

CORRECTIVE LENSES

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Due more to politics and economics rather than any increase in crime, incarceration rates in the United States have exploded during the past two decades.

Today the nation's prisons and jails brim with 1.8 million people, and few observers seem much bothered. Another three million are "doing time" outside, as satellites of the court system, subject to unannounced visits from parole and probation officers, mandatory urine tests, home detention, or the invisible leash of electronic shackles. Millions more are connected to punishment from the other end, making their living directly or indirectly from the Keynesian stimulus of the nation's lockup costs. (Parenti, 1999:167).

Michigan mirrors this national trend.

Fifteen years ago, there were 16,003 inmates in Michigan prisons. Today, the number has soared above 46,000. Taxpayers pay dearly for prison growth. Corrections spending now tops \$1.67 billion a year, or 17 percent of Michigan's general-fund budget. (Flint Journal, 2001:A-12).

This paper, which draws upon my fourteen years experience as a corrections officer, focuses on expanding boot camps in Michigan as an alternative to incarceration for some criminals.

Politics influence prison populations. Utilizing 'tough on crime' rhetoric is effective during election campaigns to get votes. Protecting the public from crime is important but all too often the result is higher taxes for more prisons to confine more people. In three terms Governor Engler, of Michigan has helped pave the way for additional crowding. Corrections officers, myself included, opposed double-bunking and conducted informational pickets to educate the public on security issues. When Governor Engler addressed the topic in his 1994 State of the State Speech, he said:

"Making two prisoners live in each cell has also added more than 6500 beds to our prison capacity, while saving taxpayers nearly \$700 million in both operating and construction costs of new prisons. I make no apologies for this -- if our kids can double-bunk in college, convicted criminals can double-bunk in prison."

Michigan's 650 law, intended to snare drug kingpins, also contributed to the influx of prisoners. 1.

The economic impact prisons have is important to understand. Industries that manufacture razor wire, pre-fabricated cellblocks, electronic monitoring equipment, microwave detection systems, belly-chains, leg-irons, handcuffs and weapons all profit from prisons. Prison economics is directly influenced by the reactive rather than proactive philosophy of the justice system. Incarceration rates show a preference for spending money on

confinement as opposed to education and treatment programs. An article in the Star-Ledger gave State senator Dr. John Schwarz's insight:

"When I'm writing a tuition check for my daughter at the University of Michigan, I feel I am in part subsidizing the corrections system." and he ought to know. He has watched the budget for the university slashed to free up money for prisons ever since 1979. Since then, the state has spent billions of dollars to add more than thirty new prisons to its system. When the buildup began, one out of every fourteen state employees worked for the prison system. By 1995, one out of every four was a DOC employee. As a result of Michigan's diversion of funds into corrections, the ability of the poor to survive in places like Detroit and Flint has been made much more difficult. Consequently, the low-income urban neighborhoods in these cities have become the main supplier of inmates to the new investor-funded prisons. (Dyer, 1995:Star-Ledger).

It is also big business for private firms like Wackenhut and Corrections Corporation of America. In 1999 Wackenhut opened a juvenile facility in Lake County which represents the first privatized prison in Michigan.

The media plays a significant role in how people perceive crime and punishment. Television bombards viewers with a variety of crime-related topics. A glance in the T.V. Guide proves the point: "Cops; Arrest & Trial;" "Police Videos;" "America's Most Wanted;" "Law & Order;" "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and a serial, "Oz," that offers viewers a soap-opera look inside a penitentiary. Shows with the judge as the main character are becoming more

popular: WJBK's "Judge Hatchett;" "Judge Judy;" "Divorce Court;" "Power of Attorney;" and "People's Court." The networks cater to everyone: "Judge Joe Brown;" "Judge Mathis;" "Judge Lane" and "Judging Amy." Cable even offers "Court TV" which is solely dedicated to crime-related topics.

Graphic depictions of crime can remain etched in the minds of the viewing public. Explicit details captured on film equal high ratings which ensure high profits. The mundane has no place in this highly competitive market. It is no wonder that taxpayers have an exaggerated fear of crime.

This trend could be reversed if boot camps were expanded. Their goal is to change an offenders perspective. Likewise, society could change its perspective on imprisonment practices and the media could be used to this end. A new governor will be elected in less than a year and endorsing boot camps could be part of a campaign platform. Legislation to change current laws could be enacted to spearhead boot camp growth as opposed to merely incarcerating offenders. Refusing to change current practices is akin to wiping the nose without curing the cold.

Boot Camps Defined

A variety of nonviolent offenders clog our penal facilities. Drunk drivers, prostitutes, petty larcenists, bad-check writers, and low-level drug dealers make their way to prison and share cells with people convicted of murder, rape and child molestation. It is my belief that Michigan's ninety-day boot camp program, which already exists, should be expanded to help alleviate overcrowding and use prison space only for dangerous inmates. To achieve this end laws would have to be changed.

The primary goal of bootcamps are to help reduce bedspace in our seriously overcrowded prisons and jails and to reduce recidivism. Rehabilitation of the offender is still the ultimate goal yet the degree to which it is embraced ebbs and flows with the current political climate. Despite a history of heated debate the concept of rehabilitation remains intriguing to researchers while often ridiculed in correctional circles.

