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# Prison as Seen by Convict Criminologists

Stephen C. Richards  
*University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh*

Michael Lenza  
*University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh*

Greg Newbold  
*University of Canterbury*

Richard S. Jones  
*Marquette University, richard.jones@marquette.edu*

Daniel S. Murphy  
*Appalachian State University*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Stephen C. Richards, Michael Lenza, Greg Newbold, Richard S. Jones, Daniel S. Murphy, and Robert S. Grisby

## 1.3 Prisons as seen by Convict Criminologists

Stephen C. Richards<sup>1</sup>

Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, USA

Michael Lenza<sup>2</sup>

Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, USA

Greg Newbold<sup>3</sup>

Professor of Criminology at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Richard S. Jones<sup>4</sup>

Associate Professor of Sociology at Marquette University, USA

Daniel S. Murphy<sup>5</sup>

Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Appalachian State University, USA

Robert S. Grisby<sup>6</sup>

Center for Social Justice Policy. USA

### *Abstract*

Most criminologists tend to base their view of prison on ideological assumptions gathered from secondary sources, with at best limited entry to the prison world. They nearly always get it wrong, as they systematically exclude the perspectives and real life experiences of their human subjects. These academic researchers have contributed to poor public policy that promotes the violent repression of prisoners in the USA and other countries. In response, Convict Criminologists are ex-convicts working as criminology and criminal justice professors, along with “non-con” associates, that insist that as a means for societies to develop humane, effective, and cost efficient prisons, we must develop ways to incorporate the voice of prisoners in our theorizing about, policy recommendations for, and management of the prison.

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<sup>1</sup> richarsc@uwosh.edu

<sup>2</sup> lenzam@uwosh.edu

<sup>3</sup> greg.newbold@canterbury.ac.nz

<sup>4</sup> richard.jones@marquette.edu

<sup>5</sup> murphyds@appstate.edu

<sup>6</sup> bobgrigsby@convictcriminology.org

## *Résumé*

La plupart des criminologues tendent à asseoir leur conception de la prison sur des présupposés idéologiques eux-mêmes importés depuis des sources secondaires, et au mieux, depuis des entrées réduites dans le monde carcéral. Ils se trompent presque toujours, parce qu'ils excluent systématiquement le point de vue et les expériences vécues de leurs sujets humains. Ces chercheurs et intellectuels ont contribué à la politique publique de piètre qualité qui prône la répression violente contre les détenus, aux USA et dans d'autres pays. Au contraire, les « détenus criminologues » sont d'anciens détenus qui travaillent en tant que criminologues et professeurs de justice pénale, ainsi qu'avec des partenaires « non détenus », qui sont intransigeants quant à l'idée que pour que des sociétés aient pour but de développer des prisons humaines, efficaces et économiques, il convient de trouver le moyen d'inclure la voix des prisonniers dans le travail de théorisation, dans les propositions de réforme et dans la gestion des prisons.

## *1. Introduction*

This chapter introduces and defines Convict Criminology (CC) and presents our view of prison. The authors are all ex-convicts. We never volunteered to become experts on the prison. Our expertise is the result of over 40 years in prison, combined with extensive academic training that came later. This includes nightmare years inside some of the Western World's most infamous penitentiaries: San Quentin (CA), Stillwater (MN) USP Atlanta (GA), USP Terre Haute (IN), USP Leavenworth (KS), and Jefferson City (MO). Compared to the many academics that write about prison, although they have never spent one night in a jail cell, we tell it like it was and still is today. We make no apologies, as we survived to tell the tale.

In short, Convict Criminologists are tired of the empty pretence that passes for knowledge. We struggle to reconcile what we experienced with the more benign accounts of prison life appearing in most criminology and criminal justice articles and books. Convict Criminologists also point to the misuse of statistics in the development and use of scales for classification and supervision (Richards and Ross, 2003a), the common misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and faulty analytical ideas about 'inmate cultures' and prison violence that have been published, and the general failure to even do research on the positive contributions inmates and inmate organizations have made within prisons and for outside communities. CC also recognizes the contributions prisoners, ex-cons, and prison reformers have made in the development of programming and reform efforts inside and outside the prison.

