them job skills, with the hope that they will then be able to find legal employment and will not be forced to return to crime. If Sally were a beneficiary of these programs, and once released, found a job working as a cashier at a grocery store, where

she made sufficient money, and therefore did not return to a life of crime, does this constitute rehabilitation?

Alternatively, Sally could end up in a unit without programs or counseling, and spend her eighteen fairly comfortable months receiving “three hots and a cot,” constantly worrying about her children. Oddly enough, if she manages to avoid a return to prison after her release, Sally will fall into the category of those inmates who the prison system believes have been rehabilitated, regardless of whether this is true or not. She may have simply refined her techniques so she is never caught with a forged check again, or she may have found an alternate method of making sufficient money to take care of her children. Either way, if she does not return to prison, can one say that Sally has really been rehabilitated?

There are many people who believe that correctional institutions ought to be a painful experience for inmates. The buildings themselves ought to be imposing and terrifying, with conditions inside worse than the living situation of the poorest free man. The theory is that this creates an atmosphere where inmates, once having been through the prison system, would not want to return simply out of fear. Place Sally in an institutional experience like this: there is a real possibility that she could be raped by male officers or other female inmates, treated badly, given no personal space or freedom, and generally subjected to the type of total institution treatment that Erving Goffman describes in *Asylums*. She could spend her eighteen months in a perpetual state of alarm, always on guard, unable to sleep at night for fear of what would happen if she were to close her eyes. Upon release, it is possible that Sally would do everything possible to avoid return to the institution, perhaps trying to make her money legally to ensure that



there was no possibility of returning to the facility. But can this be considered rehabilitation? Sally may avoid crime only because she fears punishment, not because of any newly developed moral compass. If this is the case, has the system actually reformed her, or simply instilled a fear that will soon be forgotten and ineffective in preventing her from committing future crimes?

Prior to her arrest, Sally regularly stole credit cards from unsuspecting citizens, and used them until they were cut off. She forged checks, illegally withdrawing cash from the bank accounts of innocent people she did not know, and did not feel remorse for her actions, as she badly needed the money. Should Sally spend time in an Options unit while incarcerated, she would receive counseling where she could talk about her crime. Once, I heard rehabilitation defined as a change in the set of moral values belonging to an inmate. According to the women in the Options unit at Riverside Correctional Facility, the experience of being in Options has made them reconsider the morals and values they held while on the outside. With similar programming, Sally would be able to reconsider her crime, understand that it was not victimless, and have the opportunity to rearrange her moral value system. Upon release, Sally would be less likely to return to a life of crime.

This last course of action, I believe, is the only one that can truly be defined as “rehabilitation.” In my eyes, rehabilitation must be proactive and work towards change in the inmate, rather than simply basing itself entirely on recidivism statistics. Unfortunately, however, I believe the general public does not feel the same way, and would most likely be equally satisfied with any of the above scenarios. As long as Sally does not return to prison, it appears as though she has ceased to commit criminal activity, and therefore she must have been rehabilitated while incarcerated. The general

population will never know if Sally is actually living an honest life, or if she has only learned new and tricky techniques to avoid being caught. They will never know if she was abused physically or mentally inside the institution, causing her to avoid prison at any cost rather than due to a new concept of morality. They will never know if she underwent counseling, now understands that criminal acts cause pain to others, and has made the moral decision to abide by the law. Most likely, they will never care, either. Anything that results in a reduction of the recidivism rate allows them to believe that criminals are being reformed and their personal safety is increasing. I am not content with the definition of a rehabilitated inmate being one who does not return to prison. True rehabilitation must come from inside the individual, and includes an evaluation and radical modification of one's moral value set, culminating in the understanding that criminal activity is wrong not simply because it is against a law and will land you in prison, but because it victimizes others, and places human beings in danger.

## V. The History of Rehabilitation

Just as prisons have a lengthy history, so does the concept of implementing rehabilitation for inmates inside these institutions. The idea of rehabilitating criminals has lacked important prominence throughout time. Yet the notion that rehabilitation of criminals was possible, and ought to be an aim, has been present for centuries. As early as the year 723 C.E., regulations in China required prison facilities to be built in close proximity to Buddhist temples, with the hope that Buddhist monks would be able to help the prisoners on a path to a better way of life. The Chinese believed that the criminals they imprisoned could benefit from spiritual guidance, and learn new and moral ways that would allow them to change their behavior and become law-abiding Buddhists themselves.

While people in some areas of the world through a large part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century believed in the ability to reform prisoners, most of the world believed that those who committed crimes were incorrigible. Rather than rehabilitate, prisons were meant to “fulfill a limited number of functions; primarily the secure detention of suspected wrongdoers until the guilty among them could be executed or subjected to corporal punishment or exile...Such quarters were not expected to be healthful or to provide for the rehabilitation of prisoners” (Johnston 2000: 5). Once the idea arose that rehabilitation could be achieved, many prisons began to institute programs of manual labor designed to instill the values of hard work into inmates, the idea being that inmates had resorted to criminal action upon discovering that they were unable to earn a legal living. Prisons cropped up, “designed by professional architects and intended through the hard work and

isolation of their inmates to bring about character reformation” (Johnston 2000: 29). This theme carried across the world, becoming particularly popular for juvenile offenders. Societies view young boys committing criminal acts as misguided, while older men who do the same are viewed as hardened criminals. Therefore, a large portion of the institutions in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century designed with rehabilitation in mind housed juvenile boys exclusively. This juvenile rehabilitative process was given a jumpstart in 1589 by the objections of political officials in Amsterdam to a death sentence set down for a fifteen year-old boy who had committed petty theft. Instead of carrying out the execution, the city leaders chose to create a series of correctional facilities to house juvenile males. While imprisoned, these boys were responsible for a wide variety of physical tasks, as officials were convinced that manual labor was the key to rehabilitation. After hearing of these institutions and their revolutionary plan for reforming young criminals, a similar home was opened in France by Filippo Franci in the late 1600’s. In this facility, however, the philosophy strayed from a focus on manual labor, as Franci believed that compassion rather than force was the manner in which to instill a set of moral values into juveniles. In addition, he believed that the boys ought to remain anonymous while in the home to avoid tarnishing their reputations, and therefore diminishing their chances, once released, to operate as full, productive, law-abiding parts of society. To achieve this end, Franci kept his charges in solitary confinement for large portions of the day and covered their faces with masks whenever they left isolation.

Rehabilitation first entered penological theory in the United States with the publishing of the Quaker penal code, in which William Penn stated that rehabilitation of inmates ought to be more important to the criminal justice system than simple

punishment. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Penn's code influenced organizations such as the Prison Reform Movement to spring up across the country and the world, demanding that both the conditions and the objectives of prisons be revolutionized. These organizations, however, were more successful in achieving humane conditions for incarcerated inmates than standards for rehabilitation inside the institutions, as those in control of the prison system remained unconvinced that their inmates could be reformed. Elam Lynds, for example, the Warden of both Auburn and Sing-Sing Prisons in New York in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, believed that rehabilitation of inmates was a rare occurrence. "I do not believe in a *complete* reform," he told those who queried him, "except with young delinquents. Nothing, in my mind, is rarer to see than a convict of mature age become a religious and virtuous man" (Johnston 1994: 66). When Auburn and Sing-Sing served as models for prisons across the country, Warden Lynds' philosophies spread along with the design.

Today, most first world countries aim to incorporate reform into their penological philosophies. There do, however, exist some exceptions to this rule, such as the American SuperMax facility. While most prisons in the United States function under a philosophy that includes rehabilitation, the SuperMax is famous for being an institution designed for the simple act of the incarceration of those people believed to be dangerous and desirous of escape. These institutions have thick concrete walls, steel doors, 24-hour solitary confinement, and, for when transportation is necessary, grated walkways with guards above and below, constantly pointing a gun towards an inmate cuffed both at hands and feet. These inmates have committed heinous crimes and the general public demands to know that they are behind bars for as long as possible. These men and

women are the reason why English vocabulary includes the phrase “hardened criminal.” The SuperMax has been widely criticized for its cruel treatment of inmates and its function as a simple holding cell, particularly by those who believe rehabilitation must be an aim in institutions of all security levels. Occasionally, the SuperMax is stereotyped as the typical American prison, leading to blanket statements such as “The notion of a prison without hope is essentially an American one, and it is most readily exemplified in prisons like the federal SuperMax at Florence, Colorado” (Shaw 2000: 158). When confronted with statements like this one, it is important to recognize that the SuperMax is a relatively rare facility in the United States, and that most correctional facilities do function under rehabilitative penological philosophies. Whether or not the American criminal justice system, on the whole, actually aims for rehabilitation, is another issue, which I will explore further in the next section.

Despite the significant amount of work done towards achieving rehabilitation inside prison facilities, many activists believe that there is still much to be accomplished. In the United Kingdom, reform advocates of the criminal justice system have been particularly vocal, calling for a less-traditional system of incarceration:

What is needed in Britain are prisons based on the minimum appropriate level of security combined with the maximum community involvement, institutions whose walls are, in the jargon, permeable and which maximize staff-prisoner interaction, whose values are open, democratic, and inclusive (Shaw 2000: 158).

These advocates raise the important issue of community involvement with prisons—ought the surrounding neighborhood be an active participant in the prison environment, creating a sense of community for the inmates and thus easing their transition back into society, or ought the prisoners be kept separate from the community for safety and punitive reasons? I will return to a more in-depth discussion of this debate later on. The

prison reform advocates in Great Britain believe that inmates will thrive in a setting with minimum security and maximum community involvement, making their lives seem as “normal” as possible, given the circumstances. This is intended to promote rehabilitation, as fostering a sense of community for incarcerated individuals may make them less likely to harm their neighbors through criminal acts upon release.

Due to the persistent voices of reformists such as these, rehabilitation has become a more prominent issue for criminal justice systems across the world. Resultantly, much of current penological philosophy has a strong base in the idea that inmates are incarcerated for the dual purpose of punishment and reform. This is the theory; is it actually the truth?

## VI. The Aim of Prisons: Rehabilitation or Incarceration?

In order to understand the role of rehabilitation in correctional facilities and the design of these institutions, it is important to explore the true intention of the institutions: is this the rehabilitation of the inmate, or the simple act of incarceration as punishment and a means of keeping convicts out of the general population? The American criminal justice system has received criticism for catering to the desires of its taxpayers, for whom it is more important that criminals are locked away for long periods of time, effectively taken out of the population, than it is that those who commit crimes be counseled and helped to reassess their value system, a process that would end in reform. While both of these pathways theoretically bring about a similar reduction in criminal action, the latter takes longer and costs more, and critics of the corrections system believe it is for these reasons that rehabilitation is less frequently considered. “Modern critics of the penal system in this country” that believe this to be the case “urge that penal practices significantly diverge from a penal theory that holds as its final goal the rehabilitation of the offender” (Fried and Smith 1974: 1). On the other hand, the Bureau of Prisons has written aims stating that the rehabilitation of the incarcerated American population is a high priority goal. These two positions stand directly in contrast, begging the question: what is the *real* aim of the United States prison system?

Riverside Correctional Facility in Philadelphia is a jail that holds approximately 800 women, either awaiting trial and sentencing or sentenced to less than 24 months. The institution was constructed in 2003 and contains many of the most up-to-date designs and technologies. The facility is divided into several units, which house either



approximately 60 or 120 women. These units are similar in terms of inmate composition, with the exception of a pregnancy ward, and a unit for those who have moderate to severe mental illness and need extra care. In addition, one of the smaller size units is set aside for Options, the unit that provides additional assistance, programming and counseling to inmates.

From this unit, ten women were chosen to take part in my Inside-Out program last fall. Over the course of the semester, these women brought new and insightful opinions to the class, speaking from the point of view of those inside the system rather than someone like myself who can only observe from the outside. One of the class sessions was entirely devoted to discussing rehabilitation inside correctional facilities. During this session, one of the Inside students, Tervonne, stated that she has been at Riverside for sixteen months already, and she feels that she is being rehabilitated. Tervonne spent the beginning of her incarceration in another unit, applied for Options and eventually was given a spot off the waiting list. Now, she feels that she is being reformed, but she believes this is only happening because she was granted a spot on Options. In the rest of the facility, she described, it does not matter what time the inmates wake up in the morning, if they even bother to get up at all. Their days are filled with television and the occasional trip to the unit hairstylist. But there is nothing for them to *do*. On Options, the women get up early, eat their breakfast, and then are shuttled off to family counseling, GED class, or computing class. They are extensively familiar with the social service wing, where the walls are papered with advertisements for a program for incarcerated mothers—where they are able to make recordings of themselves reading children’s books to send home—as well as inspirational posters reading, “The Children Are Our Future.