One of the most vocal on this topic was the late sociologist, Robert Martinson, who had often been associated with the "nothing works" philosophy of correctional rehabilitation. In 1974 he published What works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform that first appeared in The Public Interest, and concluded: "*With few*

and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism." (Martinson, 1976:10 emphasis in the original).

This statement was based on findings of 231 studies between 1945 and 1967 which were detailed in the massive work: The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies (Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks, 1975). In 1976 a heated debate ensued in Rehabilitation, Recidivism, and Research.

"Ted Palmer, Senior Researcher in the California Youth Authority, has subjected the Martinson article to a point-by-point critique, to which Martinson, in turn, has responded. Stuart Adams, Criminal Justice Consultant, also disputed Martinson's findings; his paper and Martinson's reply to it are published here for the first time." (Matlin, 1976:3).

In 1979 Martinson wrote New Findings, New Views: A Note of Caution Regarding Sentencing Reform. I contacted Hofstra University and secured a copy of Volume 7 which, to the best of my knowledge, was Martinson's last published work.

"The conclusion I derived from ECT (Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment) is supplied in an article which has been widely quoted and reprinted. However, new evidence from our current study leads me to reject my original conclusion and suggest an alternative more adequate to the facts at hand. I have hesitated up to now, but the evidence in our survey is simply too overwhelming to ignore (Martinson, 1979:252).

The study to which Martinson refers was titled, Reprocessing Criminal Offenders: A Synthesis of Research Findings. In reviewing much of Martinson's work it was fascinating to read his recantation:

"In brief, ECT focused on summarizing evaluation research which purported to uncover *causality*; in our current study we reject this perspective as premature and focus on uncovering *patterns* which can be of use to policymakers in choosing among available treatment programs. These patterns are sufficiently consistent to oblige me to modify my previous conclusion.

The authors of ECT laboriously summarized hundreds of evaluation studies, but astonishingly the book itself contains no general conclusion. It is a compendium of findings displayed in hundreds of subparagraphs, and, in my opinion, it defies summary as a whole. I undertook, on my own responsibility, to supply what the authors of this work could not or would not supply—a conclusion. I limited my summary to recidivism, and included with the summary brief discussion and analyses of the research on which the summary was based. My conclusion was: "With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism."

This conclusion takes the usual form of rejecting an hypothesis, i.e., the hypothesis that treatment *added to* the networks of criminal justice does in fact have an *apprecialbe* effect. The very evidence presented in the article indicates that it would have been incorrect to say that treatment had *no* effect. Some studies showed an effect, others did not. But, all together, looking at this entire body of research, I drew this conclusion, and thought it important that the conclusion be made public and debated. It surely was debated.

On the basis of the evidence in our current study, I withdraw this conclusion. I have often said that treatment added to the networks of criminal justice is "impotent," and I withdraw this characterization as well. I protested at the slogan used by the media to sum up what I said-"nothing works." The press has no time for scientific quibbling and got to the heart of the matter better than I did." (Ibid, pp. 253,254).

If Mr. Martinson were alive today it would be interesting to here his views on boot camps. They are not intended to ridicule or subject inmates to "hard time," nor are they designed to generate a pool of free labor to clean roadsides or beautify city parks. They include work and discipline but also build self-esteem, teach independence and provide an avenue of success in the free world. From what I've observed, they are not what television has portrayed of late: boot camp participants competing for a huge cash prize if they survive the torture, or dead beat dads getting the guilt trip of their life, or out of control children that attend day-long boot camps to scare them into compliance with their parents.

Boot camps can provide a second chance, an opportunity for offenders to earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, learn a vocational trade, work hard and get in shape. They give people a chance to change how they see themselves and to begin anew. In Michigan, when a trainee graduates his criminal record is expunged. Boot camps can benefit society, as the research will show,

because tax dollars are saved by slowing down new prison construction. It is also much cheaper to keep an offender in boot camp for ninety days as opposed to prison for several years. Successful completion of the program, coupled with comprehensive aftercare, may reduce the likelihood of an offender committing new crimes.

Presently there is only one boot camp in Michigan. Before an examination of this program is undertaken it is necessary to explore some important events that have influenced correctional practices in Michigan. The automotive industry is perhaps the biggest factor.

From cars to bars: A lesson in Michigan History

In 1980 Michigan was suffering an economic recession. Automotive workers felt the shudder of uncertainty as car makers laid off thousands of employees. No one was immune from being pink-slipped. As a result many opted to relocate to states like Texas or Oklahoma where work was abundant. The emergence of the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA) exported thousands of jobs south of the border to Mexico. Those that were fortunate enough to keep their jobs witnessed a transition that would forever change decades of past practice. In order for Michigan to remain competitive in this industry it would need to restructure, reorganize and downsize. The Japanese were dominating the

car market and making their American counterparts look bad in the process.

A get-tough approach within the auto plants ended the days of getting drunk on the assembly-line and smoking dope in the parking lot at lunchtime. Punching a co-workers time-card so he could skip out early to go golfing was now a thing of the past. So was the practice of avoiding work simply by hiding in the maze of a huge plant. This automotive facelift saw many factories in Saginaw, Flint and Detroit get revamped or completely demolished.