Prison is the distant country of this 21st century, where people live in cages, doing time confined behind the walls and fences of security perimeters. Since 1970, the total jail and prison population of the United States has increased 10 fold, from approximately 200,000 to over 2.3 million today. By some estimates 70 percent of federal prisoners in the USA are serving time on drug convictions. State prisons are also filled with people serving time for simple possession or small time drug sales. Meanwhile, state prisons are also receiving increasing numbers of men and women convicted of drunk driving and sex offenses.

The public is fascinated by prisons, as well they should given the astronomical rate of incarceration, sooner or later they or their loved ones may be confined as well. We live in a country where nearly anyone, unless they rarely venture beyond their front porch, have a chauffeur, or live in a mansion protected by wealth and lawyers, can be a guest of the state for running afoul of some law. You no longer need to be a 'criminal'. Unfortunately, if somebody in your family experiments with illegal substances has a serious traffic accident, or illegal teenage romance, they may be off to prison for many years. It all depends upon the jurisdiction, and how criminal justice authorities decide to enforce the law.

Today, the USA is being transformed into a convict nation. The American landscape is literally littered with jails, prisons, and correctional facilities of various configurations, built here or there over the last 20 years. We have special prisons for men, women, juveniles, and even separate facilities just for

drug, traffic, and sex offenders. There are so many prisons now a pilot can literally navigate a plane at low altitude across the country at night guided by the high security lighting of correctional institutions and penitentiaries. Nevertheless, the public and naive academics know little about what happens behind the razor wire and fences, inside the walls, where men and women live in absolute peril and quiet desperation, buried alive at the end of the world (see Richards, 2008, Foreword xi-xiv).

## 2. *Defining Convict Criminology*

The origins and history of the 'New School of Convict Criminology' can be found published in a number of venues (see Richards and Ross, 2001; Ross and Richards, 2003; Richards, et al., 2008; Jones, et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2010). Informally organized in 1997 by a small contingent of ex-convict professors and graduate students, CC now includes nearly 200 associated students and scholars, including a large number of "non-con" critical academics and prison reform activists. The first formal appearance of CC in the academic literature soon followed, Jones et al (2010, pp. 155-156) wrote:

In 2001, Richards and Ross published the article 'The New School of Convict Criminology' in the journal *Social Justice*; they discussed the birth and definition of CC and outlined the parameters of the movement and the research perspective. In 2003, they published the edited book *Convict Criminology*, which included chapters written by the founders of the group. The book included a foreword by Todd Clear, a preface by [John] Irwin, eight autobiographical chapters by ex-convict criminologists, and a number of supporting chapters by 'non-con' colleagues who wrote about jail and prison issues. This was the first time ex-convict academics appeared in a book together discussing their own criminal convictions, their time in prison, and their experiences in graduate school and as professors at universities.

These publications, reflecting some earlier books (Irwin, 1970, 1980, 1985; Newbold, 1982, 1989, 1992, 2000; Curry, 1985; McCleary, 1992; Irwin and Austin, 1994; Richards, 1995; Jones and Schmid, 2000, were quickly followed by many more (Ross and Richards, 2002, 2009; Terry, 2003; Irwin, 2005, 2009; Newbold, 2007; Tregga, 2009), and a host of articles on prison, prisoners, and prison reform policies. Only some of the earlier works, before the 2003 publication of *Convict Criminology*, clearly identified the author as an ex-convict.