Let's Educate Them in the Right Ways." It is only due to these opportunities, Tervonne completely believes, that she has begun to reform her set of values and become a different and better person. Had she remained on her old unit, she is certain she would not have experienced any form of rehabilitation.

Options can hold a maximum of 64 women at a time. There is almost always a long waiting list of women hoping to gain entrance to the unit, wanting to take part in the programs offered only to those on Options. Yet Riverside continues to offer these programs to only 64 out of 800 women, or approximately one out of every twelve women. If only one twelfth of the institutional population is receiving the programs necessary for rehabilitation, can the officers at Riverside Correctional honestly claim that rehabilitation of inmates is an institutional goal? For the women of Options, Riverside does everything possible to obtain reform; for the rest of the women, the pregnant women, and the women simply unfortunate enough to spend their entire period of incarceration on the Options waiting list, Riverside does little. For these other women, Riverside is a holding cell, a place to undergo punishment, a simple storage space for humans.

At this point, it becomes important to recognize the economic limitations of the correctional system. Realistically, on the tight budgets given to the Bureau of Prisons, it is virtually impossible to provide every inmate with the level of programming and counseling present in Options units. If the corrections system desired to create an equal experience for all people incarcerated inside, they would be forced to eliminate programming from Options rather than instate it in all other units, for the economic logistics of these programs is entirely unrealistic. Therefore, the corrections system may

desire, in theory, to work towards rehabilitation of inmates and still be unable to put this desire into action.

Yet it seems as though economic limitations are not the only reason that reform is not a top priority. In some cases, it seems as though institutions simply give other aspects higher precedence. Bob Schwartz is an architect at Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum Inc. (HOK), a firm which specializes in the design of correctional facilities, and he does not believe that all institutions aim for a goal of rehabilitation. Instead, he believes that,

Each type of prison has its own goals. For example, there is a much higher success rate in reducing recidivism with female inmates and juveniles than with their male counterparts. For example, the female inmate usually has low self-esteem, limited job skills and has been taken advantage of. If you can give them the skills they need to earn an income and survive on their own they are more unlikely to return (Schwartz 2006: pers comm).

Speaking from experience while working on the design of a variety of correctional facilities, Schwartz concludes that every institution has a different set of goals. Women and juveniles, more consistently, do not return to prison after serving a sentence, and are therefore considered more successfully and easily rehabilitated than adult male populations. The theory seems to be that rehabilitation for the female inmate population should consist of providing women with the self-confidence and the skills necessary to make a legal living outside the prison walls. For males, however, this approach will not suffice. If there is a high probability of reform, correctional facilities are more likely to institute programs aimed at increasing self-confidence and general working skills in women, for these types of programs are relatively simple to implement. If correctional facility leadership believes that male inmates need more complex programming and counseling in order to achieve the same level of rehabilitation, they may not choose to implement these programs—often due to budget restrictions. It is simply not

economically feasible to spend the needed money to achieve this necessary level of programming for male inmates. In fact, they are less likely to choose to give male inmates the same basic level of programs and counseling as they give female inmates, for it is believed to have less of an effect. Institutions designed to hold men, Schwartz states, are less likely to place “rehabilitation” on a list of goals, as inmates typically have much higher recidivism rates regardless of rehabilitative action taken inside the prison walls.

There is also the question of security level. Oftentimes, those placed in a maximum security prison are not given a remote possibility of rehabilitation, unless they are capable of reforming themselves through intense periods of thought while in solitary confinement. These inmates are locked away in undecorated cells for 23 hours of the day, never receiving any counseling, never provided with any real human contact. With respect to this situation, Schwartz (2006: pers comm) writes, “The prisons meant for incarceration usually have high security inmates that can not interact with others.” According to Schwartz, these prisons are *meant* for incarceration and not for rehabilitation at all. These maximum security inmates, once labeled a security risk, are deemed incorrigible and the institutional leadership ceases to implement programs designed for reform. Howard Gill, Director of the Institute of Correctional Administration at American University, believes this correctional philosophy to be entirely incorrect:

The acting-out prisoner or the escape artist may be the most hopeful prospect for reform because he has character—bad character maybe, but character nonetheless. The moron who does not have brains enough to escape has the least potential for reform. Hence the correlation of maximum, medium, and minimum to bad, better, and best is a myth (Gill 1962: 315-6).

Gill does believe that there must be minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities, but that the level of security ought not to influence the potential given to these inmates for rehabilitation. All inmates ought to be treated equally with respect to rehabilitation and programming, and differently only with respect to security.

Prison design is also often limited by outside factors, for as Bob Schwartz (2006: pers comm) says, “We try to use principles of good design but security, cost, and durability are often a higher priority.” Designers are frequently not able to create the facilities that they had in mind, or institutions that assist rehabilitation, because they are given an incredibly limited budget. Prison owners and operators, such as the federal government or state department of corrections, may indeed desire for the institutions to assist in the process of rehabilitation, but this is not their primary goal. Instead, they must respond to the greater community, and are responsible for the safety of inmates while inside, and the ensured safety of the general population through limited escapes from the institutions, as well as the cost to create and maintain the institution, money that comes out of the law-abiding taxpayer’s wallet. To keep costs down, the facilities must be durable and require as little maintenance as possible. These factors—security, cost, and durability—often come in direct conflict with the goal of rehabilitation, as specialized designs that are conducive to reform inside an institution may not be the most secure, durable, and cheap options. As the owner and operators of the institutions must respond to taxpayers concerns, these practical matters are more likely to take higher precedence than the goal of moral rehabilitation. Many taxpayers will be the most content if they believe convicts are locked in secure institutions with thick walls, few

escapes, and even fewer amenities, particularly ones that can be broken during a fit of inmate anger.

Institutions that operate under these restrictions may claim rehabilitation as a primary goal, but in actuality, the end result is punishment, simple incarceration. If the operators and funding authorities of prisons are going to respond only to taxpayer concerns and force prison architects to design facilities that restrict the freedoms of inmate movement inside their own cell blocks, they cannot claim to simultaneously desire these inmates to undergo some sort of moral reform. These two set-ups are completely at odds, and taxpayers generally win, as their voices are more important to politicians than the muted voices of the incarcerated population.

The question of whether prisons facilitate rehabilitation of inmates raises several questions about rehabilitation in the prison environment in general. One such question surrounds the idea of whether or not rehabilitation is actually possible in a forced environment. With respect to design, the prison environment is not conducive to rehabilitation the way many are currently designed. Sanford Bates, the first Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, once wrote in a paper that, “The unnatural and cage-like atmosphere of the stone cell with the barred door or opening is such as to make the rehabilitation of the hopeful prisoner less likely to be accomplished” (Bates 1931: 538). In addition, it is important to note that those people inside correctional institutions are there involuntarily, and may not desire to undergo the rehabilitative process. It is possible to force prisoners, through incarcerating them in specifically designed facilities and forcing them to attend counseling and additional programming, to impose rehabilitation, or will these measures simply not make any difference unless the inmate is

cooperative in the first place? I believe that rehabilitation can occur in prison environments, despite the fact that they are physically and mentally stifling. In order for this to occur, however, I believe that the institution must work to function in a manner that is as minimally restrictive to inmates as possible. Also, I believe that as many inmates as possible ought to be transferred to other facilities, such as psychiatric hospitals or drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, to aid them in therapy specialized to their individual problems. Realistically, I realize that this is not possible; special rehabilitation centers and hospitals require more individualized care, and are therefore much more expensive. The cheapest option remains placing an inmate into prison, and economics almost always win out when it comes to those people who have gone outside the law. Therefore, in most cases, inmates will be incarcerated in corrections facilities that oppress them both in body and mind. In these cases, I think that the programming and counseling offered, as well as the physical set-up of the cellblocks, can do a great deal to induce rehabilitation. Inmates must desire to undergo reform in order for this to be effective, however. It is not realistic to expect that simply by making inmates attend individual counseling sessions that they will refrain from criminal action once released. Yet finding willing participants does not appear to be a problem. Judging from the waiting list at Riverside Correctional for the Options unit, it seems as though a large percentage of people incarcerated truly desire some degree of change. Once incarcerated, they realize that they have made a mistake and wish to figure out a way to reorganize their lives. These women, exemplified by Tervonne, have shown me that it is possible to undergo rehabilitation while inside a prison environment, regardless of whether this is, to any degree, a “total institution.”

The United States correctional system claims to aim for the reformation of inmates, and demonstrates this by the implementation of programming and personal counseling for inmates in units like Options. These units only comprise a small percentage of the total population of incarcerated individuals, however, leaving the majority of inmates to spend their period of imprisonment without any means of rehabilitation. On the surface, it appears as though the system, therefore, does not actually desire to bring about the reformation of inmates, and simply claims this to appear progressive. One must examine the problem, however, of a limited budget, and take this into account as well. The taxpayers of the United States would rather their money be spent on schools and public safety than the wellbeing of law-breakers, and therefore the Bureau of Prisons is left with a an absurdly small budget, considering that there are 2 million people incarcerated in the United States at any given time. Due to these limited funds, the Bureau of Prisons is incapable of instituting programming at the level of Options units throughout the system, even if it should desire to do so. The existence of Options units can be viewed, therefore, as a step in the direction of rehabilitation, with further steps limited by economics. Prisons can be viewed with rehabilitation as an aim; they cannot, however, frequently be viewed with rehabilitation as a practice.



## VII. What Should a Prison Look Like?

Personal counseling and programming that provides inmates with job skills has a great impact upon the rehabilitation of those who are incarcerated. This is not, however, the only manner through which rehabilitation can be achieved. Once the concept of prisoner reform has been established as a goal, the physical appearance of correctional institutions must be carefully considered. “The importance of prison architecture cannot be over emphasized,” Sanford Bates once wrote, “and in a sense it is fundamental to the whole problem of prisoner management and rehabilitation” (Bates 1931: 536). The architectural design of prison facilities can have a large impact on how they function, and therefore on the rehabilitation of the inmates who are incarcerated within their walls. Therefore, the next question we must ask is, “What should a prison look like?”

Throughout time, penal philosophies have considered the idea that the shape of a prison has an effect upon both guards and prisoners, yet there have been no definite conclusions as to what type of architectural designs are the most successful. Also, many members of the criminal justice community believe that the architecture of a prison has little or nothing to do with the success of an institution in meeting its penal goals; instead, they believe that it is the actions of the guards and the programming of inmate life that achieves their desired effects. Despite this, however, many different designs have been tried over time, in a persistent search to find the one that will solve all the problems of incarceration. These have been classified into three main categories: non-radial, radial, and circular.

The latter two categories are specific and limiting, thereby leaving all other design shapes to fall into the less particular non-radial grouping. Most frequently, these non-radial prisons have been designed into U-shapes, or hollow rectangles, designs chosen because they were believed to be superior in terms of health of inmates and security from escape. Over time, however, these designs have proven to be less than desirable, as they make supervision of inmates difficult through the lack of one central location that can view the entire population. Also into this category fall all the prisons constructed without serious thought given to design in relation to function. These prisons are usually large, solid shapes, rectangles, octagons or the like, with the inside space carved into cells and locations of supervision for guards. Rather than the shape of the prison being designed around the cells and watch towers, these prisons are given a shape first and then a function.

Radial prisons were designed as a central hub of supervision with spokes or wings radiating out of it. The idea behind these designs was to centralize the supervision, thus effectively solving the problems present in the U-shaped and hollow rectangular designs. These prisons can be designed in a variety of shapes, such as a T-shape, cruciform, fan, or complete circle. This design was most notably used at Eastern State Penitentiary, a revolution in prison architecture, which I will describe in depth later on.

Circular prisons were never very popular. There was, however, one design that, in theory, was very successful, but in practice was never instituted in full. This was Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Bentham believed in the idea of maintaining order in prisons through the idea of constant surveillance of inmates. The Panopticon, his ideal prison, was a hollow circular prison with a tower in the center of the hollow area. The

ring was to be divided up into cells that ran along its entire depth—one cell thick, all around—with windows on each side. The central tower was to have a system of windows that would align with all of the inside-facing windows of the cells. Thus, a guard standing in the central tower would be able to see into the cells of every prisoner without having to move greatly from his post. Guards would have a clear image of every inmate, as the inmates would be constantly backlit from the windows facing the outside. At any given time of the day, therefore, the guards in the central surveillance tower would be able to monitor every inmate through the presence of the inmate's shadow. Inside the central tower, however, would be a complicated system of partitioning, eliminating the possibility of backlighting for the guards inside. Thus, the guards would constantly be able to look out at the inmates in their cells, yet the inmates would not be able to see the guards.