This consolidation resulted in high-tech, state-of-the-art car assemblers like the Orion Plant in neighboring Oakland County. All of the car manufacturers stepped up their outsourcing policy (sending certain jobs to smaller local plants) and perfection became the norm not the exception. Within a few short years foreign automobile markets posed much less of a threat. It also marked the end of an era where *guaranteed* employment with one of the "Big Three" awaited high school graduates. Michigan baby-boomers, myself included, were subjected to countless warnings by their parents: "Stay in school;" "Don't rely on working at Generous Motors;" "Get out of Michigan if you want job security or join a branch of the armed forces." I work with several former auto workers that were bought out of their retirements. Part of their settlements included

free tuition to attend criminal justice classes for entry into the Department of Corrections.

Another significant change that displaced workers was the downsizing of the Department of Mental Health. Residents were placed in community group homes and employees were offered early retirements, transfers, or employment with other departments like Corrections. In Lapeer, group homes replaced the Oakdale Center for Developmental Disabilities. Ironically, the site where Oakdale once stood overlooked the swampy land that would later become the Thumb Correctional Facility.

The door for prison expansion was opened a bit wider not just because the Great Lake State was in the grip of recession. The "war on drugs" was pumped up due to the emergence of crack cocaine and Michigan suffered prison riots in 1981. A Consent Decree from the U.S. Justice Department (an order to comply or suffer fines and sanctions) began the clean-up of deteriorating prisons and the construction of new facilities.

Perspectives on Prison Growth

The auto industry can serve as an example to Corrections. General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler re-tooled because they were forced to change their perspective. The alternative,

refusing to change, could have devastated the industry. In response to political and economic factors the Michigan Department of Corrections grew by leaps and bounds. More people than ever do time behind prison walls but it is interesting to note that not every county embraced prison expansion.

Those counties with a heavy concentration of prisons often clamor for more because they see it as a boost to the local economy: jobs for guards, teachers, counselors, accountants, maintenance personnel, clerks, nurses and a host of other support staff. One need only visit the counties of Jackson (nicknamed Jacktown) or Ionia (I Own Ya!) to witness this firsthand. The following will illustrate how two counties vary in their perception of prisons.

Tuscola County comprises part of Michigan's Thumb region. Ionia is located in the center of the state. Both are rural areas with farming as the chief source of income. Tuscola has one minimum security camp where prisoners go out in the community on work details to clean parks, roadsides, cut wood and build nature trails. Ionia has several prisons ranging from supermax, level VI (that which houses inmates found guilty of murder in prison or those with a history of escape) to minimum (those requiring the least amount of supervision and near the completion of a

sentence). Tuscola made it quite clear that they did not want any more prisons when they rejected a 1500 bed facility which was to house Level IV prisoners (those requiring close supervision). Ionia County accepted the prison. Mr. Flintoff, the director of Camp Tuscola, told a group of us in a training seminar about a telephone call he received from a businessman friend. "Thanks. Anytime you guys don't want a prison send it our way! We'll take all the business we can get!"

When Lapeer's Thumb Correctional Facility was on the drawing board there was resistance from community leaders because they knew very little about prisons. It was to be the first in the county and the usual fears were voiced. A major concern was location because an eyesore was the last thing anyone wanted. What type of prisoners were to be housed in this close/medium facility was important as well. Would it be constructed well enough to prevent escapes and what contingency plans would be in place if an escape did occur? After several town meetings, and an annexation that placed the prison in the city limits for tax revenue, construction commenced. The site would be a swampy area between the now defunct Oakdale Regional Center for Developmental Disabilities and I-69. Part of the agreement was that the population would not exceed 480 prisoners. When it opened in 1987 that part of the agreement was upheld. By 1992 the prison double-bunked to 960. On

October 1st of 2001 an additional 240 inmates began to fill the newly constructed Franklin Unit (Level IV) which will push the population to 1200.

On October 5th, 2001, one of my duties was to assist in monitoring chow lines for the evening meal. I recognized at least five inmates that did time at Thumb Correctional years ago and were now back residing in the new Franklin unit. Chow lines are not conducive to conversation amidst the noise of people and the clatter of plastic food trays but I did manage to speak with two prisoners while they stood in line.

The first conversation was with a young black man from Flint who used to work in the kitchen when I was the second shift kitchen officer. He paroled in 1997. His crime was selling drugs in Flint.

Prisoner: "Hey Bonds, what's up?"

"Hi *****, what's goin' on?"

Prisoner: "My P.O. violated me, man. My fault. But I was doin' good, man. I was cool for four-and-a-half years but caught a dirty urine (drug use)."

"Well, keep the faith. Like the man once said: "This too, shall pass." If you ever need to holler at me I'm not going anywhere."

Prisoner: "Bet." (Slang for o.k., or, I just may take you

up on that offer).

We made small talk about the changes the facility had undergone: prisoners that had died, staff that had died, female staff that had fallen in love with convicts and lost their state jobs, the thousands of faces that had come through these chow lines, the decline in food quality, the restriction in prisoner property, the hope for a new governor, the recent terrorist attacks, the sorry-assed Detroit Lions, learning from our mistakes, and why I was still a guard with a B.S. degree.

"The money," I answered. "Other jobs might sound more prestigious but it all boils down to the almighty dollar."

The second conversation was much shorter. This white prisoner in his late twenties came from a wealthy family and did his first bit (sentence) for robbery. He paroled eighteen months ago from one of the housing units I frequently work.

"Hey, *****, what's up?"

Prisoner: "Same shit new bit."

