

120517

120517

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~copyrighted~~ material has been granted by

Public Domain/NIJ  
U.S. Department of Justice  
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.

PRISON IMPACTS:  
A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

by

Katherine A. Carlson, Ph.D.

Peninsula College  
Port Angeles, WA  
98362

Research support provided by  
The National Institute of Justice  
Grant #85-IJ-CX-0022  
and the  
Clallam County Sheriff's Department  
Steven T. Kernes, Sheriff

120517

120517

120517

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~copyrighted~~ material has been granted by

Public Domain/NIJ  
U.S. Department of Justice  
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.

PRISON IMPACTS:  
A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

by

Katherine A. Carlson, Ph.D.

Peninsula College  
Port Angeles, WA  
98362

# PRISON IMPACTS: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

## INTRODUCTION

Studies of prisons and prisoners form a substantial portion of the social science literature, an indication that their workings and inhabitants are both interesting and generally of some research significance. If the number of published books and articles is any guide, the communities where these prisons are located are of considerably less importance. References to prison towns occur in passing if at all, with all our scholarly attention focused on life inside the walls. This neglect has left our understanding of prisons in a contextual vacuum, as if correctional institutions were entirely self-contained and their settings irrelevant.

That prison settings are not at all irrelevant has been amply illustrated by the reactions of residents of proposed new prison communities. These reactions range from the strongly opposed ("Not in My Back Yard!") to the strongly supportive: they are seldom neutral. Prison siting is an emotional and often controversial decision process. For corrections officials, determining a location for a new facility represents one of their most delicate and difficult activities, and more than one politician has saved or lost a career through judicious site selection.

According to one commentator, opposition to prison siting is "...rationalized, quite predictably, in one of three categories: fear of harm from the inmates, economic anxiety, and civic pride (McGee 1981:110)." Another writer finds that these and similar objections to a prison in town derive from residents' fears of community change and loss of preferred lifestyles (Carlson 1988). Conversely, local supporters of prison siting tend to emphasize the jobs and economic benefits an institution would bring, while discounting the likelihood of any of the negatives identified above (Pagel 1988).

Until recently, most of these debates have been carried forth with little substantive information to support or refute either view. This void has become increasingly unsatisfactory with requirements for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) prior to siting. The need for some basis on which to project socio-economic effects has been further reinforced by the presence in many states of siting guidelines requiring community support. The final and perhaps most important factor in stimulating research on prison effects has been the growth in new prison construction. In 1988, America's prison population saw its 14th straight year of record increases: the Bureau of Justice Statistics views this as translating into "...a nationwide need for more than 800 new prison bedspaces a week (1989:1)."

The boom in prison construction has been associated with a significant shift in the attitudes of residents in many communities toward prison location. While opposition is still a frequent concomitant to siting, communities are increasingly competing with each other in seeking to become prison hosts. A comparison of 1984, 1986, and 1988 prison construction surveys

conducted for Corrections Compendium, an industry periodical, reveals this change in community sentiment: in 1988, 24 correctional systems reported receiving only community support, 5 only opposition, and 12 a mixture of both (Pagel 1988:6). This turn around has been at least partially fueled by information about the occurrence of positive prison effects and the absence of negative ones. While much of this information is journalistic and anecdotal, there also are several more or less substantive research reports on prison impacts.

Studies selected for inclusion in this review were identified through contacts with individuals involved in prison impact research and references in the occasional publication. With few exceptions, the prisons in these studies housed adult, male, medium security-level inmates or above. There is comparatively less information available on the effects of minimum security or juvenile facilities, and such institutions are likely to produce a somewhat different set of impacts because of differences in their operation and inmates.

The majority of these prison impact studies are modest ones, concentrating on a single issue or a set of a few related issues. For the most part, these issues are taken from the objections perceived as raised by prison siting opponents and the expectations held by proponents. Some of the reports are clearly efforts to refute such opposing arguments; others adopt a more neutral tone. In several, the assessment of prison effects is indirect, with information on control communities used to determine presence or absence of prison-related effects in the prison locales. Research methods and sources of support vary greatly. Few of these studies have been published and thus most have had a limited circulation.

