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REHABILITATION OR RECIDIVISM: AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INCARCERATION ISSUES THAT HINDER INMATE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

In many incarceration facilities around the country, inmates are presented with a number of environmental issues that ultimately hinder their ability to accomplish rehabilitation. Some of these issues are indirectly created by the institution, while others come as a result of the inmate subculture. Furthermore, the presence of one or more of these themes often has a direct and increasing effect on many others. The recognition of these occurrences is important, because it is our family and friends who are searching for clarity behind bars.

This final program project centers on an examination of these themes as they are experienced by those who have lived through incarceration firsthand. More specifically, these topics are identified and analyzed as they are recounted by literary autobiographical authors and me. In doing so, I am able to recognize what rehabilitative measures have proven successful in the process. Through an interview conducted by myself, with a local incarceration official, I am able to receive an alternate perspective into the surfacing of such issues. Literary analysis, personal reflection, and interview acknowledgement will become helpful as I later formulate recommendations to implement for the future.
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INTRODUCTION

We are all human. This is a fact of life that we are continually reminded of as we age. Perhaps this statement was created to remind us of the humbling truths that we are equally prone to imperfection as well. And that no individual will achieve the ultimate good in every particular course of action. Often, we must make important mistakes in order to grow, but hopefully we are also assisted by those who have the insight to place us back on the right path. Our entire cognitive and emotional development is dependent on this. From an early age, most of us are given proper instruction on how to recognize self-destructive attitudes and behaviors through the guidance of family, friends, and peers. We become mentally and emotionally nurtured and sustained.

From childhood to adulthood, I have been taught the essence of our modern social paradigm, which is that while some deviant behavior is acceptable and expected, the most serious infractions carry serious criminal consequence. As a result, there are institutions set in place to remand the individual for a given period of time. And while popular culture has led us to believe that such places exist for the benefit of the offender and society, in correcting his or her deviant behavior, the truth is that many facilities lack the adequate resources to effectively treat a growing inmate population. Furthermore, many offenders enter the system with weighing psychological and emotional baggage, which only seems to compound the problem. It is my belief that if these institutional issues were more thoroughly recognized and addressed, we may begin to take on a greater responsibility and place more value in rehabilitating the offender.
I am choosing to center my final program project on the American Correctional Institutions as they exist today, particularly in their ability or inability to rehabilitate the offender. Through my own experiences of incarceration, I have witnessed many issues that make such a reality a near impossibility. My recognition and understanding of such concerns were further validated through my reading of Jimmy Santiago Baca’s autobiography entitled *A Place to Stand*, in which he thoroughly discusses his struggles with criminalization and incarceration. I was later introduced to a number of other writers whose autobiographical accounts detailed much of the same occurrences.

In chapter one, I will analyze a number of these themes as they exist in many of today’s correctional institutions, which are expressed and documented through the literature of a number of autobiographical authors. In doing so, I may also demonstrate how each may consequently affect a number of other themes, thus compounding the greater problem of inmate rehabilitation as a whole. In chapter two, I will attempt to recount my own detailed incarceration experiences as they relate to such themes expressed through the previous chapter. By relating my experiences with those of the autobiographical authors, I will gain a better understanding as to how and why such institutions failed me and the steps I may begin taking in order to become an advocate for those facing the same situation. Chapter three is a transcription of an interview conducted by myself with a person knowledgeable in the area of American Corrections. The particular questions posed were drawn from analysis and conclusions expressed in the former chapters, in order to assess how such themes are being evaluated and addressed by professionals and officials of such institutions. In chapter four, I will draw on much of the evaluated material expressed throughout the previous three chapters in order to make
suggestions for future possibilities in implementation for many of today’s correctional institutions. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of what has been discussed throughout while expressing how I plan to utilize the knowledge I have gained to enlighten others.
CHAPTER 1

Monotony

I believe it is fair to state that every successful treatment program shares a commonality of recognizing a beneficial objective for its members and then following such by a meaningful and efficient course of action. Yet, perhaps the most thoroughly documented issue shared among the autobiographical authors I have chosen to review, is the lack of meaningful stimulus his respective institution has failed to provide. What occurs instead are incarceration accounts of daily repetitive cycles filled with tedious and trivial activity. Many Americans today still harness a mentality of “tough on crime” and place value on punishment above everything else, which most definitely carries over to the mindsets of many administrators and staff members. Nevertheless, most may not be aware of the damaging physical, emotional, and psychological effects such a livelihood has on the offender. Through my readings, I was introduced to a prisoner of Illinois’ Statesville Prison, by the name of Sam Gutierrez. While thoroughly documenting a typical day, primarily filled by sleep, television, and socializing, he states that prison is a mental struggle above anything else. “Prison life is really nothing like what the press, television, and movies suggest. Boredom, time-slowing boredom, interrupted by occasional burst of fear and anger, is the governing reality of life in prison (Morris & Rothman 228). He later goes on to mention that his involvement in the rudimentary computer course offered through the prison primarily serves to alleviate this internal conflict above anything else.
While reading a collection of prison memoirs entitled *Undoing Time*, I was introduced to a fellow prisoner from a Nevada State Prison in Ely, Nevada in which he equally states that, “the monotony could kill you, what’s worse, you wish it would. That is the hard time when you want out so bad it’s hard to breathe and your heart beats fast and your temperature rises. Then you have to get a hold of yourself and calm down and try to put your mind at ease” (Evans 17-18). Such a statement helps to shed light on how inmates like Mr. Gutierrez become motivated to join offered programs for reasons other than rehabilitation. Nevertheless, I feel it may be reasonable to assume that for those who do not have such constructive outlets available, he or she may begin to transcend such anxieties into avenues of frustration and aggression.

For obvious reasons, the effects brought on by the presence of monotony in the incarceration setting cannot be overlooked. Yet, there seems to be an additional consequence brought on by the institution’s inability to create a thoroughly stimulating and productive environment for the offender. This became evident to me after reading Jimmy Santiago Baca’s autobiography entitled *A Place to Stand*. While incarcerated in a local San Diego Jail with his roommate Marcos, the two were offered virtually no productive stimulation. As a result, they attempted to alleviate their own boredom through the few means available to them. He states that, “We spent most of our time in an open common area with five stainless-steel tables where we ate, played checkers, dominos, cards, sat smoking, and shot the breeze” (Baca 54). And without any further authoritative influence to intervene, Baca utilized the remaining time to educate Marcos as to the dynamics of jail culture, thus furthering both of their criminalization. Even Baca himself learned how to become a more refined drug dealer and distributor with the help
of another inmate. Thus, what begins to emerge is an opportunity at seeing how such institutional inadequacies directly affect the inmate’s cognitive and emotional attitudes and decisions, which consequently carries over to the inmate social network of deviance.

**Drug Use**

Drug use in many of today’s facilities seems to be a prevalent occurrence and obstructs effort put forth by its administration and staff in attempting to rehabilitate the offender. Monotony, created through the system’s daily routines, may very well open up the inmate to avenues of recreational use as a result of boredom, anxiety, or whatever the psychological affliction. In Baca’s San Diego Jail experience, the inmate who trained Baca about drug trafficking equally engaged in recreational use while incarcerated as a means of passing the time (Baca 55). In Jeff Henderson’s autobiography entitled *Cooked*, in which he coincidently spends a number of years incarcerated for drug distribution, he too recognizes that many inmates initiate or continue recreational drug use as a means of leisure activity. He states that, “In prison, everybody had an angle, a way of making the time pass. Everyone did their time their own way. Some guys were into drugs, some guys were into guys, some guys gambled, played basketball, reminisced about the streets” (Henderson 113). In adding to this, Sam Gutierrez equally documents this phenomenon by stating that “drugs, all drugs, are readily available at about twice their street price, payable inside or outside the prison” and that “I am told, drugs are available in every large prison and jail (Morris & Rothman 236). My point in all this is to conclude that many of these correctional administrators, through the implementation of daily protocol that fosters little or no value in providing rehabilitatiING acting activity, may be directly or indirectly creating a stagnant and sustaining atmosphere for inmate growth while
consequently helping to create an epidemic of inmate economic prosperity through such opportunity.

And if abusing illegal drugs were not appalling enough, both Baca and Carl Coppolino, whose autobiography is entitled The Crime that Never Was, reveal that prescription drug use as well has become an issue in recent decades. This includes medication that has been prescribed by the facility’s healthcare professionals. For Baca, his experiences of such came during his incarceration in Florence State Prison in which a number of inmates were purposefully given mind and mood altering drugs to create for them a sense of lethargy and conformity in a system dominated by authoritative and abusive administrators. Such incidences also help to reveal another occurring issue that will be discussed later, but for now it further serves to indicate how an inmate may become introduced to such usage, and how it may become a difficult habit for the system to help treat later down the road. In Dr. Coppolino’s entries, he indicates that a group of fellow inmates are abusing their medications purposefully in order to sustain a sense of euphoria. He writes, “We went into the day room and Georgia Boy explained to me how the men took Dilatin, Darvon, Librium, and practically any and all medications. They crushed it, put it into a barrel of a syringe, added tap water, shook it until the material dissolved, and then shot the mixture into their veins” (Coppolino 68). And like the situation revealed by Baca, Coppolino too acknowledged the improper monitoring of such usage by both staff and healthcare professionals. He was a trained medical physician and knew how to recognize potential abuse.

Given the severity of drugs and drug usage in many of today’s correctional facilities, which may contribute to the inmate’s inability to initiate a sense of control to
rehabilitate while incarcerated, it may be reasonable to suggest that a sufficient drug program may become the starting point for any institution looking to move forward in providing treatment. Yet, through the memoirs of a particular inmate of San Quentin Prison in Undoing Time, I learned that even for many inmates who desire a drug and alcohol recovery, the system may very well not be financially equipped to handle such issues. The inmate states on behalf of his cellmate, “the second time he was caught, he asked for help and was offered a program, but only if he could pay 30 percent. But he was unable to pay, so the program was out. The third time he was caught, the county revoked his probation and sentenced him to prison. He did his time at another penitentiary and attended some Narcotics Anonymous classes until the instructor found a night-teaching job that paid better” (Evans 90). Logically, one looking on the outside in could assume that once the offender became placed into the system as a result of his drug problem, the institution then took on a responsibility to protect his well-being, but the reality is that it only fulfilled part of its obligation. In this man’s case, like so many other inmates who fall into incarceration due in part to his or her socio-economic hardships, he was not able to help himself without intervention. My point here is to again show how many institutions are compounding the occurrence of incarceration drug usage, but here it can be attributed to a recognizable and feasible variable. In essence, such institutions are placing such issues onto the proverbial backburner and hoping that the issue somehow resolves itself. Yet, from my readings of a number of writers, there are far too many drug users in today’s institutions to ignore. The irony here is that the more the institution prolongs acknowledging and solving the issue, the greater the problem of incarcerated
drug users becomes, and the fewer the amount of resources the system has at fully eliminating the issue.

As I become familiar with the intricacies of incarceration culture, I am quickly learning that much like on the outside of incarceration, money motivates and dictates nearly all movement. It is a phenomenon I will soon refer to as incarceration economy. What is important here is its strong relationship with incarceration drug usage. And as Sam Gutierrez explains, the drug trade is alive and thrives at a substantial price, which many are obviously taking advantage of. In his autobiography entitled *Convicted in the Womb*, Carl Upchurch explains that while serving time in a number of maximum security prisons he “had always been involved in the prison drug trade, for example, and I got a cut of every load of drugs. Drugs were smuggled into prison by several different methods. Lots of guards were involved” (Upchurch 105). Again, what is evident is the existence of staff abuse. Nevertheless, what is important here is that given what I have already revealed regarding a number of issues which essentially undermine rehabilitation in the incarceration setting, many inmates easily come to a decision to engage in illicit money-making operations as a means of thriving. In other words, I can comprehend how such an opportunity may seem tempting, especially for those who are left with a troubled state of mind and no effective guidance to correct personal vice. And for inmates such as Upchurch, who explains how he would enter other inmate’s cells in order to abuse them and steal their drug supply (Upchurch 74), such an engagement essentially strengthens personal aggression and violent tendencies. It is yet another example of how one particular theme has direct relation with another in regard to inmate rehabilitation. What may be occurring in the mind of the inmate is that by partaking in such enterprises, he or
she is compensating for a lost sense of purpose that such a facility may not be treating
due to its inability to recognize and treat abuses and the offender as a holistic and worthy
being. Regardless, it would seem ideal that both the dealer and the user need to be
acknowledged psychologically and emotionally.

**Poor Incarceration Conditions**

Psychologist Abraham Maslow once developed a theoretical human development
chart famously known as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Essentially, the chart suggests
that in order for a human to become self-actualized, he or she must first secure certain
basic needs in a successive and progressive fashion. Accomplishing self-actualization
equates or matches well with the idea of rehabilitation, in that the person or inmate seeks
to become the ideal self for the benefit of his fellow man. Yet, he or she cannot fully do
so if his or her incarceration facility is not adequately providing the necessities needed to
transcend. And while reading the autobiographies and memoirs I have mentioned so far,
this is most certainly the case in many of today’s correctional institutions. Sadly, the
rising incarceration population over the last thirty to forty years, beginning from the
1970’s onward, has forced many institutions to resort to fitting two to three inmates
together in minimal spaced cells while simultaneously stretching sustained budget dollars
here and elsewhere throughout their respective facility (Morris & Rothman 236-237).
Furthermore, the rate of facilities being built is devastatingly disproportional to the
amount of inmates that are being remanded and sentenced through the criminal justice
system. As a result, many current and incoming inmates have to suffer through grotesque
and deteriorating living conditions on a day to day basis. In reviewing Baca’s relative
experience, he once stated that while locked up in a Yuma County Jail, “the rusting bunk
was anchored to a shit-smeared wall, and the putrid commode was barely attached to the wall with rotten bolts. Every time someone in another cell flushed the toilet, particles of sewage bubbled up from my commode and puddled on the floor” (Baca 96). For any sensible individual, he or she would most likely spend a great majority of his or her effort here focused on avoiding such diseases as hepatitis e coli rather than utilizing the time in rehabilitative contemplation or learning. Thus, it is easy to rationalize how such environments are sometimes more harmful than constructive. And one may have more to lose than his or her physical health. In Dr. Coppolino’s autobiography, he too attests to the sub-par conditions of his particular holding unit. Even the superintendent of his building recognizes the dangers of such living arrangements, in which he states to Coppolino that, “anybody who spends any length of time living or rather existing under these conditions becomes mentally ill. The logical processes of the mind become disorganized” (Coppolino 60). In assessing this statement, I believe the official is not necessarily stating that incarceration itself causes mental problems, but that living under the pressures of dire and unspeakable circumstances created by the facility does. And perhaps he expressed it perfectly by utilizing the word exist rather than live or thrive.