"You over in Franklin?"

Prisoner: "Yes. Hopefully I'll be in medium soon."

"Alright, man. Be cool."

Both inmates were back in the system and both should have been put in a boot camp. I say this with unwavering certainty because I have known them for years, literally. Both could use what boot camp promises to deliver: discipline, hard work, vocational training, and an opportunity to change. Both men are smart and should have been given the opportunity at boot camp. What they do not need is what prison offers; simply doing their time which consists of countless idle hours of card playing, television, lots of sleep, or just sitting in a chair like a vegetable. I say this with unwavering certainty because I have seen it first-hand for fourteen years, literally.

Reality Check

Working as a corrections officer involves educating the public. When asked about my work it is not unusual to hear questions like: "You don't have real bad guys... like murderers and rapists, right?" Or one of my personal favorites: "You don't actually go up to them, do you? You don't actually have contact with the inmates, right?" One time I had to set someone straight that believed we lowered food down in buckets to the prisoners. Images of brutal prison guards beating helpless inmates or muscle-bound inmates extorting everything from sexual favors to cigarettes become implanted to help form these perceptions. Sometimes this does occur but usually the

media helps to inflate reality. When tour groups are allowed in for a realistic look (mostly college classes) they are shocked to see orderly clientele, well-groomed grounds, and a generally relaxed environment. Responses are mixed: some are appalled at the recreational opportunities, televisions, videos, occasional concerts and freedom of movement while others could care less. They are also surprised to hear that we perform such tasks as passing out toilet paper and waking prisoners up in the morning. 2. In many instances the penitentiaries are safer, cleaner, and in better repair than some public schools.

Correctional facilities are designed to protect the public from crime and to provide for the custody and security of inmates. Generally, this goal is achieved year after year with limited disturbances or full-scale riots. A peaceful environment is desired by every warden. Line staff (guards) undergo yearly refresher training to achieve this end. If confinement is the *only* goal the present system is sufficient. Boot camp on the other hand is an intensely structured program that demands much of an individual and leaves one with almost no leisure time.

Separated from "regular" population inmates, the day-to-day routine is intended to be intense and demanding. Participants are involved in structured activities from very early in the morning until "lights out," approximately 16 hours later. Shock

incarceration programs range in length from 90 to 180 days. Upon completion, graduates are released to community supervision after serving, in many states, a fraction of their court-imposed sentence. (Smylka, 1995:59).

The Michigan Department of Correction's Special Alternative Incarceration Program (SAI) is designed to assist prisoners in developing a sense of individual responsibility, self-discipline and a positive work ethic. The program consists of three phases: The first is ninety days of physically strenuous work, strict discipline and exercise, patterned after military basic training, and programming (e.g., education, substance abuse awareness, basic life skills, anger management). The second phase is residential placement in the community not to exceed 120 days. This is required only if ordered by the Parole Board. Prisoners in Phase II also shall be required to complete phase three which is parole supervision in the community with a minimum of the first 120 days under maximum supervision. (MDOC, 2000:1).

David Anderson, author of Sensible Justice: Alternatives to Prison, supports the boot camp philosophy because they help take the pressure off jails and prisons.

"They give offenders the chance to turn their lives around, to the benefit of everyone. And they grant courts new flexibility to fashion sentences for individual offenders. No longer do judges face the dismaying choice of probation, where overworked officers provide little support or supervision, or sending offenders to chaotic prisons likely to return

them to the streets more dangerous than when they went in." (Anderson, 1998:160).

Boot Camp Tours

Going into the field and beyond the textbooks proved very interesting. I made two visits to boot camps in Michigan; one operated by the MDOC in Chelsea, Michigan and one ran by the Oakland County Sherrif's Department. The first was on January 3, not an ideal day for an expedition. It was bitterly cold and mountains of snow had fallen in recent days. The drive from my home in Lapeer was nearly two hours in good weather but we arrived almost thirty minutes early despite the slippery roads and two wrong turns. While we waited reality sank in and bit like the January cold. This place is tough. Not anything like the cushy confines of Thumb Correctional Facility. Here there are no visits, no cable, no recreation, no concerts and no weekend videos.

My gut twinged with the same sickening feeling when I went to boot camp as a Navy recruit. Thank God that was over! I reflected on my own upbringing: plenty of chores around our small farm; working part-time at McDonald's to save for college and an expectation from my parents to get good grades. I learned responsibility, self-esteem, a strong work ethic, a will to succeed and how to survive what life doles out. Unlike the boot camp trainees, I was

provided these tools at an early age. These guys were starting much later in life and I had a pretty good idea what they were in for. At least they were getting a second chance. Many prisoners are not so fortunate.

When I scheduled the tour the Inspector wanted to know in what capacity I would be touring the facility. The department has strict guidelines governing students performing research and policy must be followed. If I chose to tour the facility as an employee things would be much simpler. So my partner and I donned our uniforms just as if we were reporting for an ordinary day at the prison, made sure we had our state identification badges and proceeded.