We define CC (Jones et al. 2009, 152-153) as:

As defined (see Richards and Ross, 2001, p. 180; Ross and Richards, 2003, p. 6), CC represents the work of convicts or ex-

convicts who are in possession of a PhD or on their way to completing one, or enlightened academics and practitioners who contribute to a new conversation about crime and corrections. This is a 'new criminology', led by former prisoners who are now among the ranks of academic faculty. The CC group tends to conduct research that illustrates the experiences of prisoners and ex-cons; attempts to combat the misrepresentations of scholars, the media, and government; and proposes new and less costly strategies that are more humane and effective (Richards and Ross, 2003a, 2003b). The convict scholars are able to do what many previous researchers could not: merge their past with their present and provide a provocative approach to the academic study of their field. The convict perspective is also based on perceptions, experiences, and analytical ideas that originate with defendants and prisoners, which are then developed by critical scholars (Richards and Ross, 2003a, 2003b).

This definition has evolved over the years, as the group added new members, established a reputation in academic circles, and expanded its influence, especially in the USA. The Convict Criminology web site<sup>7</sup>, publications, participation in international criminology conferences, and stories in the mass media (Railey, 2003; St. John, 2003, Van Sant 2003a, 2003b; Barton, 2006; Gieske, 2006) have provided additional credibility, both in the US and globally. Jones et al. wrote (2009, p. 153):

It is now 8 years since Richards and Ross published their essay 'The New School of Convict Criminology' in *Social Justice* (2001) and 6 years since they published their co-edited book *Convict Criminology* (2003). The CC group has been working together to conduct research, present papers at academic conferences, publish their findings in scholarly venues, mentor ex-convicts, and share their real-life experiences in custody and the academy with prison reform groups, criminal justice professionals, and the public at large. Although this group has made significant strides in the field in just a few short years, there is much more work left to be accomplished.

Today, the Convict Criminology Group includes male and female ex-con academics from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, the Netherlands, and France. The United States, which offers the largest prison population in the world, continues to contribute the most members (Jones. et al., 2009, 161).

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<sup>7</sup> Convict Criminology web site: <http://www.convictcriminology.org>

### 3. *What is a convict criminologist?*

The group is not limited to ex-convict students and faculty that research (Richards and Ross, 2003b) or teach in criminology, criminal justice, sociology, and social work. CC may also include ex-cons or 'non-cons' that work outside of academia, including government agencies, private foundations, or community groups. For example, the group includes a number of ex-convicts with PhDs employed by government or private agencies that research or administer criminal justice programs. Although these members may not hold positions at universities, they may teach part-time, write research reports that contribute to academic publications or criminal justice policy and participate on CC panels at ASC, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, or American Correctional Association conferences.

The CC group is composed of active members that are 'out of the closet' as well as inactive ex-con students and professors that prefer to still conceal their criminal background history. Some ex-cons have personal and professional reasons, or a preference to live their lives less public. Nevertheless, they may still participate on occasion, or ask for help when necessary. The group appreciates their support and understands and respects their need or desire for privacy.

Finally, there is a growing group of men and women behind bars that hold advance degrees and publish academic work about crime and corrections. Some of these authors are better published than many professors. A number of them have co-authored books and academic articles with 'free world' academics.

Even working as professors at major universities, we know we are not free. We are damaged goods tainted by the stigma (Goffman, 1963) of projected fears upon us, constraining who and what we can be. Nevertheless, we have chosen to stand and speak through reflexive knowledge to structures of power. Our Convict Criminology perspective is our unique understanding of imprisonment.

By saying unique we do not mean that Convict Criminologists have some special knowledge of how oppressive use of power can define, stigmatize, and constrain social production of self and access to resources for specified social groups. That is something we share with many groups within this nation and around the globe. We all in some sense face constraints of class, gender, race, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation and our own biographies within social structures not of our own making. By unique we mean convicts tend to have experienced a particular context and degree of socially approved and mandated oppression. We have experienced 'degradation ceremonies' (Garfinkel, 1956) which stripped us of our personal human identity and been redefined or categorized as a less than a normal human being. We have experienced the 'total institutions' (Goffman, 1962) that were built to confine and punish us, and upon release from custody we continue to face laws and policies that constrict who and what we are allowed to become, that tend to perpetuate a return to prison while we are stripped of political and social voice.