Nourishment is another important element when attempting to accomplish self-transcendence or rehabilitation. Yet again, it seems that many institutions are equally unable to adequately provide this as well. Jeff Henderson may agree. As a prison chef, he was able to become familiar with the kitchen facility and explains that a substantial amount of the wholesome prepared food is never offered to the general population due to being used by inmates or corrupt guards as a means of barter (Henderson 140-143). Instead, what is mostly being served is ill-prepared and often unidentifiable food, which
consequently leads many to compensate by selecting overly saturated preservative snacks through their respective canteens on a weekly basis. Even Dr. Coppolino describes the consequences of living under a prison diet by stating that, “because of the vile food and my constant state of anxiety, I began to lose weight rapidly. Many men suffered from influenza and developed high fevers. This was due to their undernourishment and lack of resistance” (Coppolino 76). And whether it is created through the ignorance or neglect of prison administration, and sustained by the existence of a thriving incarceration economy, the issue of inadequate daily sustenance during incarceration cannot be understated. Numerous scientific studies have validated a direct correlation between adequate nutrition and psychical, emotional, and cognitive stability and growth.

In regard to the issue of incarceration housing and overcrowding, both Baca and Gutierrez have attested to the additional consequences which follow being forced to share close proximity with another offender, over a substantial amount of time. In A Place to Stand, the former is essentially forced into a scenario of demonstrating violence, as a result of his enclosed shared living arrangements. He explains that this was done out of survival. Yet, he made every effort to avoid being placed too close to another inmate altogether. In other words, the reader comes to recognize Baca as essentially being a kind and caring individual, but as a survivor he is willing to do what is needed of him in order to maintain his livelihood. And for the latter, he expresses in detail how he is well aware of a similar possibility between himself and his cellmate Tyrone by stating, “We have not yet had an argument that leads to a fight, even a shouting match, but we live so close that someday that will happen and we will probably end up in the hole, hating one another” (Morris & Rothman 235). My point here is to express the dangers overcrowding may
have on the inmate’s health and rehabilitation. When two offenders are enclosed together and share every bit of sound, smell, and sight, their patience flares and tensions rise. Little growth can occur. Furthermore, such examples serve to communicate how this particular theme encourages and affects the theme of inmate aggression and brutality, which will soon be discussed.

**Inadequate Health Maintenance**

In following with Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, each striving individual needs to have reliable access to quality healthcare in order to continue along the path toward growth or rehabilitation. And for most of us who live outside the walls of incarceration, we have such options. We are not restricted in choosing where we would like to receive treatment and we are always encouraged to select the healthcare provider that works best for us. Furthermore, if we happen to receive poor or careless treatment, we are entitled to a certain amount of compensation through various agencies that represent our interests and well-being. Yet, for many who are faced with incarceration in American facilities, such options and routes of compensation are non-existent. And what makes matters worse, is that many institutions are equally staffed with healthcare providers and administrators who are not only careless, but are counter-productive through their corruptive behaviors. Much of Dr. Coppolino’s autobiography explores the nature of healthcare in the prison setting. At one particular stage of his incarceration, he recalls that it had taken him around twelve days from the time of his arrival in Railford State Prison to receive any sort of examination for his chronic heart condition (Coppolino 30-45). In relation to this occurrence, he mentions that given the high-profile nature of his trial and case, he was purposely neglected through the booking and transitioning process.
A fellow inmate states to him that, “I heard the hacks talking about you. They’ve been talking all day about getting their hands on you. They figure to make things tough for you like tear you a new asshole” (Coppolino 33). Clearly, such actions may have dire consequences for many offenders in regard to both his and her immediate and long-term health. Jimmy Baca may strongly agree. He too has witnessed similar corruption. In the summer of 1977, while incarcerated in Florence State Prison, his cellmate suffered from extreme intestinal difficulties in which he had to continually hold his bowels in place with a dirty cloth. Yet, Baca states that, “He wasn’t in the infirmary because the prison doctor didn’t think so” (Baca 217-218). Thus, the ignorance of this particular healthcare provider was at blame. The inmate later died as a result of the negligence.

Inmate ignorance is another aspect of inadequate inmate health maintenance. As nearly every autobiographical author states at one point, many inmates are functionally illiterate, which carries great consequence in relation to medical prescription and with being directed on how and when to use it. In addition, the inmate and inmate population may not be educated enough to recognize a serious health concern when it actually occurs. In turn, the inmate(s) are more likely to adhere to the corrupt instructions and guidance of these particular healthcare officials, as well as be less likely to file any sort of appeal that may have direct effect on his or her well-being, from a medical standpoint. Dr. Coppolino gives great example, in an opposing way, in that he was fortunately competent and able to recognize being or having been misdiagnosed and prescribed (Coppolino 45). As a trained physician, he essentially became his own advocate and consultant when no one else was. He quickly stopped taking the medication, Peritrate, and began taking another inmate’s epilepsy medication, which stopped him from having
a heart attack long enough to seek an outside opinion through the help of his legal
defense (Coppolino 66). Nevertheless, I believe many inmates are not as educationally
fortunate. I believe my point here would be to indicate how important a role the facility
has in hiring healthcare providers that are adamant about adhering to a standard of
integrity. The inmate should be given instruction on how to recognize an issue, especially
when it comes to medication, and encouraged to follow up without the threat of
retribution.

A second factor that may reveal the inmate’s inadequate health maintenance
during incarceration may be due to person neglect. This may not be a result of ignorance,
but out of a sense of pride in relation to the incarceration culture. In other words, he or
she may decide to forgo any needed medical attention or treatment due to appearing weak
by other inmates. As I will later express, incarceration culture often values toughness.
And Baca is once again helpful in shedding light on my observation, which he does
through a particular inmate named Wedo, who is stabbed in the foot by another inmate.
“One of them slipped a toothbrush from his towel and ran the bristles up the pads of
Wedo’s bare feet. Blood gushed from Wedo’s feet. He got up, wedged his face between
the bars, and yelled: I’ll show you how it’s done, punks! Grinning, he said; Ain’t nothing
meatball, and he sat down, tore his sheet in strips, and wrapped his feet” (Baca 113). In
assessing such a scenario, it would seem logical to assume that Wedo is indeed in pain.
But regardless, it serves his well-being in a greater fashion to endure the pain and express
to his perpetrators that he is mentally and emotionally prepared to handle any harm that is
thrown his way. Essentially, it is just as much a test of spirit as it is a physical assault. By
showing his assailants that he can treat himself instead of receiving medical treatment, he
is demonstrating his resilience, independence, and will to survive in such an atmosphere. In other words, he is not one to be dominated and possessed.

Given a number of possible explanations that may keep the inmate offender from receiving adequate healthcare maintenance, and thus, a meaningful and effective rehabilitation, perhaps none is more evident than the issue surrounding the incompetency of the healthcare staff itself. In returning to a primary literary source, it took an injunction granted through the state courts for Coppolino to be properly diagnosed as having congestive heart failure from a thoroughly trained University of Florida specialist. And even when subpoenaed by such courts to discuss why he had chosen to taken such brief course of action, the misdiagnosing prison physician stated that Coppolino “had a cardiac problem by history, not by physical examination, despite the preponderous amount of evidence to the contrary” (Coppolino 112-113). Thus, the doctor was holding on to a notion of incompetency, over the possibility of neglect or anything else. And as Coppolino mentions earlier in his book, “Every day I would hear of stories about convicts poorly treated, not treated, misdiagnosed, and dying. It was a chamber of horrors. Any minute could have been my last” (Coppolino 76). What the reader must again keep in mind is that due to the incarceration boom of the 1970’s, a great financial crisis has begun to erupt in regard to the allocation of resources for the benefit of the inmate offender. “It is often difficult to attract competent medical staff to work in prisons, salaries tend to be lower, and inmates tend to be difficult litigious patients” (Morris & Rothman 250). My goal is to continue to evaluate a few of the themes that have direct effect to this particular one and conclude what may be done to alleviate the pressures of a system that is already in financial ruins.
Incarceration Economy

Living in a heavily capitalistic society, many of us are encouraged from an early age to value and strive toward economic success. Indeed, we often go to great lengths in doing so, sacrificing our health and our morals in the process. I believe this is equally true for many who are incarcerated in today’s correctional institutions. It would appear that many enter through the system by violating laws that serve to increase their financial situation to begin with. Of course, I am referring to crimes such as robbery, theft, or drug distribution. Thus, these individuals carry the same monetary ambitions as nearly anyone else on the outside.

Incarceration that emphasizes rehabilitation should ideally encourage an environment that introduces and corrects the offender’s understanding of integrity or the principles surrounding attempts to acquire economic prosperity. Yet, due to a number of existing themes, such as monotony, staff and administrative abuse, and sustaining drug use of many offenders, many facilities consequently encourage the inmate to continue his or her involvement in criminal capitalistic enterprise during confinement. These institutions often offer little in terms of treatment while equally providing the offender with opportunities necessary to continue and expand his or her illegal money making skills.

Through the autobiographies of Baca and Henderson, the reader is able to observe how facilities create such opportunities. In regard to the former, I have already expressed how the presence of monotony allowed Baca’s cellmate in the San Diego Jail to continue his drug distribution ring via phone conferring. Furthermore, Baca never once mentions
the existence of staff supervision in monitoring activity as it occurs. As a result, he was further able to expand his own criminal knowledge without the threat of administrative punishment. And as he transitioned to the federal prison setting, he was open to detailing how the further lack of supervision, staff and administrative corruption, and heavy presence of violent and aggressive behavior, created a capitalistic market whereby new inmates had to pay a protection fee to other inmates in order to avoid harm (Baca 113). The latter writer details a similar scenario in which he mentions that the Jews working in the facility kitchen “paid off some of the black shot callers with special food so no harm would come to them” (Henderson 138). Thus, a barter system involving goods is in play as well. And by preying on the weak and physically vulnerable, the dominant inmates have assured themselves a steady clientele based on extortion and intimidation. But regardless of which side the offender resides on, the fact remains that a great number of inmates become engulfed and preoccupied in emotions which ultimately hinder him or her from an opportunity to seek meaningful personal growth.

For many who are unfamiliar with the incarceration culture within today’s American correctional facilities, he or she may assume that such circumstances and occurrences are few and far between and that such issues are easily resolved rather quickly and efficiently. I say this because this would have been my assumption prior to doing my research. Nevertheless, given the number of examples detailed by the literary authors I have chosen to examine, clandestine criminal activity within the incarceration setting is an issue that deserves much needed attention. While incarcerated in Florence State Prison, Baca states that, “beneath the everyday routine of prison life, this secret system operated through the intricate network of homeboys, messengers, porters, trusties,
and corrupt guards. Macaron said the system could be used to your advantage, but also warned that a twenty-dollar bribe or a bottle cap of heroin residue was enough of a pay-off that some cons and guards would do anything, even kill or set you up. It works both ways, he said, and you always have to be aware of it” (Baca 117). What I find most important here, in relation to the inmate’s ability to receive rehabilitation while incarcerated, is that so many are willing to become involved and compromise their personal integrity for such little gain that creates more bodily and emotional harm in the long run, such as an increased drug habit or greed itself. Thus, it is a phenomenon that many inmates are blinded by, which is why effective treatment programs are needed more than ever.

During his incarceration in prison, Upchurch gives even deeper insight into the confusion and mania of such a mentality by stating that, “he was contemptuous of the straight-arrows who just wanted to do their time and get out, refusing to participate in the stealing and the drug scene” (Upchurch 76). And by recognizing this statement, I am also concluding that this aspect of incarceration culture has such an impact on a significant portion of the inmate population, in terms of breadth and scope that those who are at the opposing end or seek change in their ways, essentially become more vulnerable. During Baca’s prison incarceration, he experienced times of anxiety and stress as a result of his non-conformity to assimilate with this mentality, such as failing to take part in an attempt to assassinate a fellow inmate for person gain (Baca 127-129). Consequently, he felt the pressure of a Mexican gang at many stages during his sentence that very well could have led to his demise. And as he mentions through this particular struggle, all who are incarcerated must take extra precaution when considering how easily he or she can
quickly become the target of a hit for hire as well. My point here is to assess that such facilities must be equipped to advocate for these inmates who are willing to initiate and sustain change for themselves and others, but are too afraid to take action out of fear of retaliation. Surely, this theme has a direct impact on rehabilitation and its relationship in motivating and directing the offender’s thoughts and behaviors.

**Gangs**

Perhaps the most thoroughly expressed theme documented by the literary authors I have chosen to review, is the wide existence of incarceration gangs. These groupings tend to be classified more by racial affiliation than anything else. Furthermore, they serve as a catalyst to many of the surrounding issues I discuss. By doing so, they deeply affect the inmate’s desires and ability to become rehabilitated.

In *Cooked*, Jeff Henderson discusses his transition into California’s infamous Terminal Island Prison by stating that, “Everyone was segregated by race—blacks with blacks, whites with whites, latinos with latinos” (Henderson 103). And by deciding to become part of such a group, the individual is able to identify and share common cultural and ethnic values. Thus, he or she is given a sense of personal and social identity in an environment that may seem both foreign and unnerving. Yet, I am equally aware of the possibility of the individual developing a sense of closed mindedness and bias, in relation to another group’s values. This may occur if the individual becomes strictly involved in his or her respective group, while failing to surround oneself with diversity, along with prolonged attempts at weighing the benefits of other’s points of view.
In Carl Upchurch’s autobiography, he explains that, “There is a historical pattern to gang involvement. Young men who grow up in poor urban areas with families who are often unstable or broken by abandonment or death look for alternative sources of identity, nourishment, and security” (Upchurch 33). Such a statement applies to the originating Hispanic prison gang Neta, who formed in the 1970’s in order to allow its members the chance to feel a sense of communal bonding while facing incarceration (People against Prison Abuse). Yet, what must not be underemphasized is that although such an institutional formation serves an important emotional and psychological function for its members, each individual with his or her criminal instability is still dealing with a lost sense of cognitive direction. Thus, the downfall for many of these groupings is that they tend to effectively spread false ideologies that are not rooted in moral principle. And given what I have already shown, the environment of many such facilities makes these occurrences even easier to carry out. In Upchruch’s particular case, his initiation into prison gang life gave him the opportunity to create new friendships, but equally provided the opportunity to further his mentality to fight, steal, and utilize his time ineffectively. Nevertheless, he was later able to make a rehabilitative breakthrough through the means of education.