Bentham designed his prison around the idea that,

Power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked on at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so (Foucault 1975: 201).

Theoretically, guards should never actually have to watch the inmates, for the inmates believe that they are constantly potentially under surveillance and therefore will never act in an inappropriate manner. The guards have the power of the unseen over the incarcerated, which Bentham believes to be the greatest power of all. Bentham designed his prison with the idea that it would not only serve to punish inmates but also to reform them. Foucault wrote in his book, Discipline and Punish, that the Panopticon is a cruel institution, as it bases itself upon the fear of surveillance on behalf of the inmates. Yet he

also believes that as a machine, designed for a specific purpose, the institution is marvelous, and creates an even and compelling sense of power. In order for the Panopticon to function, the cells must be designed for solitary confinement. If the prison wishes to function in any other manner, this design becomes completely ineffectual. Because of this inflexibility, the Panopticon has rarely been constructed and used as a prison, yet as a design, it is discussed extensively.

Over the last two hundred years, prison design has evolved greatly. It used to be that prisons were filthy and unsupervised, ineffectual and solely punishment-g geared. Recently, however, advocates of prison reform have achieved a louder voice, and are working constantly towards making prisons more humane and rehabilitative atmospheres. To date, this has happened in three major steps, called First Generation, Second Generation, and Third, or New, Generation. First generation prisons consisted of two main experiments: the Pennsylvania System and the Auburn System. From here, the history of prison design changed its course.

Prison design was revolutionized in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the construction of a new correctional institution in Philadelphia. In 1821, the Building Commissioners of Pennsylvania invited several architects to submit designs for a prison, with the guidelines that the institution must include solitary confinement cells in which prisoners could eat, sleep, and work, and also had individual plumbing and an attached personal exercise yard. Architects were also asked to promote ease of surveillance for guards through their design plan. The commissioners reviewed two plans in depth. One was a circular design submitted by William Strickland, which was a take-off of Bentham's Panopticon and

similar to Western State Penitentiary (the other major correctional institution in Pennsylvania at the time). The other was a radial design submitted by the English-born architect, John Haviland. Haviland's prison was designed as a set of spokes radiating from a central core, similar in appearance to a bicycle wheel and like many prisons contemporarily built in Great Britain (See Figure 1). After an involved and hotly contested process, John Haviland won the commission and construction was started on Eastern State Penitentiary a short time after.

With the construction of the Eastern State Penitentiary emerged a new penal philosophy, called the Pennsylvania System. For the first time in the United States, incarceration was not solely meant for punishment, but instead considered rehabilitation an achievable goal for which to aim. The Pennsylvania System involved a philosophy of total solitary confinement of inmates, with the idea that inmates, unable to converse with others, would undergo a process of rehabilitation when forced to confront themselves and their actions and come to the realization that they were immoral. Officials hoped that through total isolation, inmates would reform—aided by the design of the institution, as,

Good design is to produce, by means of sufferings principally acting on the mind and accompanied with moral and religious instruction, a disposition to virtuous conduct, the only sure preventative of crime; and where this beneficial effect does not follow, to impress so great a dread and terror, as to deter the offender from the commission of crime in the state where the system of solitary confinement exists (Johnston 1994: 32).

The moral and religious instruction would be given to inmates orally, by a preacher using a loudspeaker at the ends of the long hallways, allowing for the educational aspects of imprisonment to occur while prisoners were still kept in solitary confinement.

Haviland's design had single story wings with a hallway down the center of each, with cells on each side—double-loaded corridors—which ranged from 7.5'x12' to

7.5'x16'. As requested by the Building Commissioners, these cells had attached 8'x18' exercise yards that were walled in on the sides but open to natural light and air from above. The central core of the building contained the necessary services, such as kitchens, store rooms, and laundry. It also housed the main focal point for the guard staff. Haviland addressed the question of surveillance through his radial design—the long clear corridors allowed for guards to easily monitor the entire institution from the central core, and to see down the entire length of a corridor through the core to the other end from any place in the prison. Any prisoner activity in the hallways was immediately apparent, making escape through the center of the institution theoretically essentially impossible.

In reality, the institution didn't function as Haviland and the Building Commissioners had hoped. Prisoners often labored in their cells as intended, but many were able to leave their cells on a frequent basis, often to provide services around the institution such as cleaning and serving meals to other inmates. Prisoners were prohibited from conversing with each other, yet often managed to do so, for cell doors were often left ajar during the summer to allow for a cross-breeze in the otherwise stiflingly hot cells. Inmates developed methods of tapping on the plumbing pipes to communicate as well, which was difficult to prevent without removing the individual toilets entirely—effectively ending the total isolation upon which Eastern State was founded.

In addition, the plan to use solitary confinement as a method of self-confrontation resulting in rehabilitation of inmates backfired greatly; instead, there were high levels of mental illness throughout the institution, believed to be brought about by the lack of

outside contact for what could potentially be years. Critics were enraged that “prisoners, particularly those vulnerable in body or mind, were harmed mentally or physically by their solitary existence in the Philadelphia prison” (Johnston 1994: 67). Architecturally, the institution had issues besides the intense summer heat: the cells were incredibly damp all year round, causing disease to rise easily and spread quickly through the institution (See Figure 2). The cells were nearly impossible to ventilate without opening the doors to the main corridor, but this left inmates free to communicate with each other as they pleased. They were not able to leave their cells, as the entrances to each cell had bars in addition to the heavy steel doors, yet the freedom to communicate with other inmates went against the entire penal philosophy of the Pennsylvania System.

The Pennsylvania System was only truly instituted at Eastern State for the first several years. The prison was expanded several times, and each time more radial wings were squeezed in between those already existing, yet it was difficult to house the growing number of prisoners in the single-story institution. Prisoners were placed two or three into each individual cell, which both increased the levels of disease due to cramped quarters and eliminated the ability for prisoners to undergo the rehabilitative process thought to be induced by solitary confinement. Ultimately, the prison was considered a failure, and the Pennsylvania System was not largely employed across the United States.

In New York, a different system prevailed. Officials in the criminal justice system in New York weren't convinced that the method used in Pennsylvania was the most effective or the most beneficial to inmates in the system, and so they chose to create a new prison structure called either the Auburn System or the Silent System. This system was first employed in Auburn Prison in upstate New York, an institution constructed in

1816. New York wanted an institution that was self-sufficient, a characteristic not present in the complete solitary confinement of Eastern State Penitentiary. Since individuals confined in the institution had gone outside the law, the thought was that as few taxpayer dollars as possible ought to be spent housing these criminals, particularly when they were simply spending their days locked up in cells. Instead of lazing away their time, inmates ought to be responsible for working to sustain the prison. The Auburn System became the solution to this desire. A major proponent of this system was Elam Lynds, who became Warden of Auburn Prison once it was constructed. Lynds sternly believed that the money of taxpayers should be spent on law-abiding citizens, and therefore desired that his institutions be entirely self-sufficient. Through manual labor, he hoped, inmates would create a prison that would pay for itself. All other philosophies, such as “reformation of the offender, the development of saleable skills and the habits of industry and sobriety were considered to be secondary aims of imprisonment” (Correction History 2007). Prisoners ought to sew their own clothing, do their own washing, clean the prison, and manufacture goods that could be sold outside the prison to pay for food and other necessities the prisoners could not produce themselves.

The Auburn System didn't stray entirely from the Pennsylvania System, as most major thinkers of the time believed that solitary confinement was an important part of both punishment and rehabilitation of inmates. In addition, it was strongly believed that inmates had a negative effect upon each other, encouraging the damaging habits in each other that had put them behind bars in the first place, and creating alliances that could result in criminal activity both while inside the institution and once released. It was believed, however, that there could be a direct correlation drawn between many of the



problems that the Pennsylvania System was having with mental instability among inmates and the fact that inmates at Eastern State Penitentiary were in solitude twenty-four hours of the day. At night, therefore, inmates were continued to be kept in solitary confinement cells, with the hope that they would achieve some level of rehabilitation while alone with their thoughts. During the day, inmates were brought out of their cells and, in single file lines, went to large work rooms where they did all manner of labor, from sewing to manufacturing other products for sale outside of the prison. Inmates spent their days sitting in close quarters with every other inmate in the institution, and yet fraternization was impossible as, from the minute they left their cells, complete silence was mandated. These prolonged periods of extreme quiet account for how the Auburn System earned the title, "Silent System." Through these silent work days, the Auburn System accomplished their goal of creating a prison that paid for itself (at least in part), as well as attempting to eliminate the negative effects of constant solitude without creating an environment where inmates could fraternize. Prison officials believed that education of inmates in manufacturing skills that could be used in life outside the prison was a secondary aim to the idea of a self-sustaining prison, yet in actuality, the daily labors that inmates were subjected to while imprisoned in Auburn Prison taught them invaluable marketable skills, an important step on the path towards rehabilitation.

The idea of silence within the Auburn System was taken seriously, with punishment doled out quickly and harshly upon infractions of this rule. Typically, punishment was physical, most often in the form of a whip. Auburn Prison, and particularly Elam Lynds, was known for a firm belief in the idea that "reformation of the criminal could not possibly be effected, until the spirit of the criminal was broken" (Gill

1962: 313). Using this belief as a springboard, Auburn frequently employed physically cruel punishments upon inmates, and was greatly criticized for this. Institutions that followed the Auburn System fit easily into Goffman's idea of the total institution, as they are based upon the denial of,

Every essential need in the human personality including love, independence and interdependence, imagination and truth, achievement, identity, intimacy and the need to belong, creativity and integration. Indeed this philosophy ...emphasized every pathology in the human personality—rejection, doubt, guilt, inferiority, diffusion, self-absorption, apathy, and despair (Gill 1962: 314).

The Auburn System worked to destroy the inmate population spiritually, physically, and mentally, with the idea that this would bring about a basic and moldable human that could be simultaneously both punished and reformed.

Nearby seminaries worked to create religious and general education for inmates, believing that simple labor and solitary confinement would not result in any true rehabilitation, but that inmates would feel as though they had been simply punished. These seminaries had to fight for a place inside the walls of Auburn, but eventually their perseverance brought them success, and they were able to work towards making the inmates into what they believed to be "better men."

The Auburn model was much more successful than the Pennsylvania System, particularly as it lacked many of the problems of mental health that were rampant throughout Eastern State Penitentiary. In addition, the architectural design was not as exclusive as the design needed for the Pennsylvania System to be effective. All that the Auburn System needed was solitary confinement cells as well as large workrooms for daily labor. There were no limitations on outside shape or size, as the architecture of the

institution didn't play an active role as it did in Eastern State. Eventually, most states across the United States adopted the Auburn System method for their prisons.

While both the Pennsylvania and Auburn Systems had several strong points of success, they were each riddled with problems. In both, the penal philosophy included the idea that prisoners were the problem people of larger society, and that they needed to be kept from influencing each other negatively, as would most certainly be the case if they were allowed to mingle. Second Generation prison models reflected a change from this characteristically First Generation philosophy, morphing into the idea that because prisoners were criminals, they would certainly behave badly while incarcerated. Therefore, Second Generation prisons were designed with bad behavior in mind, and, in an effort to protect the correctional staff, were constructed with barriers between prisoners and officers. Second Generation prisons were the first to be constructed with a small group design rather than a solitary confinement design. These small groups, also known as housing pods or cellblocks, were designed to house a grouping of inmates in one place. Rather than have a group of guards monitoring the entire inmate population from one place, the idea was to have one or two guards in each of the smaller cellblocks responsible for maintaining order among their grouping of inmates. The housing pods normally consisted of a common area in which inmates spent their days, as well as cells where they could be locked up in solitary confinement or at other times when needed, such as at night. While it was believed that these inmates were generally disobedient and malevolent people, the idea of constant solitary confinement was discarded to avoid the high levels of mental instability present in Eastern State Penitentiary. With the creation

of Second Generation philosophy, the Bureau of Prisons proclaimed that, ““If you can’t rehabilitate, at least do no harm,”” (Tartaro 2002: 220), an idea that jumpstarted the concept of group living. Inmates were, for the first time, allowed to associate with each other both physically and verbally, although they were under constant surveillance of the correctional staff. Attached to the cellblock in Second Generation designs were control rooms, where guards were able to monitor the activities of the inmates inside the housing pod without having to have direct contact, and, as a result, putting themselves at risk. Correctional officers were expected to enter the cellblock when responding to problems that occurred inside, but otherwise not to interact with the inmates. This system functioned under the belief that inmates were bound to cause the types of problems to which guards could need to respond, and therefore was a reactive system rather than a preventative one, where guards would work to stop problems before they happened. Second Generation penal philosophy based itself on the idea that simply because they are criminals, inmates will be violent and aggressive; therefore it is not realistic for guards to attempt to prevent violence in cellblocks, nor is it safe for them to maintain a presence in the cellblock itself.