The entire facility sits in the countryside on fifty plus acres far from other prisons. Seclusion is a plus because close proximity to prisons generate a host of problems like the introduction of drugs or the negative influence a seasoned criminal can have on boot camp recruits. Our guide was quick to point out the wood pile - donated saw logs that are cut with old fashion crosscut saws by trainees. The housing units are heated with wood so the hard labor portion is of a practical nature as well as good exercise. The *trainees* (preferred terminology over prisoners or inmates because they are in a state of training) also operate a recycling center in a neighboring

county which is solely dependent on their efforts. Three platoons comprise the boot camp. Everyone starts out in A company and after successful completion or indoctrination moves on to B company and then finally to C company, the latter being the least restrictive but no less demanding than the former companies. A trainee must earn his way to each new level and the intensity never diminishes. The following is a typical schedule:

The day begins at 5:00 a.m. with wake up exercises, shower, breakfast, living area cleanup and inspection. From 7:30 to 3:00 p.m. work assignments are performed around the SAI facility or out in the community on supervised public work projects. At 3:00 p.m. trainees engage in physical training consisting of exercises and up to a four mile motivational run. Then it is to the showers followed by an inspection and the evening meal. From 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. is restricted free time where trainees may watch the news or write letters. At 7:00 p.m. they attend classes which include life skills, stress management, group counseling, job seeking, substance abuse awareness, adult basic education and GED preparation. At 10:00 p.m. it's lights out. (SAI, 2001:3).

This is certainly not an easy schedule but not much different from what a typical citizen endures in a day. Many college students work full-time, raise children and

keep up an extremely rigorous pace for much longer than ninety days. Our tour guide said that the recidivism rate hovers right around thirteen percent. The GED completion rate is higher than that found in any prison because they must finish it in ninety days. The teachers are all from the Chelsea School District and provide their valuable services on a volunteer basis. Corporal punishment (push-ups or running in place) is used regularly for minor rule infractions. Moving about the compound is done in formation. They march everywhere and use military protocol while doing so: "By your leave, sir" is used when a trainee wishes to pass a staff member or visitor (such as ourselves) and they snap to attention when uniformed staff enter a building or pass a platoon or squad formation.

On one occasion we found ourselves flanked on both sides by trainees waiting to enter the chow hall for lunch. For a brief twenty seconds or so it made us feel like we were high-ranking military personnel reviewing troops. After trainees receive their meal tray they must sit down at the same time and dine in silence with eyes fixed on their trays. No conversation or "eyeballing" as we like to say in Corrections. While in boot camp a trainee has no visits from family, no personal property and only one ten minute phone call per week after the first six weeks.

Upon arrival (intake), heads are shaved just like in

military boot camp and there is much yelling and screaming. Our tour guide assured us that the decibel level was the same for every intake and the staff were not just putting on a show for our benefit. There were two cameras placed up high near the ceiling at separate ends of the building to record intake procedures. Despite the military model of discipline the department is ever cognizant of applicable laws and policies governing the treatment of inmates. The hands off policy is strictly adhered to and the only time a staff member may touch a trainee is in self-defense or to perform a life-saving technique. When the traditional head shaving occurs it is done so in front of a mirror so the recruit can see the transformation. According to our tour guide this is the only time any degradation occurs. Profanity, racial epithets or slurs are strictly prohibited. The inspector assured us that this is the worst time for a recruit. The drill instructors (four this particular day; one sergeant and three custody officers) stay in their face during the haircut phase and say things like: "Your purse snatchin' days are over son. You like stealing, son? You like taking stuff from hard working folks?! Well those days are over cuz you belong to me!" "You can change and we're gonna help you do it. You'll be a different person when you leave here!"

On April 11, 2001, we toured the Oakland County Sherrif's Department boot camp and were escorted by the only

caseworker at the facility. Much to our surprise the sergeant that was to be our tour guide forgot to look at his daily planner that day and was absent upon our arrival. Nonetheless we had a thorough tour and were impressed with the "tent city". The entire compound, four acres or so, was constructed exactly like an army encampment. There were half a dozen tents and each had a single wooden sign planted in front with a particular word and its corresponding definition: COURAGE, TEAMWORK, LOYALTY, DISCIPLINE. Until the Fall of 2000 when a permanent building was constructed, the recruits were housed in the tents and cut wood from a huge pile of donated saw logs. The floors were constructed of plywood and two-by-fours which amplified every step. It was cold and I could hardly imagine what it would be like in February or March. There were nineteen residents in the eight-week program, three of which were female. All of the recruits engage in public works projects and participate in GED preparation, Life Management Skills, Substance Abuse Awareness, AIDS Awareness and Consequential Thinking to name a few. For the trainees still in school arrangements are made to continue working toward graduation. The caseworker indicated that they try to cram as much in during the eight weeks as possible.

Corporal punishment is the norm and if the drill instructor gets pushed to the limit everyone does

calisthenics in the sand pit. This sandbox without sides could hold about a dozen inmates and judging by the numerous bootprints it had seen recent activity. The Camp Nichols motto is "Cooperate, Motivate & Graduate" The Code of Conduct is "I will not lie, cheat, steal, or affiliate with others that do."

Our guide said that for the entire lifetime of the program (ten years) recidivism has been about 50%, citing a lack of aftercare as the culprit. Every recruit is issued a Boot Camp Guide Book: "Regimented Inmate Discipline Program" and is required to know the material therein. It covers military drill and ceremony, marching, CPR, physical fitness and all the rules, regulations and sanctions while in the program. Like the boot camp operated by the MDOC it is voluntary and targets the nonviolent offender.