As I have previously mentioned, the existence of the incarceration economy often has consequences for many of the inmates serving time, especially those who may appear vulnerable. These occurrences have a direct connection with the continued existence of incarceration gangs, according to observations made by Sam Gutierrez. He states in his writings that, “Unless you are very strong or influential, or for one reason it has been decided to leave you alone, you have to belong to a gang or be under their protection”
(Morris & Rothman 235). Such pressures negatively influence the inmate’s motivations and behaviors. He or she may have the aspirations to rehabilitate while serving time, but consequential affiliation with a gang based out of a safety necessity may cause him or her to be coerced into contributing to the organizations unruly objectives. With Henderson’s introduction to the Nation of Islam in prison, whose principles he found powerfully influential, he learned to take a passive discontentment toward the Caucasian race into a sense of genuine hatred. After watching a motivational tape of Louis Farrakhan, he states that, “A white jury gave me nineteen and a half; the white man brought drugs into the country, the white man enslaved us; the white man systematically mixed his blood with the black man. At the end of the tape, I was moved. My thinking began to broaden” (Henderson 119). Luckily, he was able to revert his thinking through educative thought as well. Yet, he gives example to what I am attempting to demonstrate. Furthermore, what I would also like to point out is that the founding principles of Neta were initially rooted in violence prevention, but seemed to change direction over time (People against Prison Abuse). Rationally, something occurred to strip the organization of its values, while influencing members to become involved in corruption. Whatever the reasons the inmate decides to join an incarceration gang, the reality exists that at some point in his or her membership, he or she has the likelihood of becoming engulfed in a mentality of hate and immorality.

In addition to the statement made earlier by Sam Gutierrez, there are a number of other writers who also believe that much of today’s incarceration drug use and activity can be directly attributed to gangs. For instance, “Some speculate that a large percentage of drug dealing in East Los Angeles is controlled within prison walls by the Mexican
Mafia” (People against Prison Abuse). Such facilities that presently recognize a significant amount of gang activity may find value in gathering an empirical data correlation between these two, in order to assess the value of a particular treatment program, in terms of resource allocation. In other words, the aim may help to clarify how the particular institution may begin to treat the problem, whether through primary attempts at eradicating drug usage itself or through an initial focus at the breakdown of the organizations. The same sort of analysis may also apply when considering the relation between gangs and incarceration violence and aggression. As one writer states, “The gangs influence who moves safely in the prison and who gets into trouble with the prison authorities since they influence a great deal of life in prison” (Morris & Rothman 236). Such an observation holds merit when considering Baca’s particular standoff with the Mexican Gang Le Eme, who after giving up the plot to an assassination attempt, was caught in a struggle between receiving educational privileges and preserving his life. To survive, he had little option but to give in to acts of self-defense by fighting, which he took great efforts to avoid in the first place (Baca 129). With this, the facility must be adequately resourced in order to protect inmates who feel powerless against coercion, especially when it jeopardizes personal growth and development.

**Emotional Difficulties of the Incarcerated**

It may be said that as human beings, we are continuously driven by the emotions we create as a response to outside stimuli. If we are positively reinforced, we may find it easier to become motivated and strive toward success. We may be more inclined to handle challenges or adversity that comes along with any particular task or goal. On the other hand, if one’s respective environment creates situations of despair, his or her mood
may be affected to an extent in which he or she finds it difficult to achieve essentially anything. Of course, every individual’s environmental conditions and affective inclinations are different, but the basic principles hold true. And for most of us who are living on the outside of incarceration, we are fortunate enough to fall into the first categorization for the most part. As I mentioned in the introduction, many of us are lovingly directed through the help and encouragement of loved ones along our journeys of growth and development. I am not suggesting that most inmates locked up in today’s American correctional facilities are experiencing such issues, but given the themes I have already detailed and others I have not yet mentioned, I state that a significant number may find it personally difficult to move forward emotionally in rehabilitation, even if the cognitive awareness is set in place.

What further complicates this scenario is the fact that many living in such correctional environments, have previously experienced years of situational anguish that contributed to his or his incarceration to begin with. I am referring to those who consequently turned to criminal activity from an early age as a result of poverty, neglect, or abuse. Within the first few chapters of Baca’s autobiography, the reader comes to understand how his childhood frustrations and instability directly related to his deviance and law-breaking tendencies. He states that, “I don’t know when the process of criminalization began for any one of the kids I hung out with or woke up with in a prison cell. For me, it was when my mother dropped my brother and sister and me off in Estancia (to live with his grandparents). It was reinforced when Mieyo and I were driven through the gates of Saint Anthony’s (to live in an orphanage) and it started to take on a more antisocial reality in the detention center (to live within a form incarceration)” (Baca
Upchurch too dealt with a number of emotional and psychological hang-ups as an adult, stemming from his socio-economic upbringing, as he was routinely mocked by authority figures while growing up in the rough neighborhoods of South Philadelphia. When describing one confrontation with a particular teacher, he states that, “That woman, who should have been nurturing my development, made me feel like a criminal. She made me feel stupid. She made me feel worthless. I reacted in my accustomed way: My outside shell got a little tougher, and my inside self-retreated a little deeper” (Upchurch 15). This toughness later molded his aggressiveness and violent behaviors in both the military and in prison. These observations help to emphasize the difficulties many institutions are faced with in encouraging the inmate to be hopeful when treating his or her afflictions. The foundations for continued drug use, violence and aggression, and gang involvement are deeply rooted and harder to confront with these individuals.

Whether one enters the system with motivational issues caused by previous environmental experiences or not, the inmate is sure to be confronted with a number of procedures which very well impact his or her emotions in relation to being part of such a formal atmosphere. As an example, nearly every writer I examined details an unsympathetic transition from being referred to by their personal name to an impersonal identification number. For Baca, he went from being called Jimmy to inmate “three-two-five-eight-one” (Baca 163). And in Coppolino’s memoirs, he gives detailed description of this shift, through a conversation with a particular guard, in which the latter states, “You hear that. That’s who you are, 018591. Somebody calls that number out, you answer. Cause you ain’t no fancy doctor in this place. You’re a dirty old inmate” (Coppolino 31). It is an identification that the inmate is constantly referenced as, whether he leaves his
cell for meals, recreation, or education classes. And as a University of California psychology professor mentions, “Prisoners find their identities denatured at each stop along the legal pathway to a prison cell. Their unique history, individuality, complexity, and internal contradictions become increasingly unimportant as they move through the process” (Evans 246). Along with a number of other incarceration formalities and issues, such as being routinely stripped and possibly loused by staff, I begin to connect a relationship between inmate depression and anxiety with the way many facilities process, handle, and transport their inmates.

Given the number of factors that may contribute to the inmate’s lost sense of emotional security, where before and/or after incarceration, it would come as little surprise that he or she would attempt to compensate by reaching out to others avenues of fulfillment while locked up. In his writing, Henderson gives insight to such occurrences by stating how he had, “never been in love as much as when I was in prison. I loved everybody. Out on the streets, I tried to pull every woman I could, but prison brings out the more affectionate, emotional side of a man” (Henderson 149). Indeed, we are all human regardless of our faults. We thrive on our ability to bond as social creatures. And as Maslow may suggest, we all require a particular amount of affection in order to survive. New born babies literally cannot survive without touch. On the outside, Henderson was obviously able to maintain a certain amount of physical connections. Yet, as he became incarcerated and severed opportunities to establish such relations, equally matched with the aggressiveness and coldness that occurs as a result of prison culture, his drive to balance his emotional equilibrium went into overdrive. In fact, he goes on to mention how many of the other inmates shared the same inclinations, as some were
drawn to romantic music videos shown on the commons television, while others enjoyed
the therapeutic benefits of interacting with stray cats that wandered the premises
(Henderson 113 & 128). Even Baca describes how many of his fellow inmates were
drawn to his emotional poetry by stating that, “I composed sentimental poems for cons
missing family, holidays, nostalgic regrets for being absent from a son’s birthday, sweet
affirmations for anniversaries, devout gratitude for Mother’s Day, and other poems of
personal significance to prisoners” (Baca 248). These particular observations may serve
relevance to incarceration administrators, staff, and the general public in that they help to
demonstrate the humaneness that is still alive in today’s inmate offender. Thus, such an
individual is worthy of treating, as he or she still carries the ability to be changed. The
effort still lies in the minds and bodies of the offender, but the facility may help to
courage the effort by instilling hope.

**Incarceration Authority Abuse**

As I have brought to the attention of the reader, it is essential to one’s growth in
any scenario or environment, that he or she be surrounded by those who are willing to put
toward an effort of support or positive reinforcement. For those who have lacked
effective mentoring from an early age on, like Baca and Upchurch, they may tend to
develop unbeneﬁcial habits that over time become very hard to break. This is why
support is more critical to those lacking the tools and skills necessary to making
wholesome decisions within a social context. And within the correctional facility setting,
responsibility falls in the hands of administration, staff, and instructors. They are the ones
who are placed in charge of setting schedules and directing daily activity, monitoring and
directing daily movement, and educating the inmates in areas of cognitive and behavioral
development. Thus, they may be viewed as surrogate parental figures, especially to many who may have never had any. Yet, as I have read and became familiar with the experiences of these literary authors, I notice that many of these authority figures are caught in the midst of the same sort misdirection and corruption displayed by many of the inmates they are responsible for overseeing. In doing so, their attitudes and behaviors only serve to strengthen rehabilitative non-compliance of the offenders, whether they recognize it or not.

When reading *A Place to Stand*, the reader gets the chance to observe a particular instance in which authority abuse has a direct effect on one’s struggles in seeking educational insight. As Baca transitioned into Florence State Prison, he is initially led to believe by a facility counselor that the opportunity to better his situation, through the existence of GED placement, was available through rule compliance and good behavior. Yet, after weeks of following through with this he is ultimately denied access to the program, during a formal review board examination. It came as a complete shock for him, which at first seemed to break his spirit. He stated upon receiving the news that he, “was almost on the verge of begging them to reconsider. Feeling a great emptiness overwhelm me, I raised my eyes to the counselor and blurted, “You promised-you stood in front of my cell telling me how great I was doing! I felt my whole body swell with explosion and rage.” He leaned forward. “It’s fucking prison and don’t you forget it. You’re here to be punished” (Baca 163). Obviously, the counselor was directed by a hidden agenda from the outset. For him and a number of others in charge at this particular facility, the establishment of incarceration is set in place to deter the inmate from breaking the laws above anything else. Yet, Baca seemed to have a different outlook. He
quickly lost trust in the integrity of the institution and was soon unwilling and unmotivated to carry out his productive routine tasks, due to the emotional and psychological trauma. Consequently, he was sent to solitary confinement for his further noncompliance (Baca 163-168). The course of his incarceration seemed to center on a cycle of mistrust and discontentment, rebellious action, and punishment.

In Jeff Henderson’s book, he expresses that the staff in Terminal Island Prison bullied him in a number of ways. Within a few weeks of arriving, he was improperly placed in solitary confinement by a guard who was “trying to prove himself” (Henderson 109). Being that Jeff did not immediately adhere to his demands to quit his weight training regimen before his allotted time had expired, the authority figure effectively responded in order to achieve his intended goal of intimidating the inmate. He later expresses a similar sort of incarceration scenario in which black guards purposefully intimidated and abused the black inmates in order to win the favor of their racist superiors. In summarizing, he states that, “Even in prison the white inmates got more love than the blacks and the Mexicans. There were guards on the yard with long ponytails, tatted up, ex-military and biker types who ignored it when the Aryan boys broke the rules. The house nigga ones were always trying to prove themselves to the lieutenants by being harder on the blacks than the white guards” (Henderson 140). This example also helps to demonstrate how staff abuse may consequently influence existing racial tensions between groups while adding to the general mindset of aggression and violence. In other words, the blacks or Mexicans may begin to notice these types of treatment disparities and act out toward other groups based on jealousy and disgust.
Given the national publicity of Coppolino’s murder trial and conviction, he periodically mentions that the administration and staff of Raiford Prison were always searching for opportunities to abuse him. Yet, throughout the course of his autobiography it seems many other offenders were treated with as much adversity. On Christmas Eve of 1967 he gives a heart-wrenching example felt by many offenders in which, “Each package that entered the institution was opened and checked for contents. When I say checked, I mean checked. The packages were pounded, squeezed, and shaken. The cookies Claire baked for me arrived at my cell reduced to crumbs, after the guards finished inspecting the package. Even the candy was smashed beyond recognition. My packages weren’t the only targets for their sadism. All of the men suffered the same indignity” (Coppolino 89). Indeed, sadism may be the correct word choice given the context of the abuse. For some of these inmates, such gifts may arrive few and far between from loved ones. And those that are received at this particular time of year tend to have special sentimental value. Thus, I can only imagine the heartbreak felt once it actually lands in his possession. It is by no means an overstatement to assess how he may become fueled with sadness and subsequent aggression.

As the autobiographical writer details his particular experiences with incarceration authority abuse, he often begins to assess why these occurrences happen. Of course, none of the authors I have chosen to review are social scientists, so their respective theories may hold no relevance. Nevertheless, Dr. Coppolino offers a very compelling theory, based on his collective knowledge of treating a number of inmates who were neglected and mistreated by the facility staff and health practitioners. According to him, the inmates are treated as indentured servants and hated by
correctional officers, “because, on the average, the convicts are smarter, sharper, and have more money than the guards” (Coppolino 89-90). Such a statement cannot be taken at face value, as it would be difficult to assess the intelligences and wealth of both groups throughout time and space in the American correctional setting. On a facility by facility basis, there may be inmates locked up who are incredibly educated and who earn a substantial amount of money on the outside, like Coppolino. However, what he may be referring to is a general lack of adequate training and payment compensation provided to these officers. Perhaps many institutions are hiring under-qualified staff, given that it is difficult to attain a high amount of highly competent workers in this setting, which I have already documented earlier in my research. Yet, it seems that ignorance and lack of integrity seems to be an even greater contributor to authority abuse. And while these occurrences should not be taken lightly for the sake of the rehabilitating offender, such causes can indeed be addressed and corrected given the willingness of the facility governance to allocate the resources necessary to do so.