Second Generation correctional institutions consisted of many cellblocks, each with a dayroom and individual cells, all of which shared a centralized area containing the other necessities of prison life: dining halls, visiting rooms and designated spaces for programming and counseling. Thus, every time prisoners needed to use any of these facilities—which happened frequently, particularly in the case of a centralized dining area—they had to be moved from their cellblocks to these central spaces, an operational function that necessitated the presence of a larger body of correctional officers. In

addition, this constant stream of movement created continuous disruption for those inmates remaining inside the cellblock. Second Generation designs were criticized for this centralization of services, as the high cost of staff and security inherent in moving large numbers of inmates was generally not worth the space saved through creating one communal facility for the entire prison. Also, prison reform advocates called for a change in philosophy, pointing out that the Second Generation viewpoint did not place much stock in the ability of prisoners to reform, and was being used as a justification to provide fewer services that aid in the rehabilitative process. This critique served to establish a relationship between the philosophy of the prison and the architectural design, showing how both contribute to the lives of inmates while incarcerated.

Third Generation prisons are also known as New Generation, for they are, currently, the most modern and highly approved facilities in existence. Most prison institutions currently constructed in the first world are Third Generation; prison philosophy in combination with the criminal justice system has worked to eliminate all other less humane types of institutions. Third Generation design throws the idea that prisoners are naturally aggressive out the window and adopts a theory that if treated humanely, prisoners will act in a humane fashion. This is a model that bases itself on the idea of mutual respect between inmates and guards in the prison setting, with the “assumption...that arrestees are cooperative when they are respectfully treated” (Kessler 2000: 97). This theory of respect and humanity carries into all aspects of Third Generation, including penal philosophy and architectural design.

Whereas in Second Generation facilities, guards maintained their distance from inmates, monitoring the inmate population from an enclosed and protected control room attached to the cellblock, in Third Generation facilities guards are a presence inside the housing pods themselves. The idea behind this is that guards and inmates will be able to establish a relationship, one of mutual respect, with the underlying agreement that guards have authority over inmates. Rather than the impersonal relationships present between guards and inmates in Second Generation facilities, where the basis of the dynamic lies in the authority that the guards have over the inmate population, Third Generation facilities hope to foster sociable relationships between these groups, where the authority is understood but rarely brought to the forefront. In an atmosphere where guards and inmates maintain mutual respect and inmates are treated humanely, there ought to be little cause for violence among inmates, and therefore little need for guards to assert their authority. In addition, the presence of guards inside the actual cellblock creates an environment of safety for inmates; with an officer physically nearby, inmates are less likely to use violence against one another, and therefore they feel safer. In Second Generation facilities, guards entered the cellblock to react to violence among inmates; in Third Generation facilities, guards are in the cellblock at all times to stop violence from occurring in the first place, effectively changing the system from a reactive one to a preventative one. A few decades of experience with this model of supervision have demonstrated that once this change is made, inmates act less violently on the whole.

The idea of humanity towards inmates is carried into the architectural design of Third Generation prisons as well. Similar to Second Generation facilities, institutions designed under Third Generation philosophy are divided into cellblocks that hold a

portion of the inmates in a given facility. These units also consist of a dayroom and cells around the edges, where inmates can be locked in for counts or nighttime. The idea behind placing many inmates into a single cellblock together, however, does not stem simply from the hope that this will eliminate mental illness. Second Generation facilities removed constant solitary confinement to protect the mental sanity of the inmates; Third Generation facilities believe that inmates ought to be confined together. Sanford Bates strongly advocated for this concept, writing, "It was Hawthorne, I think, who said, 'That which isolates damns; that which associates saves.' It is our business, however, to see that the association is a helpful and constructive one" (Bates 1931: 541). Inmates are able to help each other by living together, but the institution itself must also provide services that ensure that this association is effective for the inmate population. The most significant difference between Second and Third Generation facilities lies, then, in the presence of other services inside the individual cellblock. Third Generation philosophy believes that in order to treat inmates humanely, prison must mimic typical daily life in as many ways as possible. Inmates are more likely to settle into an environment where they feel as though they are at home, and while it is difficult to make a prison ever feel like a home for inmates, the institution must do everything possible. Howard Gill discusses the manner in which correctional facilities must strive to function: "The small group principle is reflected in housing, dining, recreation, and all important activities. The 'institutional family' attempts to approximate the family unit in outside society which is the norm" (Gill 1962: 321). At home, one does not have to be transported by a guard to eat, visit with family, or have your hair done, and so Third Generation facilities try to make this true of life in prison as well. Third Generation prisons, therefore, have visiting

rooms attached to their housing pods, as well as laundry facilities and sometimes even hairstyling rooms. Some have counseling and programming rooms attached as well. Rather than a centralized dining hall, all cellblocks are designed to allow for inmates to eat their meals inside the cellblock, either at tables in the dayroom or in their individual cells with food prepared in a central kitchen and delivered to the housing units. Therefore, in many Third Generation prisons, inmates have little reason to leave their cellblocks at all, making the cellblock into a community and feel as close to normal as is possible given the environment. Due to a combination of economic and spatial limitations, many Third Generation prisons are not able to have individual programming and counseling rooms for each cellblock, forcing inmates to leave the unit when they have classes or appointments with their counselor, yet often they aren't transported to the separate locations by guards, but rather are trusted to make their way to the Social Service wing themselves. This small amount of respect and trust goes a long way in making inmates feel more comfortable and willing to cooperate in a prison environment.

Because of the low incidence of violence in Third Generation facilities, permanent fixtures are frequently installed throughout cellblocks. In most prisons in the First and Second Generation, every cellblock was equipped with stainless steel sinks and toilets fitted right into the walls, making them virtually indestructible. This was important in older facilities, as the rates of violence were high and inmates frequently attempted to destroy sinks and toilets in fits of rage when desire to cause difficulty for the institution was high. Violence is much less of a problem in Third Generation facilities, however; in her article, *Examining Implementation Issues with New Generation Jails*, Christine Tartaro cites the statistic that,



Violent incidents in the three [New Generation] facilities dropped 30% to 90%... The dramatic change in a New York City jail, provided additional evidence of this model's success. The reductions in vandalism and violence in an institution that clearly held 'hard' criminals helped to bolster support for New Generation jails (Tartaro 2002: 220-1).

Because of this remarkable reduction in violence and incidents directed towards the fixtures of the institution itself, many architects are able to place porcelain fixtures into cells, fixtures similar to the ones that most people have in their homes. Not only is this cheaper for the institution, but it adds to the sense of normalcy for inmates. The cell will feel more like home if it is equipped with a toilet like the one the inmate had at home than it will if the cell is equipped with a stainless steel toilet built into the wall. Further, these fixtures are meant to convey a sense of respect to inmates, which works towards the reduction in violence towards the fixtures as well: "traditional jails, with their vandal-resistant furnishings...convey the message that inmates are expected to misbehave...If inmates are given incentives to behave, proponents of the New Generation jail agree that inmates will be more likely to conform" (Tartaro 2002: 223-4). The porcelain fixtures are considered a privilege, and included with the hope that inmates will understand this respect and resultantly treat the fixtures with care, thus effectively decreasing the amount of violence in the cellblock.

Riverside Correctional Facility is an example of a Third Generation prison facility. Inside each cellblock, a guard, and sometimes two, stands by a control panel ready to activate any needed switches. Any time an inmate wishes to enter or leave their cell, they hit a buzzer which notifies this guard, and the guard deactivates the lock on the cell door. This way, during the daytime hours when inmates can move freely between their cells and the dayroom, the guards on duty ultimately have control over the

population, and at all times know how many inmates are in cells and how many are in the dayroom. This control panel is located so as to give the guard clear sight lines throughout the unit; without moving from his or her post, the guard is able to see the entire dayroom, the entrances to all cells, as well as the laundry room, the hair care room, and the attached counseling room, all of which have large glass windows in the doors and walls. Just as the cells are locked at all times, these separate rooms are also locked, so if an inmate wishes to enter, access must be granted by the guard at the panel. Inmates rarely leave their units, with essentially everything needed in the cellblock, from a hairstylist that comes in a few times a week to payphones and televisions. Inmates also have an attached “outdoor” space as well, that they can access during the daytime, once again only needing the buzzer from the guard at the control panel. Medical and psychiatric services, as well as social services, however, which include several classrooms for programming and large-group counseling, are not broken up and placed in each unit; these are the only facilities that require inmates to go to a central location. Inmates from most units, however, do not participate in many programs, and therefore it is not as important that social services be attached to individual cellblocks. Programs such as creative writing or GED classes are open almost exclusively to the women in the Options unit, which is only one out of eight units in the institution. These women are given the most trust and responsibility in the prison, and are able to travel between their unit on the first floor and the social services wing on the second floor, traveling in the elevator without a guard accompanying them. Here it is clear that Riverside operates under Third Generation philosophy; under Second Generation these women would not

have been out of the sight of guards for any period of time and the idea of traveling between areas of the prison unaccompanied would be laughable.

It was at Riverside that I discovered that many Third Generation facilities have an additional type of surveillance not mentioned in most descriptions, making them slightly more similar to Second Generation facilities. In addition to guards being physically present the cellblocks, there are control rooms from which guards are able to watch over inmates through a system of glass walls and cameras. These control rooms are central to each floor, sharing one wall with each of the four cellblocks present on the floor. This allows the three or four officers that oversee the control booth to observe the actions of the inmates personally through the glass walls of the booth as well as through the extensive camera system hooked up to their computer monitors. This provides a backup for the guards inside the cellblock, particularly when there is only one guard physically present inside. This, I believe goes against the philosophy of the Third Generation facility, and, in some locations is even referred to as “Modified Third Generation.” The presence of guards in an elevated control booth, looking down on the inmate population, tends to reinforce the sense of authority and undermine the enhanced interpersonal relationships upon which the Third Generation philosophy places such a great deal of emphasis.

During the time that I spent at Riverside, I closely observed the interactions between inmates and guards. Inmates frequently stood by the control panel with the guard on duty to chat, and their relationships seemed easy and mutually friendly. It seemed in many cases as though the relationships between inmates and guards at Riverside was one of mutual respect—if not genuine friendship—instead of one based

upon authority, which fits easily into the philosophy of Third Generation penology. I did, however, observe dialogue that displayed an underlying sense of disrespect for inmates among the guard population. The guards didn't bring us into one of the cellblocks, the one designated for inmates with slight to severe mental illness, because they "didn't want to encourage the inmates." These inmates, they told us, were prone to acting out in hopes of earning attention. They dismissed this unit and we moved on to another one. I was surprised in this case, similarly to how I was surprised when I first visited a prison and met Mike, the hopeful young man about to be released, and heard the guards discussing the certainty of his return to prison. Third Generation philosophy bases itself upon the idea that inmates can be rehabilitated, so they are treated in a respectful manner and undergo rehabilitation because of this respect. I saw that respectful relationship when I visited my first prison, and was sadly shocked when it turned out not to be genuine. When I observed the same thing at Riverside, it made me question the Third Generation philosophy and its effectiveness. If guards are creating friendships with inmates, but behind closed doors discussing the inmates in negative terms, are these relationships truly based upon respect? Will they lead to the desired rehabilitation?

## VIII. Architectural Design Issues

Architecturally, prisons are incredibly complex. For every design issue, there are debates between those who believe prisons ought to be humane and comfortable for prisoners—the act of incarceration is punishment enough—and those who believe that imprisonment must be a harsh and cruel experience for prisoners, both mentally and architecturally. In the following section, I will discuss several of the most important and contested issues surrounding the design of prisons, although by no means will I be able to cover all of the significant problems faced by prison architects.