We have experienced life as objectified other. That is both our bane and our greatest source of a unique knowledge base from which to move forward toward our emancipation (see Richards and Jones, 1997, 2004; Richards, 1998, 2009).

#### 4. *Convicts as objects*

To have been a convict is to have experienced one's life as an object: defined, interpreted, categorized and controlled by the interests of others while they systematically deprived you of your voice. John Irwin addressed the objectification of social reality when he pointed out that "any approach not based firmly on qualitative phenomenological grounds is not only a distortion of the phenomenon, but is also very likely a corruption" (Irwin, 1987, p. 42). Similarly, in Schutz's (1967, pp. 190-191) critique of applying Weber's 'ideal type' to understanding another's behaviour it:

"is only a cross section lifted out of its total factual context. What is thus defined in abstraction as the unity of the other person's act will depend upon the point of view of the observer, which will vary in turn with his interests and his problems. Therefore, the personal ideal type is always determined by the interpreter's point of view. It is a function of the very question it seeks to answer... The illusion consist in regarding the ideal type as a real person, whereas actually it is only a shadow person. It 'lives' in a never-never temporal dimension that no one could ever experience.

These distortions and fabrications of self that we experienced as convicts can awaken within us what Dorothy Smith termed 'bifurcation of consciousness' as individuals and as a social group whose material embodied reality has been systematically objectified by systems or structures of power, we awaken to the diverse forms of oppression under which we live (Smith, 1987, 1990). With these lenses we can see ourselves anew and utilize auto-ethnographical (Jones, 1995, 2003; Jones and Schmid, 2000) and knowledge to shatter our objectification and regain our biographies.

#### 5. *Our view of prison*

Until now, with rare exception, the academic literature discussed *the prison* abstractly, with little attention paid to the views of prisoners. When details were provided, for example, on prison conditions or social groups within the prison, the sources were, according to academic norms, 'ancient' (i.e., Clemmer, 1940; Jacobs, 1977; Sykes, 1958). Other articles on prisons were written without even interviewing or talking with prisoners. This is apparent in most articles on the subject of corrections published in *Criminology*, the field's leading scholarly journal — researchers report their findings based on

secondary data analysis, statistical summaries, or revisiting data collected on the convict social world or prison conditions decades ago. There are very few articles reporting open-ended interviews or conversations with prisoners.

The US prison world is very different from one state to another. Members of the CC group can write with authority about what they observed or experienced in prison in different states, countries, and security levels. The CC group now includes members who have served time in the California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, private prisons, different countries, or the US Federal Bureau of Prisons. As the group grows and more observations are collected, a more complete and relatively current picture of modern prisons begins to emerge (see Irwin, 1970, 1980, 1985, 2005, 2009; Newbold, 1982, 1989, 2007; Jones, 1995, 2003; Jones and Schmid, 2000; Austin and Irwin, 2001; Murphy, 2003, 2004, 2005; Ross and Richards, 2002, 2009; Terry, 2003; Tregoe, 2009). This provides us an opportunity to compare how prison systems are different, or the same, and determine what procedures or programs may have the most promise for humane custody and possible rehabilitation.

Prisons are commonly referred to as 'total institutions' (Goffman, 1962) which are not only paramilitary in terms of the chain of command, but are bureaucratic like big government institutions. A total institution is one in which almost every aspect of an individual's life is provided for and controlled by the organization. This is similar to a monastery, mental hospital, or army, which share many features in common with prison. Within the prison there are two mutually antagonistic groups, the prisoners, who have almost no contact with the outside world, and the staff who supervise them, who get to go home to the real world at the end of each work day. Each interprets the other in terms of stereotypes. Cons see guards as authoritarian and stupid, the hated soldiers guarding prisoners of a foreign army. Guards see cons as untrustworthy, vicious criminal scum.