Research in behavioral psychology offers insight into the existence of authoritative abuse within the incarceration setting. More specifically, the concluding results of The Stanford Prison Experiment suggest that specific variables, present within the social context, inherently direct the overseer’s motivations and behaviors. In this, psychologist Dr. Zimbardo set out to recreate a correctional environmental context in order to observe the psychological effects that incarceration had on those who were in the position of being staff members and inmates (Zimbardo). Each participant selected was deemed emotional and cognitively healthy before the onset of the experiment. Half the participants were randomly selected as inmates, while the other half were assigned as
guards. Every selected prisoner participant was arrested off the street at a later date, blindfolded, and booked in to a mock detention center under the pretense that he had committed a detainable offense. Thus, he was made to believe he was actually being imprisoned (Zimbardo). Those assigned as guards were knowingly aware of the mock scenario and were given a considerable amount of autonomy in exercising their authority. Essentially, the only stipulation given was that they could not physically harm the prisoners. Within a number of hours of the experiment taking course, a rebellion occurred by the inmates, which was countered by a successful effort put forth by the guards in suppressing the attack. As an outside observer looking in, Dr. Zimbardo recognized that at this point the guards began internalizing their roles and “began stepping up in control, surveillance, and aggression” (Zimbardo). As a result, the more the inmates began to complain and act out toward their counterpart’s aggressive attitudes and behaviors, the more the guards were encouraged to humiliate and suppress them in order to enhance their sense of control. Over the course of a few days, the guard’s established sense of control led to unfortunate and unforeseeable consequences in which, “their boredom had driven them to ever more pornographic and degrading abuse of their prisoners” (Zimbardo). The study had to be discontinued shy of a full week. Yet, what the study serves to show is the value of particular environment factors that harmfully encourage the inmate-guard dynamic. The morally sound young men who played the role of the guards were later amazed at their inability to shy away from becoming engulfed in a social context that devalued humane preservation. Instead, they were motivated in producing inmate institutional compliance, which equally served to strengthen their own egos. In concluding, the experiment may have applicable relevance for those who are in need of
training or retraining in the incarceration setting, as well as for many facilities around the
country. Such institutions may begin to acknowledge and assess the existence of specific
contextual variables which begin to noticeably affect the authority figure’s attitudes and
behaviors in a counter-productive way.

**Incarceration Aggression and Violence**

At this stage in my research, I have already touched on a number of factors that
may lead the offender down a path of aggressive thought and violent behavior. Again,
one’s prior history of criminalization, especially from an early age on, is tremendously
influential when determining whether he or she will utilize such a mentality during
incarceration. This is especially true if his or her particular facility is not resourced and
actively engaged in addressing the issue through whatever means necessary. Yet, given
the existence of a number of themes I have mentioned in depth, others entering the
system without any prior record or predisposition toward aggression and violence may
themselves become engaged in doing so later in their incarceration. What I am
specifically referring to is the inmate being trained or developed to utilize this way of
thinking out of a necessity to survive in incarceration. In Baca’s case, he was already
equipped with the tools necessary to do so, after being approached by other aggressive
inmates and groups. But there are others who have a hard time adjusting because such
environments are new.

In the collection of incarceration memoirs entitled * Undoing Time, an inmate from
Helena, Oklahoma elaborates on a factual account in which he observes an innocent and
vulnerable fellow inmate being repeatedly bullied by other inmates. The bullied, Andy,
was frequently being threatened with violence in order to surrender his food to aggressive inmates. He was completely ignorant of self-defense prior to entering prison. The inmate author expresses that he had seen enough at one point and took it upon himself to train the pacifist inmate tactics on how to defend himself. After a given amount of time, the training paid off in which Andy was successful at retaining his property and distancing himself from the attacks. The inmate author states that, “It saddens me that young men like Andy have to suffer that kind of trauma. Unfortunately, sometimes there is just no other way to deal with idiots like Enrico and those gangbangers. Violence is all they understand. He was then able to do the rest of his time in peace” (Evans 99). With this I am able to give a more detailed description of how gang culture, along with other themes, directly relates to the spreading of aggression and acts of retaliation in many facilities. Yet, along with this analysis, the reader is equally able to rationalize how some in the place of Andy may also develop an ego in order to utilize the acquirement of such skills for personal gain out of greed. The social variables mentioned in The Stanford Prison Experiment very well exist in the inmate-inmate dynamic in many of these institutions as well. In Upchurch’s autobiography, he explains that his ability to intimidate and oppress other inmates had a direct effect on his self-esteem. He refers to a particular occasion while incarcerated in Petersburg Prison that he, “heard one of them say, Oh man, he really fucked up that other guy. He fucked him up bad. I thought, Yeah, that’s right, and I felt a surge of pride that I had ensured my reputation at Petersburg so quickly” (Upchurch 78-79). This is another reason why emotional and spiritual rehabilitation is so important in the incarceration setting. It transforms the inmate’s sense of purpose and transcends his or her outlook in respecting life. Upchurch would later agree.
Another unfortunate consequence that occurs for the inmate once he or she chooses to engage a mindset of aggression and violence, out of a necessity to survive, is that his or her chances of securing treatment may become diminished. In going back to Baca’s particular situation, and with the existence of authority abuse set aside, he may still have had to justify to the review board why he had chosen to initiate a brutal confrontation with another inmate. Yet, he was essentially caught in a Catch 22 scenario: If he did not choose to defend himself, then he would have been sexually violated by the other inmate. Again, Maslow would agree that physical safety comes before higher intellectual attainment. Baca recognizes the scenario for himself, by stating that, “I had to prove to everyone I was not going to be messed with. My mind reeled with anger at the fact that he was fucking with me when I hadn’t done anything to him. My plans for school would have to be delayed” (Baca 121). He expresses at the board review how they too were aware of the scenario, yet, for obvious reasons it did not matter. Regardless of the existence of authority abuse, the inmate who is placed in a similar predicament may always have to justify such reasons, even if he had or has the greatest intentions put forth in his recovery. My point is to once again demonstrate how the institution has a responsibility of advocating for the offender to ensure his or her greatest chances at receiving a meaningful rehabilitation. This particular scenario should never have to occur.

**Insufficient Incarceration Treatment Programs**

Each theme that I have chosen to analyze, as discussed through the works of the autobiographical authors, is relational to or resolved through effective incarceration education compliance. For the inmate, such programs geared toward teaching meaningful
and applicable job skills, drug and alcohol dependency techniques, and cognitive and behavioral recognition and redirection may surely have a direct impact on the issues of monotony, drug use, incarceration economy, and gangs. Furthermore, the existence of programs and opportunities that concurrently allow the inmate to address issues of emotional and spiritual difficulties, may also serve to address themes involving inmate aggression and violence, as well as self-esteem or anxiety/depression. For Staff, the existence of effective training, certification, and recertification may help to resolve the issues of abuse. And given the comments expressed earlier by Coppolino, these particular individuals may equally benefit from the same sort of emotional and spiritual program placement. My aim here though is not to express avenues of solution in too much depth, which I surely intend to do in chapter four.

What instead seems to be a nationwide occurrence are a number of correctional institutions becoming less treatment driven while offering fewer educational benefits in terms in inmate rehabilitation. In *Undoing Time*, inmate author Robert L. Johnson sheds light on this observation while transitioning into California’s infamous San Quentin Prison. Upon processing into the facility, he strikes up a conversation with some of the veteran inmates, in which he states, “I wondered for a moment about some of these men. If they worked all day, when did that leave time for the drug and alcohol programs touted by the judges and lawyers? When did they get the opportunity to improve the mind that placed them here, by taking college classes, for example? When I asked this question aloud, several people around me laughed and said I must be a cherry-someone new to the system. One older convict told me his job handing out jumpsuits to inmates was the only training he had ever received. It paid twelve cents an hour. All the programs I asked
about had been canceled long ago to save the state money” (Evans 88). The statement itself seems to suggest an obvious disparity in thought, as to the nature of incarceration, among many in charge throughout the criminal justice system. Such lack of unity creates issues of integrity and accountability that is deemed unacceptable in nearly any other sector of society. The quote directly suggests how the inmates themselves are aware of this, given their reactions to Robert’s questions. Sadly, I begin to understand how their acknowledgements may quickly create issues of hopelessness and despair.

While locked-up at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Upchurch experienced a similar sort of confusion regarding incarceration and the existence of rehabilitation programs offered. He mentions that while certain opportunities were made available for the inmate in learning a trade, such as masonry and woodcarving, “the “system didn’t seem to produce anything significant. Most of the projects that guys worked on in these shops were trivial” (Upchurch 55). This too is an issue of integrity for the system whereby the customer or inmate, Upchurch, does not buy in to what is being offered. I equally begin to understand how the very existence of these sort of rehabilitation programs, which are essentially meaningless, may insult or anger the inmate offender just as much.

In addition to the inadequacies represented in rehabilitative educational programs present in many of today’s correctional institutions, there also seems to be a continued trend by many facilities in reduced spending to maintain the quantity and quality of weight training equipment, which many inmates find both resourceful and beneficial. As an inmate from Cameron, Missouri describes, “Congressional legislation, in the form of amendments to the 1994 crime bill, among other banishment, eliminated weight-training
equipment from federal prisons and coerced states desiring or desperately needing prison construction dollars to eliminate such equipment as well to qualify for the federal largesse. Some states, such as Georgia, Mississippi, and Wisconsin, have already followed suit, and others are considering the policy” (Evans 196). This is somewhat of an ironic occurrence, in that such legislation is established under the direction of crime prevention, yet, additional crime may occur as a result of eliminating a program that has therapeutic benefits for the inmate offender. Like Henderson, while incarcerated in Terminal Island Prison, many inmates find weight lifting advantageous in relieving stress, frustration, and aggression, while also creating an opportunity to set and pursue goals. Access to such equipment is even more important for those locked up twenty three hours a day.

In relation to the inmate gaining access to quality treatment during incarceration, what also seems to occur in many facilities is a hardening mentality in which many are resistant to the idea of intellectual growth. As a University of Chicago Professor of Law and Criminology states, “Such self-development opportunities, educational and vocational, are widely available but generally patronized in the larger, maximum-security prisons; the culture of those institutions does not favor them. They are more apt to flourish in the smaller, medium-security and open prisons” (Morris & Rothman 247). I believe this point is worth mentioning, given how deeply influential criminal money-making enterprise, aggression, and violence can be in these same environments. An adopted mentality encompassing all three seem to work together nicely in preventing a number of inmates from severing a cycle of crime and recidivism in and out of incarceration. Not only did Upchurch subscribe to these during his particular
incarceration, but recognized similar attitudes by inmates after personally choosing to rehabilitate. While locked up in the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill and at Lewisburg Prison, he suggests that sharing his interests in writing and poetry with a number of inmates would have brought negative social consequence. He states, “Caught up in the first flush of literary exploration, I was pretty impressed with myself. In retrospect, it was lucky that I was in the cell alone. At this point in my life, I wouldn’t have been able to resist flaunting my fledging knowledge to guys who would have burst my bubble” (Upchurch 84). Of course, this phenomenon does not hold equal weight in and around every correctional institution. One only needs to re-examine Baca. Yet, it does seem an important enough issue to deserve examination by correctional administrators, educators, and advocates.

**Insufficient Transition or Release Programs**

What many in American society are often unaware of is an unsettling truth facing many inmates who are reluctant to confront a release back into general society. Indeed, it is often a harsh inevitability for offenders, especially those whose lives were dictated by criminalization prior to incarceration, and/or were denied or personally rejected opportunities of treatment during imprisonment. What may become his or her saving grace is the presence of an effective release program that functionally addresses all aspects of his or her emotional, spiritual, psychological, and financial needs. This is equally true for those who do not suffer from habitual criminal tendencies, but who have spent a significant amount of time behind bars growing accustomed to a hardening lifestyle. Nevertheless, the reality is that this institutional priority seems to be compromised in many facilities around the country as well.
Carl Upchurch’s incarceration experiences have already helped to demonstrate so much in terms of an institution’s ability to rehabilitate the offender. He may speak volumes here as well. He explains that upon being granted parole from Lewisburg Prison, he had elected to choose a transition facility primarily based on its proximity to emotional ties. Consequently, the placement also encouraged him to return to an outside environment which criminalized him. He states, “My first mistake was to choose a halfway house in south Jersey, near Philadelphia. I could have gone somewhere else for this fresh start, but I wanted to go home. Even though my family, except for Stoney, had virtually ignored me the entire time I’d been in prison and in the army, they were all I had. I needed the emotional support” (Upchurch 106). He goes on to mention that their attitudes towards him remained the same. Yet, I understand how those in charge of his transitioning are to blame. Very few individuals coming directly out of incarceration are prepared to make this type of decision alone. Given Upchurch’s background, he surely was not one of them. These officials equally failed to provide him with the resources geared toward job training and placement. And in demonstrating the significance of the release program for the rehabilitating offender, I will further mention that it was here at Lewisburg Prison that Upchurch learned the value of emotional sensitivity and education through the Sonnets of William Shakespeare. He states during his incarceration that, “I had almost been contemptuous of intellect. That book of sonnets didn’t just change my opinion-it quite literally changed my mind. I discovered the magic of learning, the thrill of going from not knowing to knowing” (Upchurch 82). My point being that he had already begun a conscious decision to turn his life around prior to being paroled. Yet, he was misdirected and deprived, emotionally and financially, by a system that should have
been equipped to help. It was only after further incarceration that he gained access to meaningful emotional support, through a Quaker instructor, which proved successful in reinforcing these changes in attitude and behavior.

In terms of being left in the dark, emotionally and financially, by a subsequent transitioning program, Baca experienced both at different times after being released from incarceration. The first occurred as he and Marcos were let out of the San Diego Jail facility on charges of minor drug distribution. Once released, they were given no money or job placement in order to pay their rent or stay afloat (Baca 56). Furthermore, they were given transitional housing in an environment surrounded with criminals and drug abusers. Like Upchurch, they possessed a willingness to change. Yet, they felt they were caught between a rock and a hard place. While leaving the low-grade housing facility, he states, “To get us the hell out of the dump as quickly as we could, I called Tecolote and set up a deal. It wasn’t like we were going to be big dealers or anything. It was a temporary but convenient jump start, to help us get on our feet. The judge had sentenced us to a couple of month’s community service, but this ended up by helping us sell more” (Baca 57). Had the program been more fully resourced, Baca and Marcos may have never felt the need to contact their newly discovered deviant drug connection. The reader very clearly gets the sense that the decision was made out of desperation more than anything else. They were quickly able to raise enough money to stop selling. However, Tecolote was heavily influential in convincing Baca to increase his distribution methods at a later date, which eventually led to his incarceration at Florence State Prison.