Failure to complete the program results in a return to jail where the remainder of the entire sentence will be served. Successful completion results in suspended jail time which to date has saved approximately 130,000 jail beds and nine million tax dollars (Oakland County Sheriff's Dept., 1998:3).

According to an October, 1993 report by the National Institute of Justice the annual budget for the Oakland County program is about \$400,000 with \$24.00 spent on each inmate per day (Justice Dept., 1993:2).

In both tours we found the staff to be professional and committed to helping offenders succeed. The challenges awaiting boot camp graduates were of prevailing concern: finding and maintaining employment, staying out of trouble and remaining drug free. Getting through boot camp is one thing but offenders need a support network upon release. Aftercare, or a lack of same, was perhaps the biggest problem. At the SAI facility the Inspector told us about a trainee that started his day with a joint and a cup of coffee for breakfast. His mother had both waiting for him when he woke up.

At the Oakland County boot camp the caseworker and I talked about what constitutes success. Is it simply not re-offending? If a parolee returns to the same drug-ridden environment will he be able to "just say no?" or will temptation emerge victorious? Will the techniques learned in an anger management class be practical when an ex-con is denied employment? Will a sentencing judge select boot camp as a sanction when he knows that fifty per cent will fail? Recidivism must be low if the public is to be persuaded of the programs true effectiveness and to date this was not happening.

I could not help but reflect on what inmates have told me over the years: that some prefer to serve their sentences

in prison because it is more restrictive. They make few decisions and have little responsibility. In a sense, this seems like a security blanket. Serving time in a minimum security camp or community corrections center is often overwhelming because of the increased freedom. Placement on tether (an electronic monitoring device secured to the ankle) can be stressful for the same reason - too much freedom. Boot camp is very restrictive but forces an individual to think for himself. As an officer I had always believed freedom to be the ultimate dream for prisoners but for some it was a nightmare.

Lessons From the Feds

The National Institute of Justice conducted several boot camp studies. The first, Boot Camps for Juvenile Offenders, looked at programs in Cleveland, Ohio, Denver, Colorado and Mobile, Alabama. The sites formed active public-private partnerships, developed and refined coherent program rationales, and opened on schedule. First-year boot camp completion rates were high, ranging from 80 percent to 94 percent. Youths improved in educational performance, physical fitness, and behavior. Ratings of youths in respect for authority, self-discipline, teamwork, and personal appearance also improved significantly. Youths who graduated from the 3-month boot camp and remained in aftercare for at least 5 months reported

positive changes in attitudes and behavior. Estimates of daily costs per youth indicated that the boot camps appeared to be more cost effective than State or local correctional facilities (NIJ, 1996:1-2).

The evaluation found less success in the following areas:

Two programs were disrupted by high staff turnover and all struggled to find appropriate and effective disciplinary measures and a clear-cut termination policy. Staff found it difficult to achieve a healthy balance between programming emphasizing military discipline and programming focusing on remedial education and counseling. The aftercare phase was hampered by high levels of absenteeism and noncompletion. Nearly half of the youths who entered aftercare dropped out, were arrested for new offenses, or were terminated for not complying with the programs' aftercare rules.

More information is needed on why aftercare is hampered by high levels of absenteeism and noncompletion and what can be done to lower those rates. In addition, more information is needed on recidivism over the long term as well as on the costs of other alternatives to incarceration (Ibid).

One concern for expanding boot camps is the fear of "net

widening" (confining more people). The purpose is not to target specific groups and incarcerate more people but to lessen the burden on our bulging penitentiaries. Also, the hope is to get lawbreakers *through* the criminal justice system before they become seasoned criminals and *before* they experience longterm isolation from society, family and the workforce. The intent of boot camp is to prevent what Foucault describes in his work, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison.

Although it is true that prison punishes delinquency, delinquency is for the most part produced in and by an incarceration which, ultimately, prison perpetuates in its turn. The prison is merely the natural consequence, no more than a higher degree, of that hierarchy laid down step by step. The delinquent is an institutional product (Foucault, 1977:301).

A 1994 report by the National Institute of Justice mailed surveys to all 50 states and concluded that boot camp programs have the potential to reduce institutional crowding and costs, provided they are (1) large enough, (2) target offenders who would otherwise have served a longer sentence in another institution, and (3) keep enough participants from returning to prison. Some States, including New York and Louisiana, conclude that they have met these tests and have reduced their costs and their need for prison beds.

There is still no clear evidence that boot camps reduce

recidivism. Marginal differences between boot camp graduates and comparison groups have been found in some locations, but they may result from other differences between the groups, rather than the boot camp experience. However, there is no reason to believe that boot camp graduates do any worse than comparison groups.

A few researchers have attempted to distinguish subgroups that do better or worse in boot camp itself or during aftercare, but no clear picture has emerged. However, in one State, Louisiana, the results suggest that boot camp graduates who are supervised more intensely during aftercare may adjust to the community better and ultimately have lower rates of reincarceration (NIJ, 1994:57).

Apparently, many participants consider boot camp a positive experience, despite its rigors, and most observers consider boot camp a safer environment for inmates than regular prison. More importantly, some programs seem to have helped participants improve their physical conditioning, educational level, employment prospects, and access to community programs. However, these results have been documented for only a handful of programs so far. Also, it is possible that some improvements are a result of the intensive aftercare program rather than boot camp itself.