## *6. An alternative classification*

The official classification of prisoners is designed to separate prisoners into security levels. In comparison, we suggest that an alternative system may prove useful when thinking about different groups of prisoners: amateur, professional, reservation, and political (Richards, 2003, pp. 120-149; Ross and Richards, 2002, pp. 49-56).

Amateurs are persons with only a part-time or occasional involvement with criminal activities. These are men and women, many of them married with families, who held legitimate employment and lived conventional lives before imprisonment. Most federal prisoners convicted of petty property crimes or minor drug offenses are amateurs. Some of them are serving short sentences for minor offenses, such as failure to pay student loans or income tax, social security fraud, or violation of immigration laws. This is the largest group of

prisoners. The longer they stay in prison, however, the more likely they are to learn and assume the ways and means of professional crime.

Professionals are prisoners who, when they lived in the 'free world', had occupational positions that required special training and experience, be it legal or illegal. For example, doctors, lawyers, politicians, corporate personnel, as well as successful drug smugglers, bank robbers, organized criminals, or counterfeiters are professionals. In prison you may find cops, judges, and attorneys, as well as ministers, priests, doctors, dentists, bankers, stock brokers, elected officials, even university professors. One measure of professionalism, whether illicit or legitimate, is the income or fortune derived from employment. Prisons contain numerous individuals that were considered 'pros' because of the resources and assets they retained from either legal or illegal enterprises.

Reservation refers to land reserved for federal uses. All crimes committed on Indian reservations or military property, or within the District of Columbia come under federal jurisdiction. Native American, military, and District of Columbia residents, convicted of crimes on federal property, are considered reservation prisoners. Therefore, the FBOP is home to many Native Americans, military personnel, and D.C. residents, who find themselves incarcerated in distant federal prisons for relatively minor offenses, such as misdemeanours. They usually are serving relatively short sentences compared to the typical federal convict. For example, Native Americans sentenced for drunk driving or petty theft usually spend less than a year in prison and are then released back to the reservation.

### *7. Space and time*

A number of general observations can be made about the conditions of confinement experienced by prisoners. The two variables most important for understanding how prisoners do time are space (prison cells, security and construction features) and time (length of sentence).

Space refers to a three-dimension expanse of width, height, and depth. It may be used to estimate the size of a prison cell or describe how prisoners experience security and construction. Prisoners may be confined in cells alone, or with one or more cellmates. In maximum (e.g., San Quentin State Prison in California) and medium-security prisons (e.g., Racine Correctional Institution in Wisconsin) the cells may range from approximately 40-80 sq. ft. Each cell may have bed (s), combination toilet and sink, and footlockers for personal possessions and possibly a small desk or table and chair. Cells are constructed of cement and steel. They be rooms with concrete walls and steel doors, or cages with bars. In minimum-security prisons prisoners may live dorm style rooms with one or many prisoners. Some of these are dormitories constructed of concrete block with steel security doors with hundreds of prisoners sleeping on bunk beds. The prisoners use communal showers and are locked in at night.

The dramatic increase in the numbers of people incarcerated in the U.S. has created a boom in prison construction. Hundreds of new prisons have and are

being built. These correctional facilities, both urban and rural, range from minimum to super maximum security. Traditionally, minimum security refers to camps with no fences. In comparison, medium-security facilities have heavy razor wire fences, and maximum security both fences and a wall.

Today, even those people who have been convicted of non-violent offenses have been sentenced to longer sentences. Many of these prisoners, some of them serving their first prison sentence, begin serving one to ten year sentences in minimum-security facilities. As prison sentences lengthen, many camps have been fenced in to stem the increasing problem with escapes, called 'walk-a-ways'. Convicts who violate minimum-security regulations are transferred to medium-security.

Medium-security prisons, traditionally known as 'reformatories' (e.g., Kentucky State Reformatory) for young adult prisoners, and referred to as 'gladiator schools' by prisoners, have added security features including double fences, gun towers, and internal control architecture that resembles higher security institutions. The old reformatories, built in the early 1900's, were built to be 'junior penitentiaries' with cellblocks of cages, industrial workshops, and some vocational and educational programmes.