The second occurrence took place after he was released from this particular institution. Like Upchurch’s release, his emotional and spiritual needs were not
acknowledged or addressed by the program. In fact, he does not mention any program at all. What he does describe are moments of personal and social insecurity caused by his years of incarceration, in which he states, “Many times, standing in a corner at a cocktail party, or in the office of a magazine editor, or at the gathering of writers in Raleigh, I yearned to be back in prison” (Baca 258). Surely, it is a taxing mental struggle transitioning from a highly antagonistic environment to those which are socially vibrant and optimistic. I begin to see a few solid connections between this and a soldier returning from combat, which in the soldier’s case, often leads to post-traumatic stress disorder. Luckily, Baca too had the strong emotional support of a significant other to reinforce his drive toward personal growth and development at this later time. I acknowledge that rehabilitation does not end at the facility gate.
Monotony

My adult incarnation experience had initiated once I was detained in an Idaho jail facility to serve a three day sentence for driving under the influence of alcohol, in the fall of 2007. Like many others before me, I was under a sense of panic and fear as to what awaited me in my cell, after I was booked and processed by facility staff. Indeed, I recall that as my fingerprints and personal information was being entered into the database, I was overwhelmed with thoughts of having to defend myself from inmates who might want to assault me. The notion I gathered from popular culture was that it is imperative the inmate does not present himself or herself as being weak or vulnerable. I was thinking worse-case scenarios and how I would choose to react as a result. Yet, as I entered my cell and met my two cellmates, my stress began to slowly transition in terms of what sparked and drove it.

Both of my cellmates were friendly and understanding of my new experience. I recall that they were both from underprivileged backgrounds, and like Baca and Upchurch, had been introduced to a mentality of criminalization from an early age. They were familiar with the system and this particular facility. They were helpful in detailing the daily routine of the place. Also, they were understanding of my anxiety and never made me feel uncomfortable. It took less than two hours for me to gather a sense of assurance that I was not under physical threat, as long as I remained respectful toward them and cooperative to staff.
Yet, over the course of a day or so, I felt I was under more stress than when I had first entered the facility. I became claustrophobic, depressed, and occasionally suffered from moments of panic. And while I feel the environment itself strongly contributed to this, for which I will soon describe and assess, the lack of opportunity to distract my mind through meaningful stimulation was thoroughly at fault. In retrospect, I would acknowledge that this facility either did not emphasize inmate rehabilitation, or did not have the resources to fulfill this purpose. Like inmate Sam Gutierrez, my days were repeated with the same daunting cycle of sleeping, eating, and occasional socializing. I was never presented with an opportunity to engage in recreational activity, go to a facility library, or even watch television. Instead, I was confined to a small cell. I often found myself pacing between cots, directing my attention toward thoughts which only served to cause more panic. I would mentally replay how I was going to explain my incarceration to extended family, job prospects, and future educational institutions. If I was not pacing, I was sleeping in excess of twelve hours. As a light sleeper, I was strangely able to block out the sounds of my cellmates and guards as they moved around. Essentially, the creation of wasted time led me to wallow in self-pity and “what-if” scenarios.

Like the actions and steps taken by Baca and Marcos in the San Diego jail, my two cellmates spent the majority of their sentence in leisure conversation, while discussing the experiences which led to their arrests. They seemed to find it effortless to joke around, laugh, and trade tactics of committing particular crimes, as if they each had plans to do it again. For instance, I recall one of them telling the other how to remove a car stereo more effectively and efficiently when under the pressure of an alarm system.
There were times when I would attempt to join in on their topics, based on what it
tailed, but it was mainly to pass the time. I was not in the same spirits as they were.

My second incarceration experience took place a little over a year from the first. I
was detained in a Nebraska jail in November 2008 for a sixteen day sentence for similar
charges. And like the Idaho facility, this one seemed to exemplify the same sort of
punitive objective, given that very few opportunities existed for inmate growth and
development. Unlike the Idaho facility, there was a library and gymnasium on the
premise, but I was never given the chance to utilize the former. As a group of over twenty
inmates, we are allowed access to the latter on my second to last day, but it was primarily
due to an inmate’s repeated request which was eventually approved by administrators.
For the most part, the same sort of leisurely routine existed that consequently deters the
inmate from any effective introspection. Most of the inmates I was surrounded by in the
tier were comfortable enough to pass the time playing chess, checkers, reading
magazines, or share stories of previous crimes committed. For me, I was caught in the
same sort of mentality as the first environment. Again, I was fully aware that I was not in
any immediate physical danger as long as I was respectful and non-confrontational. Yet, I
was stuck pacing and sleeping in the same rhythms, and with the same topics on my
mind, as my first incarceration experience. In a period of two weeks, I must have lost ten
to fifteen pounds because I could not stomach the thought of food.

Interestingly enough, what I felt occurred for myself the second time around was
a personal awareness and reinforcement not to reoffend primarily due to the fact that I did
not want to return to such a mentally-taxing environment. This may or may not be a
direct intention of policy makers or administrators, in relation to choosing to allocate
resources that would essentially alleviate monotony and rehabilitate the offender, such as weight-lifting equipment or even job training classes. If it is in fact a desired effect, then such an official must take into account that such an environment does not affect every inmate equally. This is especially true for those who come from criminalized backgrounds and are able to make use of his or her time in counterproductive ways.

**Drug Use**

Possibly the most memorable occurrence I witnessed during my incarceration experience of 2008 was watching a few inmates create a batch of jailhouse wine. The idea was initiated by a particular inmate who was locked up while awaiting trial for a felony driving under the influence charge. At the time, it had been his fourth charge in less than ten years and it was obvious he suffered from a physical dependency. I noticed his hands frequently trembled and he often complained of headaches. I recall that while he was fully aware of his condition, he felt he did not possess the ability to stop alone. He had been incarcerated in this particular facility for the same charge before, and they had never offered him any sort of treatment or transitioning program for his ailment. Like myself, once released he had to wait a number of weeks before given approval to join a selected outpatient substance abuse program, which often carries a substantial fee and does not offer close monitoring in between sessions.

To cope with the stress of withdrawal, he made the decision to risk his collection of good time behavior by storing a concoction of ingredients that was considered contraband. He and three other inmates placed a black trash bag into a facility-issued tote, after which they poured into it a mixture of warm water, bread, packaged sugar, and
apple slices. It was left to ferment for a number of days beside the inmate’s bed. Once ready, they had waited until a final nightly count to consume the batch. And while stating that it did not satisfy his expectations in regard to taste, it did help to calm his mind and shaking for a short amount of time. He mentioned that he felt that the alcohol was more beneficial to him than the facility healthcare staff, in that their primary means of responsibility came through an occasional monitoring of his vital signs. In essence, they provided a minimal amount of service which kept him from death or permanent structural damage, and then sent him out the door. Before I had left the facility, he made a light-hearted joke by stating that the first thing he was going to do, if he was not sent to prison, was get a beer at his favorite bar in the area.

While watching the process unfold, I became fascinated by the ingenuity of these men, as well as the amount of deviance the inmate could conceal from staff and administrators. Obviously, these were men who were mentally competent and capable of being motivated, which is essential when attempting to provide rehabilitation to the offender. Yet, like so many other inmates around the county, we were left uninformed and to our own madness. This particular scenario bears additional proof into the existing education of criminal activity, among inmates, behind bars. Furthermore, what I personally recognized in regard to this particular event is the occurrence of monotony and boredom influencing incarceration drug use as well. At least two other inmates, who like me, were unfamiliar with the existence of jail house wine, decided to try the final product because they felt it would help pass the time more easily. I cannot say whether their usage initiated a personal addition, but it is theoretically possible.
Poor Incarceration Conditions

As I mentioned earlier, while incarcerated, I felt a great amount of my claustrophobia, depression, and anxiety could have been attributed to each facility’s living conditions and arrangements. Again, while locked up in the Idaho facility, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by inmates who put my mind at ease. Yet, as I began to settle in I quickly became affected by the gang-affiliated markings scattered across the walls, which read either “MS13 Pride” or “Northsiders 4 Life.” And as I read, I became aware that these words were written by men who were holistically dedicated to their criminal family and would go to any measure to satisfy their respective allegiance. I would not go as far to say that these writings directly frightened me. However, they did serve to remind me of the aggressive behavior I might have come into contact with at any time. Essentially, it was a negative mental reinforcement, which should have been recognized and eliminated by facility staff immediately. Had I been given the opportunity to become involved in group therapy or treatment during incarceration, the writings may have influenced me to hold back pertinent personal details, important to my recovery, which may have served to express myself being weak or vulnerable. Of course, I am referring to the possibility of those involved in such group therapy I believed to be affiliated with Northsiders or MS13.

Furthermore, the cell that the three of us were confined to was small and provided little walking space. Each of our cots was no more than a foot apart and the distance between the foot of our beds and the wall was only about twice that length. We each had to share a small rusty sink at the end of that walk-way, which was adjacent to a small enclosed bathroom with another small sink and a shower. At times of pacing, often
caused by feelings of being trapped, I had to be cautious not to upset one of these men. I did this by limiting the amount of noise I made as I walked. At any given time, each of us was so close to the other that his respective movement may have been viewed as a nuisance, which easily translates to violence. Realistically, the only action that assured my distance and minimal noise output was to remain still on my cot, which may be why I chose to sleep so much.

In the Nebraska facility, the inmate seemed to be provided with a greater amount of space to walk around in. Each inmate was sent to one of three tiers which encompassed two floors. The bottom floor provided for a social area, which was adjacent to a large bathroom with a number of showers and toilets. The upstairs was arranged with around twenty dual bunks with four to five feet in between. Yet, what was made up in cubic feet per inmate was lost to dirt and grime. There were dried blood spots on the commons area wall, which indicated to me that a physical altercation had occurred that was not properly cleaned up. A number of the bunks had dried mucus stuck to the sides and the carpets looked like it had not been vacuumed in weeks. Obviously, many of these inmate offenders were not taking responsibility for themselves and their hygiene. These occurrences place greater mental, emotional, and physical stress on the surrounding and incoming inmates, especially those who are trying to utilize their time recovering and rehabilitating. Nearly every time I would lie down or pass by the wall, I would focus my attention not to touch the waste matter out of fear of contracting an illness or disease. Realistically, I could have taken the initiative to clean the areas, but I was not in the mindset to care otherwise. I was overly preoccupied with thoughts causing anxiety and depression. If the inmate is not able to take responsibility in cleaning up after him or
herself, then the duty of janitorial maintenance falls in the hands of staff. It would be unfair to request other inmates to do so, especially if he or she is not given access to proper cleaning supplies.

As I alluded to in chapter one, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theorizes that in order for a person to self-actualize, or in my case rehabilitate, he or she must be able to transcend from the bottom up in a successive stage development. Here, I continued to be weighed down by my inability to move past the entry stages of securing adequate and immediate shelter. Thus, I was forced to live for the body and not the mind; I was able to survive but unable to thrive. I am even more understanding on how I walked away unsatisfied and unenlightened. These environments did not encourage me to reflect or engage in self-introspection, which begins the conclusive stages within the Hierarchy.

Inadequate Health Maintenance

My experience in the Nebraska facility served to reinforce any further decision not to reoffend, primarily out of fear of returning to such a place of incarceration. I bring this observation to light here, due to the severity of neglect I encountered, in relation to my mental health condition while at this particular institution. Indeed, since then I have made every conscious effort to avoid being placed in a situation that would prevent me from attaining and maintaining mental and emotional stability. Never again will I be denied access to the lifesaving antidepressants I need to thrive, as I was in the fall of 2008.

At the age of ten, I was medically diagnosed with generalized anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, which has been easily treatable since the age of nineteen,
through a heavy combination of psychotropic drugs. They have helped carry me through many stress events in which I may not have been able to cope as easily otherwise, such as during my first incarceration, which I was granted approval to take by the Idaho facility staff. My physician once explained the drug’s psychological benefits by acknowledging that a built-up bodily consumption provides the user with an extra barrier against modes of emotional mania, in terms of anxiety or depression, brought on through events of stress and heredity. And being that I entered the latter facility with the prescription on my person, I counted on it as an extra crutch or security, not expecting it to add to the strain. Yet, while it took eight days from the time I arrived to receive even a portion of my recommended dosage, I began to experience a few episodes of intense hysteria that I had not recognized in years. For example, I remember lying on my bunk early one morning, possibly around the fourth day, suddenly becoming engulfed in emotional worry as I awoke. In saying this, I would suggest my surroundings had some influence in this attack. Yet, I never suffered at such an intense level in the former facility. Furthermore, I had already become familiarized enough with such an environment as to not immediately resort to panic previous to awaking my thoughts. Perhaps I will never accurately assess the relationship, but I blame the unfortunate depletion of needed neurotransmitters within my brain most of all.

After receiving a fraction of my entitled prescription from the facility nurse one afternoon, a number of answers came to surface which I am still bitter about today. In regard to the question as to why it had taken over a week to receive a single dosage, she stated that her department co-worker had to contact my physician, in order to verify my order. What continues to anger me is not so much the security process, but that I was
legally entitled to the full prescription in the beginning, based on the formality of the label pasted on the bottle at the time of my processing. Secondly, I had later found out that my physician had then given her co-worker approval to administer the full amount prescribed anyway. But once again, the facility department failed to follow through with the instruction. After being released, I spent a month tapering myself up on the quantity, continuing to suffer from irritable side effects I had not felt in years. From a legal standpoint, the facility staff had no right to deny me of this lifesaving medication, which leads me to believe the mistake was made either through incompetence or negligence. In relation to the Hierarchy of Needs, I was denied another essential resource in route through my journey to self-actualization, or rehabilitation.

**Emotional Difficulties of the Incarcerated**

As well as suffering from occurrences of anxiety while being locked up, I was frequently plagued by loneliness which seemed to motivate and guide my depression as well. This was more evident during my 2008 incarceration. Here, I often desired to reach out to family in communication, but faced a few obstacles which limited my success. Throughout my life, they are the ones I turn to in times of inspiration, leisure activity, and stress. Thus, as I became frustrated with monotony, my medication, and staff, they easily became the first line of defense I thought of. But due to being out of state for school, as well as the high prices of calls, I was only able to speak with my mother or grandmother for a limited amount of time each week, within this institution. Once I arrived, my initial conversation with them lasted a half an hour. It was the first time in my life I was essentially cut off from the outside world.
At times, the depression brought on by loneliness caused me to weep in silence, either behind a blanket or within a bathroom stall. About a week into my 2008 sentence, I recognized myself becoming introverted and somewhat antisocial. To reiterate, I was not fearful of the other inmates, who sometimes had interesting and comical comments which lightened the moments. Yet, I felt I was not in a stable enough environment or condition to begin developing meaningful and trusting relationships, which theoretically would have alleviated the emotional problems I was suffering from. Instead, I chose to set up a psychological and emotional barrier between myself and them, by limiting my conversation, in order to safeguard myself from further anguish. I did not want to be reminded of family or friends, through their personal stories. In retrospect, I am more thoroughly aware of the importance in addressing the inmate’s emotional affectivities, while equally addressing his or her cognitive and behavior processing as well. Had treatment been available in this facility, the depression I continued to suffer from may have overly influenced any decision to initiate or continue receiving help.