Although boot camp programs face some operational challenges, most are surmountable. Typical challenges connected with implementing a boot camp include overcoming resistance from others in the correctional system; establishing appropriate criteria and identifying sufficient numbers of offenders who meet them; operationalizing military structure and discipline; selecting, training, and supervising boot camp staff; coping with boot camp dropouts and failures; and helping offenders make the transition to community living (Ibid).

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, at this point in their development, boot camps do not appear to be the panacea that many hoped they would become. Nonetheless, boot camps do appear to offer certain practical advantages and future promise that warrant continued testing and examination. As an intermediate sanction, boot camps are a useful alternative for offenders for whom probation would be insufficiently punitive, yet for whom long-term incarceration would be excessive. As such, under certain conditions, boot camps can free bed space for more hardened offenders, thereby reducing the financial burden on correctional budgets. (OJJDP, 1997:32-33).

Perhaps the most extensive boot camp program in the

country is in New York state. After several attempts to secure information I was referred to Mr. David Aziz in Albany. He is employed by the Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation and has co-authored several reports about boot camps and their effectiveness. He was good enough to mail a copy of the Twelfth Annual Shock Legislative Report for 2000 and it details every aspect of the Lakeview Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility in Brocton, NY.

New York State's Shock Incarceration Program was established by enabling legislation on July 13, 1987, (Chapter 261 of the Laws of New York, 1987). New York's program is the largest Shock Incarceration Program for sentenced state prisoners in the nation, with a capacity for 1,290 male inmates, 169 female inmates, and 222 beds dedicated to orientation and screening. (NYDOCS, 2000:1).

The number of boot camp participants is most interesting because it is in large numbers that financial savings to the taxpayer is best realized. One of the goals of New York's program is the reduction of demand for bedspace. It is acknowledged by outside observers that New York has a large enough number of graduates to have an impact on crowded prisons and this is not the case in most states.

For each graduate there was an average net savings of 354

days or approximately 11.7 months from their actual date of release from Shock to his/her court determined Parole Eligibility date. For the first 22,116 releases from Shock, as of September 30, 1999, there was an estimated savings in program costs of \$569 million. In addition, the Department saved an estimated 28,292 man-years which translates into a cost avoidance of \$112.5 million for capital construction. In sum, for the first 22,116 releases from Shock, as of September 30, 1999, the Department saved an estimated \$681.5 million in both operating and capital costs. The Shock Incarceration Program reduces the demand for bedspace and saves the State money, despite the fact that it is expensive to provide the intense level of Shock programming. (Ibid, ii,iii).

What appears to make New York's boot camp program such a huge success is the degree to which aftercare is approached. This portion of the program receives as much attention as the incarceration phase which is critical if such a program is to survive. Funding would eventually cease if success is not achieved. Our tour guide at the Chelsea camp said that Michigan used to have three boot camps but funds had been eliminated. A fellow corrections officer that worked at Chelsea as a drill instructor agreed that sentencing judges need to be more involved. Turning inmates loose on society armed with a GED is simply not enough. New York takes great pains to help with this

critical transition phase.

Pre-release planning begins early. Parole officers work closely with inmates, inmates' families and community service agencies to develop sound residence and employment programs prior to release and to ensure a smooth transition from the facility to the community. Although the Shock supervision program is a statewide effort, the Division has concentrated most of its resources for this initiative in New York City where 69% of Shock releases have returned. The development of unique program elements in this urban area has enabled the Division to deliver specialized services to the greatest number of Schock graduates. Specialized employment and vocational services have been established through a contract with the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). This organization is made up of the Neighborhood Work Project (NWP) and the Vocational Development Program, formally under the Vera Institute. Relapse prevention services are provided through a contract with the Alcoholism Council of New York, formerly known as the Fellowship Center. (Ibid, 29).

Reality Check

Reviewing the research would suggest that boot camps do work in some cases. Aftercare is critical and so is a

dedicated staff with the same mission statement and set of goals. It would also appear that sufficient numbers must exist before any noticeable cost savings is realized. According to the MDOC, they claimed the following:

The average cost for each participant was \$6,187 for the 90-day, Phase I program (1998-99 appropriated costs based on full capacity), compared with \$15,348 for a year in a minimum-security prison camp, which would be a typical location for an offender placed in the SAI program. If each of the 1,434 offenders who completed the boot camp portion of the program during 1999 had been confined in a Level I prison camp throughout the year, it would have been necessary to construct five 300-bed camps to confine them. In addition to the capital costs associated with construction, the cost of supervising the offenders in camps throughout the year would have exceeded by \$22 million the cost of operating the boot camp. (MDOC, 1999:64).

Time for a Change

The time is now to persuade the MDOC to divert funds for boot camp expansion. At present the MDOC is slated to close four prisons: Camp Pellston, Pontiac Corrections Center, Michigan Reformatory and Jackson Central Complex. This effort is to trim \$55 million from the department.

(Flint Journal, 2001:B2).

Earlier in 2001 Governor Engler cited three efficiencies the department has put in place that have helped to slow budget growth. One is use of federal funds under the federal Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1994 which has brought \$9.4 million to Michigan since the program started. The funding has been largely used to fund operation of the Youth Correctional Facility (the state's first privatized facility). The second is implementation of managed health care for prisoners, which has saved tens of millions since it was started in 1998. The third is a criminal justice partnership with local government which includes the jail reimbursement program which pays counties to house prisoners who might otherwise have come to prison and a grants program which helps locals provide community sanctions. The 2002 budget is estimated to be at least \$1.7 billion (FYI, 2001:23).