The idea of aesthetics in prisons raises a great deal of controversy. Many believe that prisoners deserve to live in an environment lacking all types of beauty, so as to contribute to their punishment. The reasoning behind this point of view is that inmates are members of society who have gone outside the commonly agreed upon laws for moral and correct behavior, and therefore must be punished. They are sentenced to live in a prison for a given period of time as their punishment and institution life ought to be a miserable experience, an experience that will instill in them the desire to avoid returning to prison at all costs. Extreme proponents of this point of view believe that inmates ought to live in conditions that are worse than that of the poorest free men, for the poorest free men have chosen to live within the law, despite the fact that they could benefit greatly from going outside the law. If prison inmates were given a comfortable living environment, it is argued, there is incentive to break the law if one is poor or homeless and living in wretched conditions. This group believes that there should be no incentive towards criminal acts that would land one in jail, and therefore, prisons must be

despicable environments where inmates truly suffer, physically as well as mentally, for their actions.

The other side of the argument has to do with the idea of rehabilitation. Studies have shown that prisoners respond in a highly positive manner to aesthetically pleasing prison designs, while they tend to show no improvement or tendency to reform when the environment is cruel and harsh. If correctional officers are aiming for rehabilitation, then everything must be done in order to attain the living environment most conducive to this process. The experience of being incarcerated is mentally difficult for anyone, particularly when the period of incarceration is long; a harshly aesthetic environment is an unnecessary addition to inmate stress. Also, Third Generation design and penal philosophy, by far the most prevalent in current day, stress that inmates should be given an environment that creates the greatest sense of normalcy, one that will most closely approximate “home.” To achieve this, it is important that the prison be at least comfortable aesthetically, if not beautiful; a prison that follows the former point of view would take prisoners far away from being able to consider the institution their home. Harsh environments create a sense of alienation from the outside population; inmates will interpret their surroundings as a sign that the rest of society does not believe them worthy of the basic necessities and comforts of life. Once released, this feeling of alienation will remain intact, making the transition from inside the prison walls to outside, as a part of society, difficult. This will also raise the rate of recidivism in that once released, if former inmates do not feel a positive connection with larger society, they will have less motivation to refrain from committing crimes. If their experience in prison was as “normal” as possible, and their environment less harsh, inmates are more likely to feel a

positive connection with the outside world and less likely to continue to commit crimes once released from prison. In addition, there is the argument that aesthetically pleasing prisons actually benefits the greater society. Sanford Bates argued this point in a paper in 1931, writing,

Keen students of human nature have proclaimed that the traditional type of steel and stone structure is so forbidding and so hopeless...as to make difficult, if not impossible, the more recently demanded task of improving the individual character of the prisoner... If the purpose of the prison is to protect society, it could do so by rendering its inmates less dangerous, more productive and more law abiding (Bates 1931: 537).

In this passage, Bates argues that the imposing prison designs that have been traditionally used create an atmosphere of hopelessness that actually has a negative effect upon the character of the inmates inside. It is the desire, however, of larger society to create an inmate body that has improved character; therefore, the prison itself must be constructed in a different architectural manner. Should the institutions be aesthetically pleasing, the inmates will improve in character, and society on the whole will benefit.

The presence of windows is another issue that is widely contested in the world of prison architecture. This debate, like that surrounding the aesthetics of correctional facilities, centers around the idea of humanity towards inmates. One side of the argument believes that prisoners do not deserve to have windows, as this is a porthole to the outside world, the world that, as punishment, they have been removed from. Providing constant access to the outside world also has the potential for planting seeds of escape in the minds of the inmate population. In addition, many believe that window cells ought to be used as incentive, as reward for good behavior. Inmates ought not to be given these cells right up front, as then they will have less to work towards while incarcerated.

The other side of this debate believes in humane treatment of inmates, and believes that sunlight falls under the classification of “basic necessities of life.” Sunlight has been scientifically proven to lift moods and, therefore, denying prisoners of access to natural light as enjoyed by the rest of the world makes their circumstances far from “normal.” Sunlight has also been proven to be a natural stress-reducer, which is valuable in an environment known for high anxiety. Inmates, particularly recently incarcerated ones, are constantly tense while learning the lay of the land in their new home, and the absence of windows would simply place an unnecessary addition to this burden. As stated earlier, under Third Generation philosophy, normalcy is the ultimate goal of the correctional institution atmosphere, and therefore inmates ought to be allowed to experience natural light in an environment that mimics normal life as closely as possible, and also to provide them a connection to the outside world. Alienation from the rest of the world is a prevalent problem among inmate and feelings of disconnect once released can lead to the repetition of offenses once released as well. Giving inmates windows allows for them to view the outside world, or at least a small piece of it, and therefore keeps them connected with their surroundings, hopefully staving off this disconnect.

The debate surrounding the presence of windows is actually a moot point, however; the American Correctional Association (ACA) has set down guidelines in its design manual for correctional institutions specifying the presence and size of windows in cells. These standards originally contained the phrases “all inmate rooms/cells [must] provide access to natural light” and that each cell must have a “view to the outside,” yet then continued to explain that the requirement for natural light only applies to “inmates in general population,” effectively eliminating those inmates in administrative segregation,



special needs segregation, or medical housing. The standards were confusing to interpret, but essentially required that, as natural light is a desirable feature for prisoners, windows ought to be included in every cell, but that this requirement is affected by the amount of time that an inmate spends inside the cell. If the inmate spends less than ten hours daily inside the cell, the presence of a window was not mandated; if the inmate spends more than ten hours each day inside the cell, then a window has to have been present.

Here rises an important issue across the board for prison architectural design: the difference between what is correct and what is morally right. The ambiguity present in the original set of standards allowed for a great deal of loose interpretation, which sparked debate. Mike Frawley, the Director of Justice Architecture at HOK architects, who also serves as member of the ACA Standards Committee, wrote an article concerning this topic, bringing forward the conflict between following the standards set down by the ACA and being morally right, and therefore humane, towards inmates. The standards allowed for minimal natural light and, in the areas that are not considered the “general population,” no natural light at all. Frawley argued in his article, however, that while this was technically correct, it was not right. The ACA standards were difficult to interpret, Frawley contends, and many architects chose to interpret them in the most inhumane manner possible, as this was typically the most cost effective. In addition to lowering the cost of constructing an institution, the absence of windows adds to the security of the institution: it is impossible for inmates to escape from a window that doesn’t exist. In order to ensure that the standards were humane, Frawley argued for a clarification of the written guidelines. The standards, Frawley believes, ought to prevent decisions from being made on the basis of cost effectiveness and security, when these

features can be obtained in addition to maintaining a level of humanity towards the inmate population. As a result of Frawley's article, the ACA Standards Committee reworded the guidelines to eliminate any ambiguity. Currently, the requirements for windows are much more stringent, clearly mandating that windows be placed in every individual cell. It is issues like this that highlight the important idea of technically correct versus morally right, a prominent debate that extends beyond window presence and into all areas of prison design. It is because of debates like these that the world of institutional design is ever-changing.

One of the most important issues surrounding prison architectural design is that of external appearance. This does not affect the actions of those inside the prison so much as the philosophy of the prison itself, although it does have an impact upon the inmate population. This debate concerns the question of whether prisons ought to be used as a deterrent for the outside, free population, and if the architecture ought to reflect this role, or whether prisons ought to be inviting towards the larger community.

One side of this argument believes that prisons ought to be physically harsh in appearance in order to act as a deterrent towards potential criminals in the free world.

The idea is, as Gresham Sykes writes,

Imprisonment is important as a deterrent not for the individual who has committed a crime and who has been placed in prison but for the great mass of citizens who totter on the edge. The image of the prison is supposed to check errant impulses, and again is it fear rather than morality which is expected to guide the individual in his action (Sykes 1958: 10).

This theory behind this argument is that free members of society will view a prison and be frightened of its imposing and terrifying appearance, and therefore steer clear of any criminality to avoid spending time inside the prison walls. This architectural technique

was commonly used in older prisons, up through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eastern State Penitentiary, for example, was designed with an imposing front entrance (see Figure 3).

Describing the entrance of Eastern State, Norman Johnston writes,

Prisons in the nineteenth century were not intended solely to be places to punish and reform wrongdoers; they were also tangible symbols calculated to remind free citizens what might befall them should they break the law. The exterior design, therefore, had a psychological as well as a physical function: to deter the potential criminal. To fulfill this grave responsibility, the façade had to convey the austerity, the sorrow, and the grimness of the regimen within if it were to be ‘appropriate’ and present such a forbidding and awesome appearance to passers-by that they would be disinclined to engage in any actions likely to land them inside (Johnston 1994: 36).

This opinion is shared by many, ranging from those who believe that prisons must specifically be created from rough stones to “create a visually deterrent image. [This counts] against the ornate, novel, or the visually attractive” (Shaw 2000: 154) to those who simply believe that the exteriors of prisons ought to be designed in a “heavy and somber style, which most forcibly impresses the spectator with gloom and terror” (Johnston 2000: 65), but give no specific design advice on how to achieve this heaviness.

The other side believes that imposing exteriors will discourage community involvement with the institution, and therefore ought to be avoided. This camp believes that the involvement of the community is integral to the rehabilitation of inmates, and, therefore, thinks that institutions, ought to be designed in a manner that is physically welcoming rather than deterring, or at least in a style with such that the surrounding community will not have objections. This side has become more prevalent recently, as modern penological theory believes that prisons have not effectively acted as deterrents for larger society:

If the lessons of history were such as to teach us we could rely on the deterrent force of punishment then it would obviously be our duty to make prisons as

gloomy and painful as possible. It is because of our growing belief that such a policy has not been successful that we are turning to something different (Bates 1931: 544).

As crime rates did not decrease during periods of time where prisons were designed in imposing fashions, the theory of prison as deterrent for the outside population has been discarded, and the other side of the argument has become dominant. As a result, prison architects have largely stopped designing imposing entrances and have begun to attempt a variety of different approaches to the prison exterior, such as blending into the larger community. Another debate has grown out of this original one, however. This second debate involves the location of correctional facilities. For the purposes of this debate, those who believe in imposing exteriors and those who believe in welcoming ones agree: prisons ought to be placed inside communities. Their reasons for advocating for this placement differ greatly, however. The first group, promoting the theory that correctional facilities must double as crime deterrents, believe that this cannot be done from a remote and rural location; instead, the institutions must be placed inside communities. They are a symbol of punishment and must be present for the largest possibly number of people to see on a regular basis. The second group, however, believes in community involvement in prisons, and therefore advocates for prisons to be close by to larger communities. Realistically, community involvement is difficult to enact, as inmates are typically considered dangerous by larger society and many do not want to interact with them on a regular basis. Initially, it is difficult to find individuals who are not family members of incarcerated individuals that are willing to interact with prisoners. Once these individuals are compiled, they are confronted with the issue of passing through security measures and regulation training for entering into a prison

facility. When considered practically, the idea of bringing the community into the prison environment for interaction with inmates is a complicated and problematic procedure. In principle, however, proponents of this system believe that encouraging the community to be involved with the inmate population will have a positive effect upon the rehabilitation of inmates. In addition, close proximity of prisons to larger communities allows for the families of those incarcerated to visit with more ease, contributing to the sense of community and normalcy for inmates. If the institutions are always placed far away from the rest of society, it becomes difficult for families to visit and the inmate not only becomes alienated from the larger society as a whole, but from their loved ones as well.

Restorative justice must also be taken into account when considering the placement of prison facilities. Recently, the practice of restorative justice has become more popular and widespread, and therefore must be considered when constructing new correctional institutions. Restorative justice involves compensating the victim of a crime for the actions taken against them by a criminal. Under the current justice system, the criminal convicted of a crime is punished, sentenced to a certain amount of time in a prison, and yet very infrequently is anything done to make the victim feel whole once again. A person is robbed and the thief goes to jail; the victim may receive monetary compensation, but is given nothing to restore their emotional stability. Creating an interaction between the victim and the perpetrator is an integral part of restorative justice. Ideally, this is an interaction where the victim is able to voice their pain and anger and the perpetrator and the victim are able to maintain a dialogue. Hopefully this results in an apology and an understanding between the two that (1) the crime was immoral and (2) the crime has been forgiven. Many victims feel a strong need to speak with or even just

to see the person who raped them, or stole from them, or killed a family member, and the practice of restorative justice allows them this opportunity. In many cases, a criminal action is taken against a community as a whole; in these cases the entire community, or however many people choose to become involved, can take part in restorative justice activities. In order for this to occur, it is imperative that the prison facility be nearby to the individuals or the community undergoing the process of restorative justice. It is impractical to think that the victims will be able to find a way to commute to a remote prison location, or even to think that they would want to do so. To encourage victim participation in restorative justice practices, it is important to place prisons inside neighborhoods in order to make the inmates inside easily accessible.