**Incarceration Authority Abuse**

As I reflect on my time spent in the Nebraska institution, I would like to suggest that a number of other facility officials have equally contributed to my fear of returning. I am primarily referring to the guards who utilized their authoritative power to embarrass and humiliate me for personal gain. I say this because a number of the actions directed toward me by these individuals served little or no procedural or formal function for the benefit of the institution. Rather, my reactions to his or her particular statements or actions helped him or her to pass the time more lightly, while concurrently serving to strengthen his or her ego. An excellent example was observable once I submitted my
belongings prior to fingerprinting. After handing over my cell phone, one of the guards immediately began tabbing through my text messages. As I heard the voice recordings play, she began to laugh, in which I proceeded to ask her the purpose in her actions. She responded by stating, “Don’t worry about it. Pay attention to your processing.” As I gauged her reaction, she continued to laugh and smile, looking at my phone and then at me. Thus, I feel she was intending to belittle me. I became angered and powerless.

Another instance of the same sort of troubling inmate-officer dynamic came shortly after, as I stripped down and changed into a facility-issued jumpsuit in front of a tall and burly guard. Once I was done zipping the one piece orange suit, he aggressively suggested that I upgrade to a bigger piece. He stated while pointing, “That jumpsuits’ too tight, grab that one over there!” Ultimately, keeping the jumpsuit I had on was not in violation of any particular code or regulation, given that nothing offensive was showing. In fact, I would have preferred to do so, given that the one I changed into was extremely big and sagged as I walked. Nevertheless, what I later realized were his intentions being selfishly driven, possibly to test my assertiveness in contending with his authority. I based this conclusion on the relevance of his comments to my incarceration. Interestingly enough, the one time I chose to request the phone room from this man, he quickly denied me while continuing to joke with another guard about a topic unrelated to me. I was once again left angered and powerless.

In chapter one I explained in detail what is famously known as The Stanford Prison Experiment. In this, a highly regarded psychologist theorized that certain social variables within the incarceration setting help to contribute to, or even encourage, opportunities for which the guard or staff member becomes emotionally, psychologically,
and physically overpowering. I mention this here in relation to the scenarios I mentioned above. Both circumstances directly placed me in a situation of vulnerability that the authority in charge would clearly recognize. And like the mentally healthy college students acting as guards, these particular officers seemed to become powerless to a number of conditions which serve to satisfy their egos and playful desires. Perhaps the procedures in place need to be handled with more caution as to account for the inherencies and faults of mankind. My understanding of the experiment leads me to believe that anyone, even I, could fall victim to such indulgences. Thus, while such offensive behavior is not acceptable, it is perceivable.

**Incarceration Aggression and Violence**

While incarcerated in Idaho and Nebraska, it would be fair to state that I was lucky enough to be surrounded by a majority of inmates who were considerate and respectful of their peers. Indeed, I recall a few instances when one would extend his knowledge to help brighten my own situation. For example, the man who suffered from the alcohol dependency had recommended the outpatient treatment program that I eventually enrolled in. I valued his words because he carried a sincere tone. Furthermore, I viewed him as a peer and not as an authority figure, which allowed me to empathize with his situation. I did not want to end up in a similar situation. That being said, he also gave me a greater point of view. And for this, I am grateful. Yet, during my time locked up in 2008, I had also witnessed an event of aggression which broadened my awareness of this social context, while slightly heightening my anxiety and depression for the remainder of my sentence.
Roughly two days after being placed in the tier of thirty men, a stout inmate named Tony approached another offender from across the room where I had been sitting. I had not paid any attention to the confrontation until Tony began pushing and yelling at the man, who quickly became frightened and did not retaliate. The room became silent as Tony shouted, “If I see you do this again, you’re gonna be in a world of hurt!” He then turned confidently and went to his cot. What I later found out, in talking with Tony, was that he was defending a young inmate who was being “turned-out” by the man. To elaborate, the younger was repeatedly given snacks by the older inmate to emotionally soften him up in order to coerce him into sexual favors at a later date. Tony, who was on his way back to prison for a parole violation, had seen the situation before. Essentially, he was kind hearted like many of the others detained, but made the conscious decision early on not to fall victim to the ruthlessness of the inmate mentality. Through this particular confrontation, he became even more unhesitant to defend himself or others from predators. As mentioned, he stood a little taller afterward. He seems to be a rarity in an environment that educates hate and aggression through the act of violence.

As for younger inmate and me, we opened our eyes a little wider that day. I observed that he was a little more cautious to receive goods from other inmates. In fact, I remember that when commissary rolled around, he purchased and repaid what was given to him. Yet, he remained in high spirits as he continued to socialize just as he did before the event. I, however, recall feeling even less motivated to do the same. Again, while not feeling intimidated by any individual, I was mindful of it becoming a possibility. In addition to limiting the amount of information I chose to share, which was occurring anyways, I began to generalize my statements in order to bridge a personal gap between
others and myself. I was mindful of becoming a victim to a scenario I was not prepared to recognize and handle, especially since I was dealing with other psychological and emotional factors.

**Insufficient Incarceration Treatment and Release Programs**

Up to this point, I have expressed a number of themes which have contributed to my incarceration experiences being less than noteworthy in terms of benefit for self and society. Furthermore, I have yet to specially mention that neither facility had taken the time to address the cause which landed me behind bars, binge drinking. Such a statement applies to the majority, if not all, of my cellmates in 2007 and 2008. And in my particular case, I am referring to a complete absence of alcohol and substance abuse education, which may have compensated for the amount of psychological and emotional turmoil I suffered during those days and weeks.

As I mentioned earlier, access to self-help material was never an option in either facility. Instead, I had to wait two months after being released from both places before receiving the proper treatment I needed to move ahead and begin assessing my failures. Obviously, my first outpatient treatment was not enough, given that I chose to reoffend. Yet, I feel I was able to succeed the second time around due to a more elaborate course of action I was instructed to follow, by a caring and knowledgeable probation officer in the Omaha area. More specifically, she introduced me to Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Step Tradition, which has broader application to life as well. In contrast, I was never approached by an educational counselor, facilitator, or instructor, during my times of incarceration.
Once released from the Nebraska facility, it had taken two months before I was introduced to my probation officer, who then educated and inspired me as to the benefits of Alcoholics Anonymous. In this time, I was fortunate to have the emotional support needed to distance myself from reoffending. Half-way housing was never an option, in either case, had I needed it. In relation to my alcoholic cellmate of 2008, this may have proven critical to his alcohol dependency. When stating that he intended to go directly to the neighborhood bar once released, he also revealed his wife and children did not welcome him back to their home. Thus, the bar option may have appeared as a more enticing course of immediate action. I will never know. What is important is that I may have avoided a great amount of wasted time had my rehabilitation been presented effectively, as it was later through a caring probation officer and educative outpatient programming, during confinement.
CHAPTER 3

This chapter of my final program project consists of an interview, conducted by myself, with an administrator of a local sheriff’s office in the Pacific Northwest. I drew these questions from incarceration themes discussed in the previous chapters. My goal here is to receive a more thorough understanding of such issues, as they are recognized and addressed by authority figures, within such environments. Furthermore, the responses given will be beneficial as I create a proposed plan of action, for future possibilities in chapter four. The interview, which is arranged in a question-answer format, is as follows:

Monotony

Question: Does your institution have a mission statement that emphasizes inmate rehabilitation? If so, what is it?

Answer: The mission of our institution is to make safer places for you to live, work, and play. The mission of our institution’s Alternatives to Incarceration Programs Unit is to assist in developing socially responsible individuals through meaningful educational opportunities and engaging alternatives to incarceration.

Question: What is your institution’s take on punishment versus rehabilitation?

Answer: We have no take on this subject because we are mainly a pre-trial facility that holds inmates who are innocent until proven guilty. We do not have wording like punishment or rehabilitation in our mission statement. Our facility has Pillars for Success that all of our staff members are committed to ensuring. These pillars are safety of staff,
security of the facility, inmate well-being, and that we meet or exceed stakeholder expectations.

Question: Do you believe there are programs within your institution that are trivial in relation to inmate rehabilitation? If so, what are they? How are they trivial?

Answer: Every program that we implement has been shown in the research to positively affect an inmate’s likelihood of recidivating, and any program that doesn’t accomplish this, would be trivial.

Question: Do you believe these trivial programs create psychological and emotional problems for the offender? If so, how? Do you believe these may affect issues of incarceration violence and aggression?

Answer: I don’t believe trivial programs create psychological and/or emotional problems for the offender. If nothing else, they help to pass the time during incarceration. The downside is that they have not been shown to reduce an offender’s likelihood of returning to the criminal justice system.

Question: Do you believe that an excessive amount of leisure time may motivate the inmate to participate in incarceration criminal enterprise? If so, what are your recommendations to cease this problem?

Answer: Keeping our inmates busy during their incarceration is important. Also, I don’t believe that an excessive amount of leisure time is the primary cause here. Influence and preexisting thinking patterns are more to blame.
Drug Use

Question: Do you believe illegal drug use and distribution is a rehabilitative concern in your institution? What is the standard protocol in your institution to combat these occurrences if they occur?

Answer: No. We are very aware that we cannot catch every illegal substance coming into the jail through intake. The courts have made it clear that we can’t violate someone’s rights by strip-searching them without individualized reasonable suspicion. Therefore, some substances enter our facility. To battle the introduction of contraband by arrestees and inmates, we conduct routine and unannounced individual searches and housing unit shakedowns. We also have at our disposal drug sniffing dogs to assist in shakedowns. If we have knowledge of possible drugs in a housing unit, we conduct a thorough investigation. When required, we charge the inmate criminally and with in-house disciplinary sanctions, if we find drugs.

Question: What types of rehabilitative programs are offered in your facility to those who are battling a substance abuse addiction? Where does such funding come from? Who qualifies for treatment?

Answer: We currently offer the Hazelden New Direction Substance Abuse Program. It is currently facilitated by a licensed counselor. Clients can pay for the class on their own, request funding from the court, or receive a scholarship from a current grant initiative from the National Institute of Corrections. All inmates level 4-9 qualify for the program.
Question: Assuming the inmate is involved in such criminal enterprise, do you believe he or she may be compensating for a lost sense of purpose? If so, what programs does your facility offer to help correct this?

Answer: I believe inmates participate in these criminal enterprises because they don’t know what other options exist. We currently offer Moral Reconation Therapy, a cognitive-behavioral program that addresses errors in thinking and planning for the future.

**Incarceration Conditions**

Question: What standards or measurements does your institution utilize and maintain to ensure the quality of inmate living?

Answer: We follow the jail standards set forth by our state’s Sheriff’s Association. These are only minimum standards and we always meet or exceed these standards. The Sheriff’s Association formally inspects all jails in the state each year. Additionally, our county commissioners conduct quarterly unannounced jail inspections. We are one of only a few jails in the United States that conduct written inmate surveys. The computer randomly chooses the inmates each week to fill out a survey on jail conditions, observations of crime, and their opinions of programming. We review the results and take action if required.

Question: Do you believe that mental, emotional, and physical problems are created for the inmate as a result of inadequate living conditions, within the correctional institution setting? Have you witnessed this during your tenure?
Answer: Yes. Our goal is to return the inmate back to society better than they arrived. One can’t accomplish that goal when facilities have inadequate living conditions. If inmates believe that this conduct is acceptable in custody, then why not in their life? It would be contradictory to what we believe. No.

Question: Do you believe overcrowding is a problem in today’s correctional setting? Has it ever been an issue in your institution? Do you believe a relationship exists between inmate overcrowding and subsequent inmate aggression and violence?

Answer: Yes, in some jurisdictions where the population and crime are rising faster than building additional bed space, or instituting alternatives to incarceration. No, it has not been an issue in this facility. Yes, there is a relationship between overcrowding and violence. It is typical when you place too many inmates in an area too small with nothing to occupy their time, they may start to take over their living conditions. This leads to extra stress and violence between occupants. This would also lead to an increase in suicide.

Health Maintenance

Question: What are the typical procedures and time expectations in your institution for the incoming offender, when receiving both an initial and follow-up health examination?

Answer: At an inmate’s initial intake, a health care professional asks health screening questions, mental health screening questions, and records medical and mental health observations. If the individual remains in jail, medical staff will conduct a health assessment within fourteen days. For routine medical care, inmates submit a medical request form. Each day, nurses triage all the requests and place inmates on the provider
list in order of urgency. If their treatment is outside our provider’s scope, then we will schedule a follow-up with medical providers in the community. We tell inmates that our system is similar to what is in the community. That also includes time expectations for treatment, and not all their health needs are immediate.

Question: What medical and legal options are available to your inmates if they feel they are not receiving proper or competent medical care?

Answer: The first option is submitting their complaint on a medical request form. If they are not happy with their care, then they have the option of filing a medical grievance. Inmates must exhaust all administrative remedies, request form and grievance, before they can take the next legal step in the form of a tort or lawsuit.

Question: What criteria does your institution utilize when hiring healthcare staff?

Answer: For specific healthcare positions, individuals applying must have certain professional training and experience. Our agency has specific hiring standards for all staff. They are as follows:

- No conviction or commission of a felony as an adult, with the exception of the following two below, and a case-by-case review of juvenile felony convictions. This policy will also include withheld judgments as convictions.

- No soft illegal drug use in the past three years, such as marijuana, and/or illegal use of prescription drugs, steroids, etc.

- No hard illegal drug use in the past five years, such as methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, etc.
- The two directly above deal only with use and/or possession. Sale, transportation, manufacture and/or association with anyone who is involved in any of the listed activities will be cause for disqualification. An exception to this policy may be granted for a single, experimental, one-time use of marijuana, or huffing, only within the time periods described. Polygraph confirmation is required before an exception may be considered.