It would appear that the desire for alternatives to prison has been acknowledged. Persuading those that hold the purse strings to expand boot camps is another matter. It may be that there is no interest in operating more boot camps and the intent may be to phase them out altogether. Whenever I have questioned co-workers on the subject they agree that boot camps seem a better alternative than simply

warehousing prisoners. Inmates have told me that boot camps have positive aspects but agree that it is easy to get "caught up" (catch a new case or violate parole terms) without skills and training.

It must also get approval from voters. A thorough media campaign would certainly be helpful. If taxpayers watched a thirty second commercial showing inmates performing community service and learning a vocational trade in boot camp as opposed to playing basketball or lifting weights in prison they might be inclined to endorse such a program. I am not suggesting that boot camp will cure all of our correctional ills but it certainly seems worthy of serious consideration.

While there are those who need confinement for periods of time, jail and prison space should be reserved for the truly dangerous. Petty larcenists, parole violators, prostitutes, drunk drivers and some drug offenders could benefit themselves and society by serving their sentence in boot camp. Sentencing judges working in conjunction with local law enforcement could have a significant impact on reducing prison bed space.

The term rehabilitation often generates laughter but given the right circumstances it can become a reality for some offenders. Male prisoners who fit the criteria for

boot camp need to be involved in their childrens upbringing not shut out of their lives for years at a time. Women, particularly those who come to prison pregnant, require special needs that are seldom met. They frequently lose their children to foster care or put them up for adoption. Even if a family member assumes custodial care the female inmate is denied the opportunity to raise her children suffering anguish beyond belief.

The single most tragic consequence of incarcerating nearly every law breaker is the deep-rooted sense of alienation and erasure of self. When this student performs duties as a corrections officer it is mind-boggling to witness the ease with which the confined are controlled. Television serves as the dominant tool to this end and scores of inmates waste away the days chosing to ignore their plight. Instead of utilizing the law library the majority engage in sports or other leisure recreational activities. Instead of occupying themselves with education the majority are preoccupied with what the daily menu has to offer or how much weight they can lift.

Changing Perspective

My intent has not been to ridicule or condemn the confined. Sometimes prisoners feel useless, alienated,

alone and doomed to repeat the cycle that brought them to prison in the first place. In his text, Symbolic Interactionism, Joel Charon details how our actions reflect the way we perceive ourselves and how we think others perceive us. This process is complex and is subject to change depending on circumstances like environment, socio-economic conditions and a host of other variables. (Charon: 1992).

The point is that people can change their perspective if given a decent chance. Boot camp is tough but so is life. Prisoners must be prepared not pampered if they are to achieve any level of fulfillment and success in the free world. Prison should be a last resort for nonviolent offenders and not the norm. Michigan needs to revamp its correctional system much like the automobile industry did in the 1980's. Failure to do so will continue to force the State to use financial resources designed for schools and prevention programs. Corrections may go bankrupt or become privatized. The time has come for action not more studies.

The terrorist attacks pulled our nation together. McDonald's donated tons of food to relief workers. G.M., Ford and Chrysler gave free vehicles to aid in the clean-up. Millions of dollars have been donated from public and private sources. Firefighters from around the country descended upon New York and Washington, D.C. to volunteer

their services. Why then do we refuse to give the same attention to a crisis that is every bit as shocking as what happened on September 11th? Because our penal system is a dirty little secret? Because we do not have the ability to improve it? Because we simply do not care?

Foreign nations have accused America of throwing its weight around and trodding where it does not belong. We punish them with embargoes, sanctions and military action. On September 11th they punched us hard. They finally hit what they perceive to be a global bully. We have been punching our incarcerated for generations. In 1993 college was eliminated in Michigan's prisons. It has also become increasingly difficult for volunteers to render services. A nurse taught a basic health class at Thumb Correctional Facility and when inmates attempted to present her with a gift she was forever banned from the facility. A Flint man donated his time to teach history classes. When his communications with an inmate were deemed "inappropriate" he was permanently banned from the prison. At what point do we say STOP!

Unlike many of the prisoners I am charged with guarding, my start in life gave me the tools to succeed. Growing up in a middle-class home with two very loving and supportive parents provided nurturing. I never experienced hunger, neglect, or worried if there would be health care available

during sickness. Becoming homeless or abandoned never entered my mind. Getting a decent education was a priority in our household and my parents provided the means to help four children achieve this goal. Domestic violence, substance abuse, verbal or psychological torture were foreign. A sense of worth and identity was instilled at an early age. In short, I was lucky. The past fourteen years have allowed me to witness first-hand those who have not been so fortunate. At the very least boot camps may serve as a second chance, an opportunity to fill a void that has left thousands in a cycle of despair.

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Notes

1. When State Representative Paul Rosenbaum authored the 650 law it was designed to snare drug kingpins (anyone possessing over 650 grams of cocaine). Unfortunately the result was nabbing couriers and low-level drug dealers. The law had no impact on the drug trade but had much impact on the prison population. (Gordon, 1994:58-59).

2. Alarm clocks were banned years ago because it was believed that the internal works could be fashioned into a timer for a bomb.