Many people do not believe in the system of restorative justice, however, and are generally opposed to the idea of prisons inside communities. They believe that once a law has been broken, the offender must be punished and that punishment must entail a complete separation from the rest of society. There are other people that believe prisons ought to be placed far away from larger communities as well: those people who believe that all inmates are dangerous and desirous of escape. They do not want prisons near to their own homes for fear that criminals will escape and make their neighborhoods unsafe. They would rather send convicted criminals “upstate”—out of sight, out of mind—sent off to places where it is assumed that these immoral and horrific people are being punished and are far away from anywhere where they could cause harm. These are the people for whom prisons are designed without rehabilitation in mind, those who know little about the criminal justice system.

Prison architects are not given an option as to the location for the prisons they design, for the plots of land are already chosen and purchased by the time an architect is involved. They do, however, often have the opportunity to affect the external appearance while working with their client towards a final design. Oftentimes low-security facilities, such as jails—holding inmates that are awaiting trial or have been sentenced to less than 24 months—are located in the middle of communities, and then the architect must make the important decision of how to design an appropriate façade. Architects have, as mentioned earlier, ceased to design correctional institutions with daunting façades. This has led them to explore other options for prison exteriors, begging the question: what is the appropriate design? One possibility, which has recently gained popularity, is exemplified by prison architect Bob Schwartz. Schwartz designs his institutions with the aim of integrating them seamlessly into the surrounding community, visually incorporating his facilities into their atmospheres. He has worked on several designs that respond to the larger community in a way that minimizes the impact of the prison upon the environment. For example, the Baltimore Central Booking and Intake Facility in Maryland has an industrial-type façade that mimics the gray stone and industrial style architecture of the neighborhood that surrounds it. This makes the institution stand out minimally, and become a part of the society instead of a sore thumb in the middle of an otherwise seamless landscape. Oftentimes, Schwartz modifies the scale as well as the exterior appearance of his designs in order to make them most conducive to the surrounding community. In Charlotte, North Carolina, HOK was asked to design both the Mecklenberg County Center and the Mecklenberg County Jail. For one of these institutions, the surrounding community was large and semi-industrial; Schwartz and the

HOK team approached the design of this facility in the same manner as they had with the Intake facility in Baltimore. The other institution, however, was sited in a smaller neighborhood with a more residential feel, and therefore HOK decided to design the facility as a series of wooden townhouses to ensure that they fit in easily with the surroundings.

Ultimately, however, Schwartz reminded me that his design experience in dealing with facilities inside communities had been largely with jails and not prisons; he has designed institutions limited to those inmates who are not considered a flight risk. This makes incorporation into the surrounding community more acceptable to those who live or work nearby, as opposed to attempting to incorporate a high security—or even a medium security—prison into a residential community. Also, an architect for a low-security prison or a jail has more freedom of design. When designing for lower security inmates, there are less initial regulations for security than there are for medium and maximum security prisons. When an architect is hired to design a maximum-security facility, his options are limited for external materiality—he or she essentially has to use vandal-proof metals and stone or concrete to prevent violence and escape—while an architect designing a jail, like Schwartz’ Mecklenberg County Jail, has the ability to incorporate wood or other materials that may not hold up to extreme violence quite as well. Essentially, it is important to recognize the security level for which one is designing, as this greatly informs the choices of the architect.

The question of respect is also vital when designing a correctional facility. It is part of Third Generation philosophy to foster a sense of respect for inmates inside the prison environment, which makes this less of a debate and more a difficult design



problem. When designing a prison, architects must come up with ways to create environments that promote mutual respect between inmates and guards while still falling within budget constraints.

Designing prisons that operate under the Direct Supervision model is an effective way for architects to work towards inmate respect through design. Direct Supervision is the model used by Third Generation prisons, where guards are present inside the units themselves. Architects must take this presence into account when designing and create a unit that can be supervised safely by only one guard. To ensure this, architects must design cellblocks with clear sightlines from the control station; a guard standing at this location must be able to see the entire unit without difficulty. Not only is this important for the guards and their safety, but it is integral to ensuring that all inmates are safe from each other at all times. Inmates must also be provided with an outdoor recreation area, which the architect is required by standards to incorporate into each cellblock. The ability to move between the open air and the inside of the unit gives inmates a small amount of freedom in an otherwise entirely regulated world and provides them with a measure of self-respect. If these outdoor areas are not attached to the units themselves, or are not exclusively attached to one unit, inmates will be limited as to the times when they are able to use the space. At Riverside, a functioning Third Generation facility, each cellblock had an individual exercise yard which inmates can use as they pleased during the daytime hours. This is an important decision that architects must strive for, as it holds the potential to greatly impact the feelings of self-respect and the behavior of inmates.

Sound must also be considered with relation to inmate respect. Units must be designed acoustically to avoid echo and minimize the amount of noise that is carried

across the unit. Quiet units have been proven to be less stressful and more rehabilitative for inmates, on the whole, than loud units where the acoustics allow for every sound to carry and echo repeatedly. Also, designing a quiet unit allows for the officer to be heard more easily; if the acoustics are bad and the officer is forced to yell, or is not heard and obeyed by inmates, the relationship between officers and inmates that Third Generation strives for is lost. Designing a quiet unit presents a problem for architects, as most materials that are considered safe and indestructible, and therefore are desirable to use in a prison environment, simply reflect sound, creating echoes and loud, hard, environments. Architects, therefore, must come up with creative manners in which to use materials that are safe and still noise-absorbing, all while staying within a tight budget.

The location of toilets and showers are another important architectural decision that must take inmate respect into account. Into this decision, the architect must factor the cost effectiveness of placing communal showers into prisons, as well as the degree to which inmates will feel respected if they are given individual showers. Communal showers and toilets promote the humiliation and self-degradation that Erving Goffman describes as integral to a prison environment, and therefore they may be effective to use, if the goal of the facility is to attain a total institution environment. Forcing inmates to shower and use the toilet in front of each other and in front of guards breaks down their sense of self-respect, and makes it clear that the guards and the institution do not respect them either. As a result, inmates begin to feel less than human, which is, as Goffman believes, the goal of a total institution. Third Generation design, however, does not agree with Goffman's strategy. Instead, the philosophy behind Third Generation tries to make the environment of prison as much like the environment of home as possible. Under this

philosophy, prison architects regularly attempt to place individual toilets into every cell, enabling inmates to use the bathroom in private and allowing them to maintain a sense of self-respect and the idea that the guards and the prison facility respect them as well. Showers, on the other hand, are frequently placed off the dayrooms, with inmate privacy maintained by the presence of stalls. The difficulty arises when money is factored in. Ideally, every inmate cell would be given its own toilet, and Goffman's total institution would become even more so a figment of the past. Economically, however, this is not always possible. On a tight budget, institutions are forced to make cuts somewhere. If the designers and owners of a prison decide to place individual toilets into each cell, it means that they will be sacrificing something in another location of the institution. Similarly, if they make the decision, for example, to create individual outdoor spaces for each cellblock, they may not have the funds to give each individual cell a toilet. Something always has to give way in order for another aspect to be realized.

Similar to the idea of communal hygiene facilities is the question of cell occupant number. When starting the design process, prison owners and architects must come to a decision as to how many inmates will be placed into a given cell. Spatially and economically, it is smarter to place several inmates into a single cell, as a double cell is smaller than two singles and a quad is smaller than two doubles, yet this forces the question of respect. Under Third Generation philosophy, is it important to give inmates individual cells? Stephen Shaw, former secretary of the Prison Reform Trust, writes in his article, *Prison Architecture and the Politics of Reform*, that "after size and security, the second criterion for the well-designed prison is the need to provide a proper balance between privacy and safety...Prisoners need some space of their own" (Johnston 2000:

157). For prisoners to feel respected in a prison environment, and therefore, for Third Generation design to function correctly, prisoners need to have some space of their own where they can feel safe from physical or sexual assault, or where they can be alone with their thoughts. These inmates may only be able to undergo rehabilitation if they are given time to consider their actions on their own. Individual cells are one way to achieve this end, yet they are relatively uncommon due to the tight budgeting restrictions. Also, one cannot assume that all inmates feel the same way and desire to have their own private space. Some prisoners, on the other hand, need to have other people around while they are incarcerated so they are not driven crazy by solitude. Arguing for the elimination of individual cells are also the people, outside of the prison system, who believe that solitude can be too comforting for the prison population, and advocate that prisoners ought never to be left alone: “Prisons should, ideally, be ‘short and massive, were the prisoners, humiliated, weighted down, are constantly before the eyes of the other criminals who are confined there, offering a vision of the punishments that await them and the repentance that must follow the dissoluteness of their past life’” (Johnston 2000: 31). This viewpoint believes that prisoners must be forced to be surrounded by each other at all times, providing them with a constant reminder that they are incarcerated, a constant reminder that they have taken illegal actions, and a constant reminder that they are being punished. Giving them solitary space would provide a place where they could be alone and forget their circumstances, mentally leaving the prison environment, which ought not be possible. Architects must work closely with their clients in order to make this important decision, although the final decision lies in the hands of the funding authority.

Architects must also consider the prevalence of sexual assault when designing prison facilities. Similarly to the idea of inmate respect, this does not involve as much of a debate as some of the previous issues, as it is agreed upon that sexual assault in prisons is a widespread problem that ought to be addressed architecturally. The criminal justice system has recognized that architectural design can have a large impact upon the actions that occur inside a prison with respect to sexual assault, and so it becomes the responsibility of architects to find creative manners in which to design cellblocks—and individual cells—to decrease instances of assault.

The number of inmate inside each individual cell can influence the prevalence of sexual assault inside correctional institutions. Prisons officials are continuously attempting to determine whether solitary cells, double cells, or group dormitory cell configuration is the most effective in preventing problems between inmates, particularly at night. After the design process has concluded, Bob Schwartz has spoken with inmates concerning their opinion on the number of inmates that ought to be placed into a single cell, and has come to the conclusion that four is the most appropriate number. Many institutions do not have the space or funds to provide inmates each with their own cell, and therefore are forced to create double cells. This, however, can provide the perfect opportunity for sexual assault to occur on a regular basis; once two inmates have been locked down together for the night, it is easy for one of these two to sexually dominate the other, and virtually impossible for the other to escape or seek help. Schwartz has learned from inmates that in groupings of four, this sexual domination is less likely to occur, as the other two inmates present in the cell will prevent any single inmate from sexually assaulting any single person.

Inside correctional facilities, there are holes, nooks, and other private areas given the collective title “blind spots.” Blind spots are areas out of the direct line of sight of the guards on duty, and therefore are spots where sexual assaults could occur without the guard’s knowledge. There have been times where guards were bribed to look the other way during a sexual assault, but in cases where the assaults occur without the guard’s sanction, blind spots become the only useable locations. To reduce the numbers of sexual assaults in prisons, architects have been creating units with clear sight lines throughout each cellblock, hoping to ensure that blind spots disappear entirely. Cellblocks, therefore, are designed with large open rooms and large amounts of glass between separate but attached facilities (laundry, counseling). The double-height dayrooms are frequently surrounded by two stories of cells on two sides, with the staircase leading to the second level minimally structured to avoid any areas where a guard cannot clearly see. This design allows for the guard on duty inside the unit— as well as any guards present in a separate control booth—to see the entire cellblock from a single standing point. Without having to move from their spot at the control panel, they can monitor the actions of the entire cellblock and work to ensure inmates freedom from sexual assault.

Clear sightlines aid the reduction of sexual assault in a twofold manner. Most obviously, it eliminates the possibility of sexual assault occurring in institutional blind spots, immediately lowering the total number of assaults. Additionally, there is the added aspect of safety. Some inmates choose to engage in sexual assault to avoid the same thing happening to themselves, going on the offensive to show power and dominance and avoid being sexually assaulted due to this display of strength and potential for violence. Sexual assault is a cycle that perpetuates itself, and therefore any small reduction has a

large impact. Third generation prison facilities that have a guard present in the cellblock have been successful in reducing sexual assaults, for they create a cut into this cycle. Studies have shown that the prevalence of sexual assault has decreased between fifty and ninety percent in Third Generation prisons, although the exact numbers cannot be known, as many sexual assaults inside prisons are unreported.