- General misdemeanor convictions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, however, no convictions for domestic battery, child abuse, and stalking. Any criminal probation must already have been served.

- No driving under the influence convictions in the past three years. This policy will also include withheld judgments as convictions.

- No driver's license suspensions in the past three years for violations relating to driving under the influence, or chemical test refusal or points assessed due to moving traffic violations, if driving is an essential function of the job.

- No dishonorable discharges from any U.S. military force.

- The policy of the sheriff's office is to hire applicants who have not smoked for at least eleven months prior to applying. The use of smokeless tobacco is excluded from this policy.

- Have not smoked for the past eleven months.

- Pass a polygraph and background investigation prior to being hired.
Question: Would you acknowledge the existence of an inmate mentality in which he or she chooses not to seek medical attention as a result of being viewed as weak or vulnerable by peers? If so, how often does this occur? How is this being addressed?

Answer: No. There have been inmates within our facility that do not seek routine medical care because they do not want to pay the $5 co-pay for a visit or for prescription medication. They want to keep that money for snacks from our commissary store or for buying telephone or video visitation time.

Question: What issues do you feel are keeping today’s correctional institutions from hiring and maintaining the highest quality of healthcare workers? What recommendations do you offer?

Answer: The issues today are pay, environment, and the thought that inmates are needy or behave badly. We must pay our healthcare workers at the same rate as those working outside the jail, provide them a safe environment, and educate those considering a career in correctional healthcare of items that drive the behavior of inmates.

Gangs

Question: Are gangs an issue in your institution? If so, what criteria does the inmate use when deciding to join a particular group? What sorts of benefits are offered to the inmate? What sort of ideologies do these groups promote?

Answer: No. Gangs are not an issue in our facility. When properly managed, gangs do not need to be a facility issue.
Question: Do you believe incarceration drug activity is affected by the existence of gangs in a particular institution? If so, how? To what extent?

Answer: Yes. It is well known that gangs will run the correctional facility, if allowed by staff, and thereby will control most or all of the contraband activity.

Question: Do you believe that gang activity has an effect on the amount of violence and aggression demonstrated within a correctional institution? If so, how? To what extent?

Answer: Yes. The gang subculture is a violent subculture that wants to control its environment and members by using violence. To run the correctional facility and control contraband, they must use violence to maintain order and institute discipline.

**Emotional Difficulties of the Incarcerated**

Question: In general, do you believe the inmate’s socio-economic upbringing has an impact on his or her desires to seek rehabilitation? If so, how? To what extent?

Answer: I believe an inmate’s upbringing has an impact on his or her desire to seek rehabilitation, but I cannot say that it is based in socio-economic status. A stronger predictor would be integrity and make-up of the household, as well as the presence of criminal history in the family.

Question: How do you believe the inmate may attempt to compensate for a lost sense of emotional security while incarcerated? Does this affect his or her desires to seek rehabilitation?

Answer: Maintaining contact with family through visitation and communication helps to compensate for a lost sense of emotional security. Also, participation in our religious
programs can help as well. This can have an effect on his or her desire to seek rehabilitation.

Question: What emotional and psychological programs does your institution offer to those who are experiencing such insecurities or problems?

Answer: I mentioned our program offerings earlier. In addition, our mental health staff offers weekly group to deal with these issues.

**Incarceration Authority Abuse**

Question: Do you believe reported and/or unreported abuse by incarceration staff is a problem within today’s correctional institutions? If so, what sorts of abuse occur and by what type of staff? Does this affect the inmate’s ability to seek rehabilitation?

Answer: No. It is not as big of a problem as the public makes it out to be. A few cases that make the news taint the public on how staff treats inmates. Our facility, in the inmate survey, reports that eighty five percent or more of inmates feel safe. Reported and unreported abuse does occur in correctional facilities. Since many instances around the United States go unreported, I believe it is mainly sex between staff and inmates. It is never consensual when staff has positional power over inmates.

Question: If abuse occurs, what factors would you attribute these to? What must be done by the institution to recognize and correct these?

Answer: I would attribute abuse to three main factors: hiring standards of staff, organizational culture, and supervision. If an agency hires the wrong people, places them
in a unit that has a culture of allowing abuse of inmates, and supervisors who don’t actively supervise, then you have a recipe for abuse.

**Incarceration Aggression and Violence**

Question: Is inmate aggression and violence a concern in today’s correctional institutions? Has it ever been an issue in your institution? If so, how?

Answer: Yes, it seems to be an issue in many correctional facilities. No, we actively track our inmate-inmate and inmate-staff incidents monthly and yearly. With these numbers, we attempt to find the reasons why, and fix any problems. Our inmate-inmate violence is at or below 2.5 incidents per 10,000 inmate days, which is one of the lowest in the United States.

Question: Do you believe there is a correlation between an inmate’s aggressive tendencies and the inmate’s lost sense of emotional and psychological stability? If so, to what extent? What is being done to address this?

Answer: There are numerous causes for the aggressive tendencies for our inmates, but loss of stability is definitely one of those causes.

Question: To what extent are inmates allowed to defend themselves? Does this have any bearing on his or her chances of being placed in a rehabilitation program?

Answer: We, and criminal statutes, allow inmate victims to defend themselves in certain instances. When attacked, and you believe your life is in danger, defense is an option. It is not okay to continue to attack after the officer subdues the attacker, or the attacker
stops. We look at those factors when making decisions about inmate disciplinary
sanctions or programming options for the inmate.

Incarceration Treatment Programs

Question: What types of meaningful rehabilitative programs are offered in your
institution? How are they beneficial to the inmate’s rehabilitation? How are they funded?

Answer: We offer a substance abuse programming, Moral Reconation Therapy, GED,
workforce readiness, and community resource education. All of these programs address
areas of life that can affect an individual’s chance to recidivate. They are either funded by
program fees paid by the inmate, court funding, or scholarship.

Question: What sorts of inmates take advantage of such programs?

Answer: Mostly inmates ordered to take the programs by the court or probation.

Question: How does your institution determine which inmates qualify if too many wish to
take part? Which inmates are excluded?

Answer: Inmates who are sentenced have first priority. Only those inmates with a
classification level 4-9 qualify for programs.

Transitional or Release Programs

Question: What types of transitional programs are offered to inmates once they are
released from your institution? How are these programs funded?
Answer: Transitional programs are offered through either misdemeanor or felony probation. They are funded in various ways, from the offender paying, to state funding through the Department of Health and Welfare.

Question: Do you believe these are beneficial to the released inmate? Does the inmate have a voice in choosing such a program? How does the inmate qualify for such a program?

Answer: They are absolutely beneficial. The probation officer and the judge will have a say in what programs the offender will attend, all based on assessments. Each provider will have different qualifications.

Question: Do you believe there is a relationship between one’s ability to seek rehabilitation while incarcerated, along with taking part in a successful transitional program? How so?

Answer: Absolutely. In Carlo DiClemente’s Stages of Change Model, we see that an individual must move towards acceptance and appreciation of a problem before he or she is willing to change. With this in mind, an offender must desire to change before it can actually take place.

Question: What sorts of consequences exist for inmates who do not have access to quality transitional programs? Do you believe this effects recidivism? How so?

Answer: The number one consequence is an increased chance of recidivism. If an inmate has unmet needs along with no positive change, he or she should be expected to return to the same behavior that lead them to jail in the first place.
When assessing the results of the interview, I was pleased to find a pre-trial facility which values rehabilitation through cognitive and behavioral education. I would have appreciated these opportunities in my incarceration experience. Also, I believe the Nebraska facility may have saved my alcoholic cellmate, had the Hazelden New Direction Substance Abuse Program been instituted. Furthermore, I was astonished at the amount of agreement we shared regarding the importance of housing, medical care, and transitional programming. While conducting the interview, the value of transparency became clear. The idea that every aspect of inmate life and development is open to feedback and development is crucial, as well as revolutionary.

I am surprised the official did not acknowledge a correlation between leisure activity and inmate criminal enterprise. Given the insight expressed by Baca, Upchurch, and my Idaho cellmates, there seems to be a disparity of thought here. I do not know what to make of this, other than to suggest limiting the amount of free time available to inmates. I am equally surprised at the interviewee’s responses regarding authoritative abuse. And while such corruption may not occur as widely as I initially thought, I still believe more effective training and oversight may be needed in general.
CHAPTER 4

In order for any particular institution to have success, it must be willing to establish and assess clear and obtainable objectives for those whom it serves on a continual basis. Within many areas of the private and public sector, it is customary for governing members of an organization to frequently collaborate on issues of intention and sustainability. We often hear of state of the state gatherings or shareholders meetings, which are held for these matters. Furthermore, it is often during these collaborations where the organization’s ideologies are reiterated or amended. Nevertheless, in regard to the socially funded and driven organization that is the American correctional facility, such a process of internal examination is nonexistent for the typical American. For the benefit of the law abiding citizen and the inmate offender, we are not given public access to statistical information, in which to assess strengths and weaknesses for future implementation. I reference this because we are all shareholders and investors in public safety and welfare.

Instead, over the last few decades, many Americans have been deeply affected by sentencing reform initiated by politicians in the 1960’s and 1970’s, which have consequently led many to adopt notions of punishment over rehabilitation, in regard to confinement. As Norval Morris, a law professor at the University of Chicago states, “In 1965 a major purpose of the prison was thought to be the rehabilitation of the prisoner. By a variety of reeducative programs, the prison was to turn the malefactor into a conforming and productive member of society. In the ensuing decades, these high aspirations have been rejected in the public commentary, and it has become fashionable to say that nothing works in prison to reform criminals” (Morris & Rothman 247). This
observation is critical because it allows the reader to gain an understanding as to the origins of a facility’s underdevelopment and insufficiencies.

As I have once been told, nothing is more impressionable to a people than an idea. We as a nation continue to struggle with the notions of rehabilitation to this day. In fact, “though crime rates in the early 1990’s were broadly the same as they were, or were slightly lower than they were, at the beginning of the 1980’s, the great increase in rates of incarceration continued, in substantial part because of those sentencing reforms” (Morris & Rothman 244). My point is that in light of these facts, as well as the themes I have thoroughly referenced, we need to mindfully begin taking responsibility for the consequences we have allowed to occur. The rest of the chapter will unravel the pertinent and successive steps I feel must be initiated and instituted in order to help correct our collective biases, while providing the inmate offender with opportunities to effectively rehabilitate.

One strategy I believe may be effective in strengthening a national recognition and agreement to invest in rehabilitation within incarceration is to educate Americans from an early age, as to the value and dignity of those worth saving. More specifically, I propose that just as we are introduced to social science and literature, we also be instructed to invest our attention to understanding the struggles of those attempting to find meaning in sin and immorality in our own society. How I believe this may be accomplished is through the examination of incarceration autobiographical writings, which is beneficial for both reader and writer. By unraveling and revealing the inmate’s mindset and motivations for engaging in a criminal activity, along with his or her contextual surroundings, the reader begins to empathize with the offender and view him
or her with humility. He or she becomes inclusive, rather than exclusive, to the sensitivities of the human species. As Baca states, “We begin to see them differently. Our first realization is that they are not all the predatory ogres the media and politicians said they were” (Evans x). For the inmate writer who knows that his or her story is being read and acknowledged, he or she becomes engaged in a healing process all in its own. On a cognitive level, the writer is presented with an opportunity to reflect in detail while carefully tracing the progress of behavior which led him or her to offend. Furthermore, he or she becomes emotionally and psychologically empowered by expressing his or herself outward in such a progressive and effective way. “These writers, through the redemptive act of writing, announce to the world beyond the walls and bars that a spark of life still burns in them. From this vulnerable source, where their words collide with their damaged spirits, they strip away the armor and communicate their humanity” (Evans xi). Thus, it becomes an essential bonding experience for all parties involved. The engaged student learns to reject ill-conceived notions of the incarcerated projected on him or her, while instead, choosing to become an advocate for progressive restructure to those who often find it difficult to help themselves.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that any extended autobiographical assessment done by the inmate offender, in conjunction with educational training in the humanities, may further allow him or her to gain clarity into the emotions and motivations influencing years of criminalization, due to poverty and social disparity. These conclusions are based on the observations gained from the authors analyzed from chapter one. For Jimmy Baca, teaching himself to read from an unnamed textbook while incarcerated in a Yuma county jail imaginatively inspired a personal desire to return to
experiences of his past (Baca 99-100), which over the course of his incarceration, allowed him to effectively come to terms with heartbreak and misfortune. He states while in isolation at Florence State Prison, “The more I visited Estancia, the more there was to see and do. I wanted to know more about it, to get into every person’s heart and know what happened to each of them; what changed them, why things turned out as they did. I wanted to understand both the joyous and the tragic sides of their lives” (Baca 142-143). Furthermore, in summing up the nature of his incarceration within the prologue of his autobiography, he states, “Language gave me a way to keep the chaos of prison at bay and prevent it from devouring me; it was a resource that allowed me to confront and understand my past, even to write from it some compelling truths, and it opened the way toward a future that was based not on fear or bitterness or apathy but on compassionate involvement and a belief that I belonged” (Baca 5). Indeed, I contend that literature and poetry are essential for the inmate in that they provide both intellectual and emotional nurturance. It not only grants him or her with the capability of expanded thought and terminology, but provides a meaningful outlet to feelings he or she has never been able to feel before, due to social and economic hardship. In turn, literature helps transition from one story to the other to enable the offender to make sense out of the past, while providing the opportunity to emotionally heal. Baca was able to do this through imagination, rather than through paper.

Such a meaningful occurrence seemed to be experienced by Upchurch while incarcerated at Lewisburg Prison. He states that while reading Les Misérables and The Feminine Mystiques, his perspective of himself within the world changed forever. This was because, “I discovered that people I had never met knew exactly how I felt—so well
that I could use their writings as reference points in my own life. Literature gave me the vocabulary I could use to express my deepest feelings and the insight to understand that my situation was universal. I escaped in a way far more satisfying than any tunnel under a prison wall, into a completely new world” (Upchurch 91). Thus, it seems that as a hardened criminal who frequently engaged in incarceration aggression and violence, he was able to make use of this rehabilitative tool because it spoke to an immediate suffering. What begins to emerge is my understanding of a resolution to incarceration rehabilitation which needs to be holistically sound, mind-body-heart, in treating all aspects of the offender. And while I feel this particular approach is essential when treating inmates of pre-incarceration disparity, I would also agree that one-on-one or group counseling is necessary.