There are two styles of new construction medium-security institutions (Green River Correctional Complex in Kentucky). The first style is built of steel and concrete, with a yard, and separate buildings for administrative offices, factories, recreation and programs, and housing convicts. The housing units are separate buildings, with individual 'pods', which house a few hundred prisoners each, and are usually one or two floors tall. These 'units' organize prisoners into disciplinary steps, with each building representing different levels of privilege. For example, there may be a building for reception and departure (R & D), a unit for new prisoners, and additional units for ascending levels of good behaviour. In addition, each prison may have special cellblocks, called administrative segregation or special housing units (SHU) for disciplinary violators (the hole), protective custody (PC), medical prisoners, gang isolation, or drug therapy. Prisoners are moved from one unit to another as they are evaluated, disciplined, or isolated as decided by the prison administration.

The second style is a cheaper version built with minimal consideration for the daily needs of prisoners. Many states are attempting to save on construction costs by building new medium-security prisons of fabricated steel and concrete, with little stone or brick. The buildings may resemble large farm sheds or large metal pole barns with few windows on a concrete foundation. These penal facilities act as human warehouses (Irwin, 2005), consisting of little more than security perimeters and housing units. The institution may have no recreational yard or gym, factories, or programmes. The prisoners live in vast dormitory style housing units with hundreds of men sleeping on bunk beds, stacked two high, and arranged a few feet apart. Prisoners refer to these hastily constructed institutions as 'bus stops', 'pig pens', or 'dog kennels', because of the chaotic confusion of living for years in huge open dormitories. Many medium security prisoners are transferred to maximum-security institutions for disciplinary infractions.

Maximum-security prisons can be divided into three separate categories, the old 'big house' penitentiaries (e.g., Kentucky State Penitentiary), new generation facilities (e.g., California State Prison, Corcoran), and super maximum institutions (e.g., Wisconsin Secure Program Facility). The big house penitentiaries (e.g., Attica in New York, Jackson in Michigan, Joliet and Statesville in Illinois, Waupun in Wisconsin), many of them built in the late 19th Century or early 20th Century, are fortress like structures, enclosed by walls 30 to 50 feet high, with buildings made of stone, brick, concrete, and steel, containing massive cellblocks, some five tiers high. These ancient prisons are still operating, even as they are supplemented by the construction of modern penitentiaries.

The new generation penitentiaries may appear, from a distance, like factories, except they are enclosed by heavy security fences and gun towers. There are no tall walls. The double or triple chain link perimeter fence is layered with rolls of razor wire, that may have carry an electric current, and include remote sensors, and video cameras to alert the guards of attempted escapes. Inside, these correctional institutions may have a dining hall and 'yard', and limited space designated for convict employment, recreation, or education. The housing units, like the first style of medium security prisons, are pod construction, which is expensive and requires separate structures, each with its own staff offices. Some of these pods may have separate rooms for one or two convicts, each with a metal door, half bath, and communal showers at the end of each tier. Trusty prisoners may have a key to their room. In comparison, disciplinary prisoners may be locked in their rooms and fed meals through the door slot (wicket). Unit construction of concrete block walls and cement floors is generally considered by prisoners to be an improvement over traditional cellblocks of multiple iron cages.

In addition, medium and maximum-security prisons may have special cellblocks, units, or dormitories for prisoners with chronic or acute problems; for example, the elderly, medical or mentally disabled, or sexually deviant. Some prison systems have separate hospital prisons (e.g., FCI Lexington; California Medical Facility) for elderly or medical convicts. Some prisons have entire cellblocks occupied by prisoners who have HIV or AIDS, are mentally retarded or mentally ill, or are homosexual. Nationally, there appears to be a trend to incarcerate homeless and vulnerable populations that local governments no longer want to provide with community medical or mental health services.