When designing a correctional institution, architects must also be aware of the level of security and the population of inmates that will be living inside the prison walls. This has already been discussed with respect to the exterior design of facilities, but it is also important to consider with respect to the interiors. SuperMax prisons, meant for only those inmates who are deemed to be entirely incorrigible and dangerous to virtually everyone (including, at times, themselves), are designed in an entirely different manner than a lower-security prison, or any jail. When designing SuperMax facilities, architects must consider the above issues and most often will come to a different set of conclusions than they would if they were designing a lower security prison. Sexual assaults are less of an issue, as prisoners are let out of their cells for only very little time every day, if at all; and therefore architects worry less about sightlines in SuperMax facilities than they do in most other institutions. Despite Gill's claim that all inmates, regardless of security level, have the potential for reform, these prisoners are frequently considered a lost cause, impossible to reform, therefore the Third Generation philosophy is less applicable, making many of the design decisions that had been based upon the promotion of respect and normalcy inside the cellblock entirely moot. Yet because these prisoners spend such a great portion of their time inside their cells, architects must consider the design of the cell itself with more care. The question of windows becomes an incredibly important

issue, as the light and view from the window are practically the only piece of the outside that these inmates will see for the duration of their incarceration. It is important to note that SuperMax facilities make up a miniscule portion of prisons in the United States, and therefore these design questions are considered less frequently.

Designing for a women's facility brings up differences in these decisions as well. Women are generally considered less of a flight risk and less violent, and therefore architects can take larger liberties with their designs, creating an even more "normal" environment with low-security male facilities. This can be seen mostly in the fixtures present in women's institutions: more frequently, these are porcelain instead of stainless steel, while in most male institutions, the operators are hesitant to place breakable, porcelain fixtures in male units.

In general, prison architects face an important dilemma when attempting to answer the question: who is the client? The clear answer points to the operators and prison funding authorities, but the architect can still appreciate and realize that they are designing for the prison population as well, and take the needs of the inmates into account when they set pen to paper. Each of these groups has different priorities, making the architect's job even more difficult. The client is generally the Federal government or state government, depending on the type of facility; these groups are mostly interested in achieving the lowest cost and highest durability prison, and are not overly interested in the needs or desires of the inmate population. The operators, typically the Department of Corrections in the state where the prison is located, on the other hand, are very focused on security, as they are responsible for keeping the inmates inside and avoiding any assault on the correctional officers staffing the prison. In addition, the operators are



interested in the functioning of the prison, as they will be using the facilities first hand. Therefore, during the design process, operators are invested in ensuring that the architects follow the program set out for them to the letter, in achieving their goals and in receiving a functional prison, regardless of the cost to the government. Finally, there is the inmate population. Bob Schwartz has never consulted an inmate during the design process for a correctional institution, and he is not the exception. The needs and desires of the inmate population are rarely taken into account when designing a facility, as they are neither paying for the institution nor operating it. They are simply inmates who are being punished, which generally means that they deserve no voice. Therefore, prison architects must take the desires of inmates into account on their own if the voices of the inmates are to be heard at all.

## IX. Ideal Prison Design

In the last 150 years, prisons have evolved from dark and cruel holding cells for those criminals awaiting torture or death sentences to facilities that aim for rehabilitation as well as a safe and healthy environment for the incarcerated population. Under current penological philosophy, inmates are meant to be treated with respect and given an environment that mimics the “normal” outside world as closely as possible. Programs and counseling have been instated in nearly all institutions with the hope that prisoners will undergo a reevaluation of their values and come to the realization that criminal actions are not the correct path to follow. Institutions are entitled “correctional facilities” to emphasize the focus on rehabilitation rather than simple incarceration of inmates. Prison authorities have admittedly increased the thought given to the design of their institutions, considering how the architecture of the buildings can actually affect the actions and rehabilitative potential of the inmates inside. Prisoners are no longer subject to continuous solitary confinement, but are rather placed in cells only at night and are allowed to socialize at their leisure during the daytime. Indeed, the prison system has come a long way in a relatively short period of time.

Yet this is not enough. Third Generation prison philosophy has been implemented in many ways, but has not as yet realized its potential; the idea that prisoners respond positively to respect and humanity has not been pushed to its limit, and this needs to happen. Rather than exploring the expanded rehabilitative potential for prison design, the owners, operators and architects of prisons have stuck to what is comfortable, what is safe, and what they believe is known to work. I do not consider this

“working,” however, when the recidivism rate is currently 67% within three years of release from prison (Bureau of Justice 2006). Clearly, inmates are not experiencing the rehabilitative process, and therefore the prison system, as advanced as it is, must undergo yet another overhaul. To achieve the ideal prison, the Department of Corrections must experiment and it must try radical new things. Authorities must be willing to upset taxpayers initially, and be willing to listen to inmates. They must be willing to believe that architecture has the ability to impact rehabilitation, and they must understand that architecture can only work to bring about rehabilitation in conjunction with an extensive system of programming and inmate counseling. In this section, I will create an ideal prison environment, one that I believe eliminates many of the negative aspects still present in Third Generation facilities while simultaneously maintaining all the positive aspects, one that focuses on the rehabilitation of the inmates rather than the desires of the taxpayers, and one that draws from the failures and successes I have described above. I recognize that many of my proposed ideas are economically complex to implement, which points to the most prevalent problem in prison design and operation. It is currently not possible to operate a prison system that embodies fully the penal philosophy in which the criminal justice system has chosen to believe. This may be possible to achieve in single instances, but cannot be implemented on a world-wide scale.

There are three main philosophical components central to the design of a correctional institution. These are (1) normalcy, (2) alienation, and (3) what constitutes sufficient punishment with respect to a prison atmosphere. I will attempt to use these three elements as a framework for my design of the practical aspects of correctional

facilities—such as the cellblock, outdoor space, and exterior appearance—as I believe that in order to create an ideal prison, these elements must be in constant consideration.

Third Generation penal philosophy states that inmates thrive in environments that are similar to the outside world, and therefore the Department of Corrections ought to aim to create facilities that approximate “normalcy.” To achieve this, prisons have been constructed in series’ of cellblocks with dayrooms surrounded by individual cells, providing each inmate with personal space as well as an area for socialization. This arrangement is seen as far more “normal” than locking inmates into their cells for the entire duration of their sentence; I believe that this idea can be pushed even further.

Alienation is a widespread issue for prison inmates. When locked into unsanitary and cruel environments and repeatedly told that they are not worth basic human rights, it becomes easy for prisoners to quickly feel alienated from the rest of society. As has been mentioned repeatedly in the section on design issues, this estrangement results in negative effects for both the inmate—who no longer feels a connection to the outside world—and the larger community—for once released, an inmate who feels only detachment will have less reason to refrain from returning to a criminal lifestyle. Therefore, it is in the best interests of society to work to maintain a connection between inmates and their communities. To eliminate this sense of alienation, prison architects and operators must work together both when designing and when running correctional institutions.

One must consider what constitutes sufficient punishment before the process of prison design can begin. Many people believe that prisons must involve some sort of additional cruelty in order to fully punish those incarcerated inside. They believe this can

occur through the architecture, through the housing options given to inmates, through the programming offered to inmates, and through inmate treatment by the correctional staff. All of these aspects become additional negative characteristics of prison life, supplementary to the experience of incarceration. These add-ons are unnecessary, in my opinion; rather, the act of placing a person inside an institution for a set amount of time, never allowing them to leave, and maintaining a basic level of control over their daily lives, is punishment enough. Sending a person convicted of a crime to a prison immediately strips them of their personal freedom. They no longer have the right to choose where they live, how they spend their days, what to wear, what to eat, who to spend their time with. Instead, they are provided the same clothing as every other person in the institution, and they eat all the same foods. They go through the same daily routines as every other inmate in the facility, to a large extent. They lose all sense of individuality the second they enter the doors of the prison and enter a numbered, nondescript, cell. Between the loss of freedom and the loss of individuality, every inmate is without two of the most important characteristics of human life, and they will not regain these for the duration of their time behind bars. This is their punishment, and this alone is enough. It is not necessary to make their time inside the institution more difficult or unpleasant, nor is it necessary that they be forced to live in an environment without other basic human essentials. Prisons ought to be designed in a manner that eliminates all extra negative aspects from prison life. Some may say that the rates of incarceration will rise if prisons are comfortable, and if inmates are allowed actual fresh air and outdoor space, for people will be less fearsome of incarceration; the hesitation to commit a crime for which one could be incarcerated will disappear. They may say that prisoners will not

actually suffer while inside if the prison is not cruel to them, and that they will, therefore, not actually experience any punishment for their crimes. I do not believe that to be true. From my research, from my experience with inmates, and from my convictions, I believe that the experience of being inside a building whose grounds you cannot leave still results in punishment. Losing freedom and individuality are the entire punishment, not just the building blocks.

When proposing my ideal prison design, I will rely heavily upon the Judicial Center of Leoben, an institution in Austria. This center, which acts as a courthouse as well as a correctional facility, can be seen as an example of a way in which Third Generation philosophy can be applied to a great extent. This institution, designed with the rehabilitation of inmates in mind, was the result of a high design competition, making it a unique approach to the corrections institution. It is also, however, a successful approach, and one from which I will borrow many concepts.

Before the design of the prison can begin, the location must be chosen. In order to achieve the maximum elimination of estrangement from society, the placement of the facility ought to be relatively close to large communities. The facility also, however, must have somewhat substantial grounds, making the placement directly inside a neighborhood difficult. In addition, we must be realistic: many families will be firmly opposed to the addition of a correctional institution to their neighborhood. The combination of these factors makes locations slightly outside communities a more practical choice. The prison ought not, however, be placed too far away to exclude the potential for community involvement with the inmate population to minimize the feelings

of alienation felt by the inmate population. The Judicial Center of Leoben achieves this type of integration into society fairly successfully. The Center straddles a highway (see Figure 4) creating constant, if only passive, interaction with the outside world. As cars pass below the Center, inmates are given the feeling of being parts of society, reducing their feelings of disconnect with the outside world.

Once the location has been chosen, the outdoor space may be addressed. In the design of these areas, all three of the philosophical components come into play strongly. To promote Third Generation ideas of normalcy, the institution ought to contain significant outdoor space that is genuinely out of doors. At Riverside Correctional, the outdoor areas attached to individual cellblocks are small spaces, no more than 20 feet in either direction, enclosed on all four sides by thick, gray, concrete walls that extend as high as six stories. The only natural light in these spaces filters down from six floors up, making the spaces dark and gloomy even during the daytime. Other prisons I have visited in Massachusetts have exercise areas that are only enclosed on three sides, leaving the last wall open, covered only with a grate or bars. Yet these spaces are frequently still several stories up in a building, and are always paved; never have I seen a facility where inmates are able to have direct contact with grass and soil. Here, the concept of a debate between right and correct comes strongly into play, as well as the idea of punishment. Technically, it is correct to provide inmates with this type of space for outdoor recreation, as the standards only require that inmates be given some space that is out of doors, but do not stipulate what this space ought to be like. Therefore, to provide them with an area that is enclosed on all four sides, and cold concrete on all four walls as well as the floor—no vegetation would be able to grow in these types of spaces—is within the corrections

standards. Mike Frawley did not believe that one ought to deprive inmates of windows, for there are significant beneficial effects of natural light. Following this line of thinking, while it may be technically approved for these enclosed spaces to fulfill the outdoor requirement, it is not morally right. Instead, outdoor spaces ought to actually be outdoors. If we have concluded that the basic act of incarceration stands as punishment enough, then the “outdoor” spaces at Riverside and most other facilities must be replaced with facilities that do not act as additional punishment. As I have said, I believe that the ideal prison must be given a relatively large plot of land, a significant portion of which must be designated for outdoor recreation and exercise areas. This can be one large area or several smaller areas divided by fences, or even short walls, if necessary. The Judicial Center of Leoben has an outdoor area in which inmates are able to exercise or simply relax in the fresh air. This area is enclosed with a high fence, but the inmates are able to see mountains in the distance (see Figures 5, 6). The outdoor area consists of a combination of paved pathways and plots of grass, and is scattered with ping pong tables and benches, providing inmates with diversions or places to sit and enjoy their outdoor time. This fulfills the “outdoor” requirement; the Riverside exercise areas do not. Providing an outdoor area like the one at Leoben provides inmates with as much normalcy as possible, and it also strengthens the connection between the inmate and life outside the prison. With a genuine outdoor space, inmates will feel a greater degree of respect from the outside world, and feelings of alienation will decrease. The ideal prison has a large, outdoor recreation space with grass, fresh air, benches, and exercise facilities.