Regardless of whether the inmate suffers from an emotional predisposition, brought on by social injustice prior to incarceration, I believe that he or she must have immediate access to an education that speaks at the heart of his or her deviant behavior, especially in light of any relevant job training offered. As Upchurch states, in regard to many who are incarcerated, “We have to stop thinking of education as the simple accumulation of facts. The greatest gift an education gives is perspective” (Upchurch 201). With this in mind, I propose the discontinuation of any facility placement program which does not first inspire one to change from the inside out. To better explain my position, I recall the daily routine of inmate Sam Gutierrez. As mentioned in chapter one, he details his involvement in a facility computer course, which obviously is a collection of knowledge, but strictly serves to alleviate his struggles with monotony. Thus, he does not respect its value for rehabilitation. Furthermore, at the conclusion of his diary entry
the reader is led to believe that he also struggles with hopelessness and a lost sense of direction due to incarceration. He states, “I hope this diary is of use to you; it fails to capture the constant unhappiness of prison life and the constant sense of danger—you are never for a moment happy, except sometimes briefly on visitors days, and that is a bitter happiness” (Morris & Rothman 233). My point here is that had he been given a coexisting opportunity to explore and strengthen his desires and self-esteem, possibly through literature and poetry, he may have been better equipped to make use of this program or another, which obviously saves on institutional time and resource.

In contrast to Sam Gutierrez, Jeff Henderson gives further proof to my arguments expressed above. During his incarceration in Terminal State Prison, he was able to continue along a path of proactive rehabilitation, even during his incarceration job placement, because a foundation of personal inquiry had already been established. More specifically, as he became familiar with an accurate depiction of his African American ancestry through the literary means of They Came before Columbus and The Destruction of Black Civilization, his ability to transcend above attitudes of hopelessness were made effortless. He became empowered by the wisdom and courage of his people. And like Upchurch, the emotional and intellectual power of literature began to eradicate a sense of disillusionment, further inspiring him to partake in acts of humanitarianism while incarcerated (Henderson 121-124). Yet, after later being placed on a kitchen detail position within the facility, a remarkable connection began to occur within his mind. While prepping food, he states, “Cooking took me back to the Motel 6 in San Diego. I was at the stove cooking pounds of cocaine and watching it harden as I submerged the glass pots in the ice-cold water one at a time. The more I thought about it, the more my
past was beating me down…I wasn’t recalling the good old days of my ill-gotten gains, I was regretting them…But I was now starting to see that maybe there was something more I could do with my life. I began to dream of a better life” (Henderson 146-147). Thus, it is within the realm of action that the inmate offender begins to transcend a newly acquired educative understanding of self, making it that much more real and reinforced. Henderson was later able to fulfill his goal of becoming a successful chef, which I believe can be hugely attributed to this two-part rehabilitative process, consisting of literary-educative instruction and reflective job placement. Nevertheless, I believe a third variable must be included as well.

Not only must the education offered contain an emotional element, the inmate must also have access to external affective nurturance if he or she is to continue along a path of rehabilitative success. The autobiographical authors I have chosen to analyze speak volumes in this regard. For instance, Upchurch’s educational spark during incarceration was heavily nurtured through the support of his sister Stoney. Her ability to connect with him on both an intellectual and emotional level inspired him to spend the majority of his time in self-introspection while at Camp Hill, an environment which generally did not encourage this attitude. Nevertheless, he spoke of how she challenged his perspective on writers, such as Irving Wallace, while continuing to share her own viewpoints on literature and life. He states, in regard to the letter correspondence, “I would take a shower, go back to my cell, and sit down to share a few hours with my sister. Camp Hill is forever associated in my mind with really getting to know her” (Upchurch 58). Furthermore, the institution was supportive in its ability to grant her frequent access to both write and visit. Unlike the difficulties faced by Coppolino,
expressed in chapter one, the letters and cards sent by her were left intact, allowing
Upchurch’s growth to take its course. I believe each facility must be willing to support
visitation and correspondence for the sake of its inmate population. Nevertheless, while
later imprisoned at Western, this facility went beyond the former. It was here that
Upchurch was given the opportunity to receive a college education, through the
instruction of a Quaker woman, who challenged his intellectual and emotional
perspective in a way no one had ever cared to do so. He states, “She never lost patience
with me, though. She talked endlessly with me, helping me examine my beliefs. Through
those discussions I found out more about her faith and began to further develop me own”
(Upchurch 109). He later goes on to mention that she continued to be a living example to
her principles. In turn, he was inspired to act as an advocate for other inmates and
disadvantaged children. Thus, the acquisition of knowledge granted to him early on in
incarceration had now begun to transition into meaningful action, given that he was able
to finally secure access to a sustaining and cultivating role model while on the inside.

Interestingly enough, the emotional support Jeff Henderson received from an
insightful inmate population while incarcerated at Terminal Island, equally encouraged a
sense of advocacy. More specifically, while given the opportunities to engage in
emotionally charging literature surrounding the dignity of his African American heritage,
by the Nation of Islam and the Imze sects, the individuals comprising such groups helped
to solidify what was stated in print. As he read, he took notice of how this particular
inmate population related to one another. In turn, what was being stated in theory was
equally being put into action. He states, “They were always respectful and polite. They
called me Brother, and we always answered one another, Yes, sir. They were the most
respected brothers on the yard. No one messed with the Nation, not the gangbangers and not even the guards, because members of the Nation stuck to themselves and never brought drama” (Henderson 122). Thus, they harnessed a harmonious and inclusive mentality that is characteristic of rehabilitation in relation to one’s entrance into society. Henderson proceeds to highlight, throughout the remaining chapters, a dissipation of previous attitudes of aggression, brought on by racism and a life-style of street gang activity. Instead, shortly after this encounter, he chose to enroll in an available G.E.D program while volunteering to help mentally unstable inmates (Henderson 124).

My point in highlighting both examples is this: While I believe emotional-intellectual nurturing education and job placement are crucial to one’s rehabilitation, the inmate must also be inspired by the qualities and actions of mentors at any given time. Every facility must be willing to hire and reward based on this characteristic, along with a number of other pertinent qualities. In this, I would also like to suggest the existence of any emotionally supportive training and coaching which addresses the mental and emotional states of staff on a frequent basis. As suggested in chapter one by Dr. Coppolino, many guards tend to violate the rights of inmates due to personal insecurities. Such individuals need to be taken care of properly before they are equipped to handle the issues of others. This is an aspect of the American correctional system which I believe has been ignored for quite some time, yet, it is obviously apparent that we continue to be emotionally directed creatures.

In returning to the notion of job placement within the incarceration setting, not only is it crucial that such a designation be included with an educational element while directing the inmate to self-reflection while in action, but I feel it must also present a
challenge to the offender while offering to reward him or her financially. As Norval Morris points out, a number of European countries have implemented a system in which inmates are paid full scale wages for jobs performed outside of the institution. Yet, in America many manufacturer organizations and organized labor unions are restricting the occurrence of such innovations (Morris & Rothman 246-247). Obviously, these groups are motivated by financial prosperity. However, as we begin to acknowledge the value of rehabilitation over punishment, we may also begin to see the additional benefits this may have for the entire system of corrections and beyond. As stated, not only would such an implementation allow a monthly stipend for inmates and their families, who are most likely taken care of by taxpayer dollars, but more importantly allow the system to be reimbursed on a continual basis through a deduction of inmate wages (Morris & Rothman 247). In turn, I believe the institution would be better prepared to allocate further resources to needed areas such as facility maintenance, medical and educational supplies, substance abuse counseling, staff training, and release transitional programming. Furthermore, the inmate would be providing productive services, thereby increasing his or her self-esteem, because of the tangible results offered. In relation to the themes I have chosen to analyze in chapter one, the inmate may feel less motivated to engage in a culture of violence, drugs, and illegal money-making operations if other opportunities of revenue are definably established. But again, all must be done around the helm of an emotionally nurturing environment, which this particular system is more equipped to provide as well.

An avenue of rehabilitation that I feel needs more consideration, in contrast to long-term imprisonment, is intermediate sentencing. I am referring to such avenues as
outpatient treatment programs, house arrest, electronic monitoring, and fines. As Norval Morris suggests, in the long run, such sentencing may help to reduce incarceration overcrowding while reducing spending put forth by prisons and jails (Morris & Rothman 256). And while I acknowledge that such alternatives may not work for all offenders, I do believe they must be readily available to an increasing number of inmates suffering from substance abuse. Not only will these reduce incarceration gang and economic activity, due to the absence of inmates susceptible to the steady flow of drugs from within, but allow such individuals to have continual access to outside non-profit or social resources that he or she would not be given otherwise. Furthermore, these offenders would continue to have access to family and friend support systems which are hard to come by during confinement. Again, I look to my outside treatment, once I left the Nebraska facility in 2008. The intermediate sentences above were detrimental to my rehabilitation from alcohol use although I had the support of a trusting probation officer and Alcoholics Anonymous advocate. And being free from the negativities of the facility, I was free to mindfully reflect on the ridicule of having to wear an alcohol monitoring bracelet while being limited to where I went. In retrospect, I would not find benefit in confinement, but did so with the help of these alternatives.

In regard to the occurrences of staff abuse, I already suggested the need for better training and emotional counseling for these individuals. Yet, while taking into account the revelations made by The Stanford Prison Experiment, I would also like to suggest a reassessment of the social variables or conditions which create such opportunities. More specifically, I recommend continual and thorough oversight regarding the reoccurring procedures involving inmate-staff interaction, such as finger-printing and the issuing of
facility attire. The authority figures involved need to be held to a higher accountability here, even if it requires frequent monitoring. Obviously, there is no way around the booking processes. However, assurance needs to be established in order that they are carried out with the utmost professionalism, as to insure the integrity of all parties. In this, I would also recommend the creation of a position in which an inmate advocate shadows the staff member as he or she performs such tasks. If this had been done, I feel I would not have been intimidated by the guard who facilitated my clothing change, while in the Nebraska facility.

In regard to the state of the American correctional institution, I would like to acknowledge that we must be leery of the existence of privatized correctional facilities. As recent research suggests, there is little evidence indicating the cost efficiency of such places, whose investors benefit financially both in terms of the number and duration of those who are held within its walls (The Sentencing Project). Thus, it would logically follow that such organizations, like the Corrections Corporation of American, would be presented with a conflict of interest in which they would be less willing to invest in countering a number of issues I have spoken against within this project, which the article later seems to validate. In regard to incarceration aggression and violence, “A survey of the prison industry conducted by analyst James Austin also found 49% more inmate on staff assaults and 65% more inmate on inmate assaults occurred in private minimum and medium security facilities than in comparable publicly run facilities” (The Sentencing Project). As I have explained, the only way we can begin to correct such vices is through the distribution of resources we must be willing to allocate. In doing so, we must be willing to alter our understanding of punishment over rehabilitation. Thus, it is important
that we be equally willing to stand against legislation which allows local, state, and federal governments to contract out to those who do not have a public interest at heart.

To summarize, I feel we must learn to take a stance against decades of prejudice facing the incarcerated. As young students, we must be led to value recovery, while being able to sync our hearts and minds with those behind bars. For the inmate, he or she cannot rehabilitate without the promise of emotional security. Education sets the foundation for both. Literacy creates opportunities of emotional correspondence between both parties, while empowering the inmate offender to sustain a sense of conviction and self-worth. Yet, the inmate must be driven further. Once he or she is directed toward a solid educative inquiry through literature, with the support of family, friends, and institutional role models, he or she must be provided with a financially and intrinsically rewarding job placement. It must also be able to create opportunities toward self-reflection, in relation to his or her deviant tendencies.
CONCLUSION

As humans, we are inherently prone to imperfection. It is an inevitability that each of us, in varying ways, will deviate from the written and unwritten laws of society. And in an age which often rewards aggression and instant gratification, it becomes apparent we must begin to place a greater appreciation in those institutions which treat the most severe of deviant behavior. This is especially true when considering that many who land behind the bars of correctional facilities never have access to informative mentors along the path toward maturation. In this project, I have chosen to examine a few critical issues within the American incarceration setting that keep the inmate from reaching an effective rehabilitation.

In chapter one, I utilized the work of autobiographical authors to elaborate on such issues as monotony, which often includes the existence of trivial or non-existent treatment programs, while compounding other existing issues like inmate drug use and emotional and psychological strain. Thus, it has come to my attention that any resolution made toward a particular theme must be contingent upon a simultaneous resolution toward any other which may undermine its proposed alleviation. For example, it may seem counterproductive to apply resources when targeting the reduction of an incarceration gang, whose members thrive on the selling and distribution of drugs from within, when the facility is not equipped to adequately treat the emotional and substance abuse problems of the inmates who are being sold to.

In chapter two, I focused my attention toward a personal examination of these themes, as they related to my incarceration experiences of 2007 and 2008. Essentially, I
learned that I was unable to rehabilitate because I was unsuccessful at maintaining a hold of basic necessities I have a continual access to, while on the outside. I am speaking of clean and spacious living conditions, nutritious food, external emotional support, and psychotropic medication. Thus, these facilities must be willing to allow the inmate to transcend beyond the bodily realm expressed through Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs paradigm. Once accomplished, the inmate may begin to move into a cognitive and spiritual self-reflection.

In chapter three, I conducted an interview with a professional of the incarceration setting. His insight gave clarification and validation to a number of themes expressed by inmate offenders. Thus, I was able to gain a greater perspective from both sides of the incarceration spectrum. His expertise was also beneficial when allowing me to arrive at the possibilities of future implementation, which I expressed in the following chapter.

In chapter four, I was able to assess the importance of literacy and education, as well as meaningful job placement, for the rehabilitating offender. In doing so, it is essential he or she be granted emotional nurturance, both through print and in action. What I propose around this is a two-step process of theory and application, while allowing the offender to make use of his or her effort through monetary compensation. Furthermore, I value a recurring letter correspondence between the inmate and civilian, which seemingly has benefit for both. Thus, throughout the entire process which requires the cooperation of the private (whose involvement is necessary when considering full-scale pay wages) and public (schools encouraging student-inmate interaction) sectors of society, we as Americans begin taking responsibility for an institution we helped create but seemingly reject. In turn, I believe the administrators of these institutions will begin
to place greater emphasis on resource allocation, as inmate morale and productivity begins to soar.

I have always assumed that my greatest career aspirations lie in the field of politics. And while not knowing exactly where, I believe it may be to influence legislation which benefits the lowliest and underprivileged, including the suffering incarcerated which I know well. These issues will continue to ignite my conscious thought, while creating a starting point for improvement. My children will be educated to value the restorative process of this struggling minority.
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