Virtually every secure facility has an isolation unit or disciplinary cellblock in which disruptive, difficult to manage, aggressive or escape risk prisoners are kept, sometimes for months or years. Many of these convicts are men who have served many years in prison. Typically, this population represents less than one percent of the total population, many of them prisoners serving long sentences, but can have a major impact on the prison system in general. Within this population is a small subset of prisoners that are the most violent, and difficult to manage, even in the confinements of a secure segregation unit. The management of this relatively small number of prisoners has consumed a

tremendous amount of resources and effort due to their serious potential threat to staff and other prisoners.

States have recently turned to the use of 'Super Max' units or institutions (e.g., Pelican Bay State Prison in California, ADX Florence, USP Marion) to control the most disruptive or potentially troublesome prisoners. The conditions of confinement in these prisons are more restrictive than death row. Super max prisons have no educational or vocational programmes, with prisoners provided only limited visiting time with family, phone communication, access to law library, and confined for the duration of their stay in austere 60-80 square foot cells. These are lock down facilities, with no convict movement, where prisoners are kept locked in their cells 23-24 hours a day. Inside these dungeons prisoners are kept as 'isolated animals' subject to severe sensory deprivation. The convicts are expected to deteriorate over time, be systematically broken, and in the end, surrender what secrets they may know to prosecutors, become informers, or simply moderate their resistance to imprisonment, or have mental breakdowns.

#### *8. Time: Length of sentence*

Prison is the 'fourth world', a society that is not developed, developing, or undeveloped, but instead contains people in an artificial environment. It is a one gender community where prisoners 'do time'. Time is the fourth dimension. In all prison classification systems, the time to be served, not the crime committed, is the most important factor for deciding where a person will be housed; maximum, medium, or minimum-security.

The first lesson a new prisoner learns is that s/he must do distinct stretches of time differently. Depending upon the length of sentence, and the security level, the prisoner must modify his or her demeanour and daily behaviour, and adapt to the specific cultural requirement of each institution. As they are moved from one security level to another prisoners experience dramatic changes in administrative rules, regulations, attitudes toward prisoners, and operational procedures. The convict code, culture, and prisoner attitude toward prison staff changes according.

#### *9. Conclusion: The conditions of prisons and prisoners*

Prisoners in the United States may be held in county jails, state prisons or, federal facilities. County jails are used primarily to hold defendants during court proceedings and those who have been sentenced to a period of less than a year. State prisons usually house people who have been found guilty of state felonies and are sentenced to prison to serve a year or more. Federal prisons incarcerate persons found guilty of violating federal or military law. State prisons are also sometimes referred to as penitentiaries, correctional institutions, reformatories, detention centres, or work camps. Prison size varies greatly, ranging from 'big house' or 'mainline' penitentiaries that incarcerate

several thousand convicts to minimum-security camps with a few hundred men or women. California and Texas operate the largest state prison systems.

Most correctional systems are overcrowded. As a result, their prisons currently hold more men or women than their legal population capacities allow. In such institutions, prisons officials often double bunk cells, move four prisoners into two person rooms, or install beds or simply lay mattresses on the floor along cell block corridors or hall ways. They also turn recreational and programme space into ad hoc dormitories with beds placed in gymnasiums and classrooms. In some prisons, with the hallways lined with beds, there may be no space for prisoners to exercise indoors or participate in education, vocational training, counselling, or pre-release programmes.

Over the past century, horrific prison conditions have existed in our nation's prisons. Despite federal court intervention, allegations of prisoner abuse continue. Prisoners may suffer physical violence, psychological trauma, and medical neglect (Murphy, 2002, 2004, 2005). Over the years many of these prisons have been the scene of riots and uprising, for example California's Folsom Penitentiary, (1927 and 2002), New York's Attica Penitentiary, (1971), and Michigan's Jackson Penitentiary, (1953 and 1983), the West Virginia Penitentiary (1986) the New Mexico State Prison (1993), and the Lucasville Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (1993). Despite the new designs and correctional philosophies the violence continues unabated.

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