The exterior of the ideal prison must fit, architecturally, into its surroundings and its time period. The architecture should not be imposing, heavy, gothic, or designed with



the goal of inducing fear; it is not the goal of the correctional institution to deter criminal action by presenting a façade that embodies terror. Instead, prisons should appear on the exterior as any other buildings; ideally, it will be impossible to recognize these institutions as prisons from afar, except for the presence of high fences. When considering the façade of the building, the concept of alienation comes into play. It is important to involve the community, if possible, in the functioning of the institution, and therefore the exterior must be more welcoming than deterring. The Judicial Center of Leoben achieves this objective. The building exterior is made entirely of glass (see Figure 7), shattering the assumption that has been held so tightly by prison designers that in order to ensure that inmates will not escape, institutions must be made of steel or thick stone walls. While most prison facilities feel heavy and imposing, the Judicial Center feels architecturally light due to its glass skin. Looking at the building from the outside, one would never know that it housed convicted criminals. The façade of the building intrigues rather than terrifies, a characteristic that works towards the elimination of estrangement. Rather than feeling as though society has cast them into a dark and undesirable hole, prisoners may feel as though their home is architecturally fascinating; rather than feeling as though society does not consider them worthy of a decent home and feeling a resulting estrangement from society, prisoners may feel as though society is invested in them even though they have made a mistake. If inmates feel as though society still cares about their welfare, they are more likely to engage actively in rehabilitation and feel a positive connection to society once released, hopefully ending in a lower rate of recidivism. The exterior of the ideal prison ought to function in a similar manner to that of the Judicial Center; rather than frightening those people living nearby,

the prison ought to be somewhat intriguing. Instead of a design that is architecturally the opposite of the surroundings, the ideal prison ought to be fit comfortable into the look of the community, either by mimicking the architectural choices of the neighborhood, or by creating a modern look that reflects the time period in which it was constructed.

The cellblock must be given the most attention by the prison designer. One must take into consideration the idea of normalcy when creating a cellblock, as this is the area in which inmates will spend the majority of their time. In order to create an atmosphere that is as “normal” as possible, the cellblocks ought to contain relatively few inmates. Many Second Generation cellblocks contained hundreds of inmates and an atmosphere that was anything but normal for the inmates inside. These larger units contribute to a sense of fear, which should be avoided in the ideal prison design. Ted Conover, a journalist who immersed himself in the lives of prison guards at Sing-Sing in New York for a year, writes in his book *Newjack*, “A-block and B-block are the most impressive buildings in Sing-Sing, and in a totally negative sense. A large cathedral will inspire awe; a large cellblock, in my experience, will mainly horrify” (Conover 8). Smaller cellblocks allow for the implementation of Third Generation philosophy, as one guard can be present and maintain control of the inmates inside, as well as establish relationships with inmates that will foster an atmosphere of mutual respect. Housing pods in current Third Generation facilities contain an average of 60 inmates; in the ideal prison, the units would contain no more than 30. Through this reduction in size, the unit would have a greater potential to form a community and inmates would more likely form close friendships with each other in addition to the correctional staff; the unit may feel more “normal.” This does double the units in a given facility, and therefore doubles the

number of guards necessary, which greatly increases the operating costs of the facility. This would, however, create a beneficial and rehabilitative atmosphere for the inmate population, and this is the ultimate goal of the ideal institution.

Generally, I believe the designs of current Third Generation facilities to be a successful combination of idealistic and realistic. The cellblocks contain a dayroom with places for inmates to lounge, play games, exercise, watch television, or make phone calls. The room are lined on two walls with cells (See Figure 8), creating clear sight lines from a monitoring panel to every cell in the pod. Most of the units I have visited have glass on the two remaining walls, although these windows always face into an institutional hallway or another housing pod; the cells line the walls facing the exterior, allowing for windows in every individual cell. Due to this deficit of natural light in the dayrooms, it must be ensured that there be as much natural light in other areas of the facility as possible.

Attached to every housing pod ought to be many of the personal services an inmate may need while incarcerated. Kitchens and medical services may remain centralized, as it quickly becomes impractical to consider providing each unit with a medical facility and kitchen. Many other services, such as counseling, visitor rooms, laundry and hair care can be provided in small rooms supplementary to the dayroom, creating a tight community that inmates rarely leave. Social services and educational programming may occur either in supplementary rooms to the dayroom or, realistically, in a centralized area, as these programs will be open to inmates from all units.

The prison cell is the most difficult part of the entire institution to design effectively. I believe that every inmate ought to be given his or her own cell, allowing

for a sense of privacy and safety from the rest of the cellblock. This would allow for a greater sense of normalcy, as in the outside world everyone has a place where they can go to be alone. Yet this might not be the most effective manner in which to induce comfort and rehabilitation in some inmates, and therefore I am hesitant to include this as a piece of the ideal prison. Instead, the ideal prison must contain a variety of housing options to accommodate for the many different comfort levels of the inmate population. This creates a more ideal environment in two ways: first, when inmates prove to be a security risk, it is possible to change their housing style, effectively punishing them for negative behavior without removing them from the institution and placing them in a facility far away, and secondly, this allows for inmates to have a degree of choice in their housing. They can choose to live in an individual cell if this is how they believe they will function in a prison setting most effectively, or they can choose to have a roommate, or a group of roommates, if they believe that being alone will be an ineffective pathway to rehabilitation. General population housing pods may each contain a single type of cell: one may consist of thirty individual cells, while the next may consist of 15 double cells. Units meant for a specific population—many institutions choose to house all pregnant women together, for example—may contain a variety of housing options, allowing for all categories of inmates to be placed in all styles of cell. This speaks to the idea of limiting additional punishment; inmates must live in an institutional cell for the duration of their incarceration, and the limited agency present in this choice reduces the extra stigma.

Units inside the ideal prison ought to be designed in a way that reduces the amount of noise carried throughout the block. This works towards an environment that is most “normal,” or most like the outside world, where one can achieve peace and quiet if

desired. As discussed earlier, not only do inmates respond positively to environments where sounds are minimized, but the commands of officers are also more readily heard. In order to reduce noise in the ideal prison, I propose “softening” the cellblocks. This is difficult to do while simultaneously maintaining a high level of safety and security, as softer surfaces are easier to destroy and use to fashion certain weapons. The use of softer items, however, will largely reduce the noise; Conover describes the cellblocks in Sing-Sing as “loud because they are hard. There is nothing inside them to absorb sound except the inmate’s thin mattresses and their bodies. Every other surface is of metal or concrete or brick” (Conover 9). Any measures that can be taken to reduce the prevalence of hard surfaces in the cellblock will decrease the noise and make the units more pleasant for inmates. The ceilings of the idea prison’s cellblocks will be made out of the acoustic blocks commonly used in public facilities such as lecture halls and cafeterias, which are easy to replace if destroyed—they are in block panels which can be replaced one by one rather than necessitating the entire ceiling to be redone—but are far enough above the heads of inmates that destruction should not be an issue. For the walls, I propose a layer of concrete block, which will then be covered by a sound board. This board will then be covered by sheets of metal, perforated to allow for the conveyance of noise from the cellblock to the sound board underneath but still significantly substantial to provide against destruction by the inmate population.

Lighting inside the ideal prison must also be carefully considered, as natural light is both beneficial for rehabilitation and a large component of the creation of a “normal” atmosphere. The Judicial Center of Leoben, is well lit, both naturally and artificially (see Figures 9, 10). The façade appears to be all glass, and from the inside it is clear that most

rooms have large windows, often that extend from floor to ceiling. The doors and windows in the cells and activity rooms are all barred from the outside to prevent escape, yet this does not detract from the light quality provided by their existence. The rooms appear pleasant due to the proliferation of natural light. Even in rooms that are given less natural light, such as the gym, full of free weights and nautilus machines, there is the same appealing feeling. The floor is made of a hardwood, light in color, that reflects what little natural light there is, and the room is filled with bright artificial bulbs. In addition, rooms that are for public use—the gym, visitor’s areas, and auditorium—are designed with high ceilings. In combination with the abundance of light, these rooms feel spacious in a pleasant, home-like manner, rather than an institutional, empty manner. The ideal prison would utilize these features: I believe that an abundance of light, both natural and artificial, as well as high ceilings that create full spaces rather than cramped and institutional ones, will both contribute to the positive and rehabilitative experience of inmates while incarcerated. I do not advocate especially high ceilings in individual cells, however, for the dimensions are not conducive to these proportions. Since cells meant for individuals, or even two inmates, are relatively small in dimension, the addition of a high ceiling would emphasize the compact quality of the cell, throwing them out of proportion, making the cell feel smaller than it is in reality. The cell must feel comfortable and free of distortion in order to mimic the home as much as possible. The dayrooms, however, are spaces that could benefit from high ceilings. Many institutions already institute this in dayrooms, as these spaces are generally double height with two stories of cells along the walls. This makes the institutional, rooms feel larger and more comfortable to inmates, which results in a more relaxed environment across the cellblock.

Just as in the Judicial Center of Leoben, I believe that the central and public spaces should be given high ceilings, as these are more likely to be the larger spaces in general. A low-ceilinged larger space will induce feelings of restriction in the inmate population, and cause mentally discomfort. When there are high ceilings on large spaces, everyone inside feels as though they have more personal space, an important feeling to ensure to inmates when attempting to maintain good behavior.

Once the prison is designed architecturally, the operators must address the functioning inside. An important part of the rehabilitative process is the idea of providing inmates with job skills and an education, as these are partial keys to being able to live an honest life once released. Many prisons provide programming in specialized techniques, such as computer applications, as well as GED classes to aid inmates in receiving their high school diplomas. In a great number of prisons, however, these classes are not available to the entire inmate population. At Riverside Correctional, this type of programming is only given to those women in the Options unit, which totals one twelfth of the entire incarcerated population. Only 1 out of every 12 women at Riverside has the chance to learn to spell and use correct grammar when writing or take family counseling classes in addition to personal counseling. Only 1 out of every 12 women at Riverside really has a chance at rehabilitation. This is not true across the board, however. In Missouri, the Department of Corrections is an exception. Bob Schwartz, who has done a significant amount of work in Missouri, states that, “the Department of Corrections requires each inmate to have a minimum of a high school GED. They must go to class to attain one.” In Missouri, inmates are required to receive an education, for this will enable them a greater range of legal employment opportunities once released. The ideal prison

falls closer to this model than to that of Riverside and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. In the ideal prison, every inmate is given a wide range of programs. Every inmate must be required to attain a GED, if they do not already hold a high school diploma, and they must also be given the opportunity, should they so desire, to pick “electives” from the other classes offered. These classes could include family counseling, computer classes, introduction to languages (Spanish in particular, as this is a valuable job skill in many inner cities), religion, spelling and grammar, creative writing and poetry. Inmates would be able to petition to create new classes on the basis of interest as well, as it is difficult to determine what types of skills and courses will be of interest to any given group of people. In addition to attaining a GED, inmates would be required to attend personal counseling sessions. Ideally, these sessions would enable inmates to discover the reason for their criminal action, and understand that how to avoid similar actions in the future. Counseling would work to create a new set of moral values, and work with the inmates one-on-one to understand how they got to a place where they had no difficulty breaking the law. The Department of Corrections in Missouri has other requirements besides the attainment of a GED: Schwartz says that inmates “also must work” while incarcerated. This is also an important part of the rehabilitative process, as working inside the prison allows for inmates to gain valuable job skills that could be applied once in the outside world. In the ideal prison, the inmates would be given a large variety of jobs, ranging from cleaning the institution to preparing and serving the food for the rest of the inmate population. This not only allows the institution to operate at lower cost—it would not have to pay additional workers to do these jobs—but allows inmates to learn practical skills they could, realistically, use to gain employment upon release.



Many of the aspects of this ideal prison design result in unrealistically high costs for the institution. Institutions like the Judicial Center of Leoben are successful due to measures such as these, but they are rare and impractical to suggest as widespread prison models due to the economic limitations of criminal justice systems. If, however, these systems and ideas can be implemented in even a few prisons, they will improve the quality of the corrections system. Ultimately, they must be striven for, regardless of the cost, as they embody the actual implementation of the Third Generation ideals we set forth. The corrections system set the bar at total execution of Third Generation penological philosophy; now it must meet that goal.











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