Because of their variability in method and scope, and the further variation in the types of communities and prisons covered, each study included in this review is first briefly outlined and summarized. These summaries are presented in order of research complexity, with the simplest reviewed first. The paper concludes with a discussion of common findings and contributing factors. Prison impacts are revealed to be neither simple nor uniform. Within certain parameters, however, they may be predictable.

#### STUDIES OF SOCIAL INDICATOR DATA

##### Wisconsin:

One of the first attempts to assess prison effects was undertaken in Wisconsin for that state's Division of Corrections and Bureau of Facilities Management by Craig F. Stanley of the University of Wisconsin (1978). Stanley explored the effects of prison proximity on property values in two communities, one an urban area adjacent to Green Bay and the other a city of 8,000 residents. In both locales, the prisons had been in place since the previous century. In neither did closeness to the prison

adversely affect assessed housing value or lower the market price of homes in the community.

#### Alabama:

This Wisconsin data is extensively cited in a report prepared for the Alabama Department of Corrections (1982). This report also reviews a study from Canada (discussed below), and includes a brief assessment of changes in industrial and community development activity in a section of Montgomery where a prison was located ten years previously. The Montgomery researchers found that other industrial locations in the vicinity had increased since the prison, that the population of the area had more than doubled, and that real estate values were above the city's average. An industry survey found that the presence of the prison had no notable negative effects on selection of a site for development.

Alabama institutions and their economic impacts also were the focus of a research project reported in 1984 (Smykla et al). Smykla and his associates used control regions for each of the three prison counties under examination. The study period was five years, beginning with two years prior to the facility's operation and extending two years thereafter. All of the prisons had been open for less than fifteen years, with one starting operations as recently as 1978. The counties ranged from rural to predominantly urban in character.

On the basis of a review of a variety of economic well-being indicators, including total employment, retail sales, property values, and juvenile and adult crime rates, Smykla et al were able to conclude that: "...no negative effects of the prison (sic) have been identified, and positive improvement is seen in some of these areas (1984:539)." New industry expansion was less than that in control counties for two of the prison locales, although there was no actual pre/post-prison indication of decline.

#### Pennsylvania:

A study of local economic impacts of a minimum security prison in Pennsylvania during its second year of operation was published in 1987 (Rogers & Haines). It is included in this review because its emphasis on salaries and expenditures covers issues common to all institutions, regardless of security level. Looking at prison expenditures for salaries and wages, small business purchases, and non-profit educational services, the researchers found that 65% of the total was made to firms or individuals located within 25 miles of the prison; subtracting salaries, the proportion spent locally was 56% (1987:31). Rogers and Haines also found that nearly half the staff was comprised of individuals initially hired from this same local area.

#### California:

Crime rates and property values in prison locales served as the topics for a 1985 study conducted in California by Jerry

Hawes of the State Senate Office of Research. In this project, seven prison cities (ranging in size from 6,520 to 80,479) were measured against 15 control communities matched on the bases of population and five other demographic characteristics. Comparisons of crime rates in the prison host communities and their controls found that in the aggregate, rates for prison locales were 22% lower: 10 of the control communities had higher crime rates, 4 had lower, and 1 was the same (1985:12). Although this was not singled out for attention in the report, the data presented showed that the host communities with the smallest populations (11,003 and 6,520) had crime rates 22 - 24% higher than their comparison cities.

The study's methodology did not allow for any further analysis of these findings or reasons for them; the author posited that the presence of correctional officers in an area may have a deterrent influence on crime. Hawes concludes: "The evidence submitted in this report does not conclusively prove that the siting of a prison in or near a city is a deterrent to crime in that community. That same evidence strongly suggests that prisons neither create an environment which encourages crime nor attract a 'criminal element' which negatively impacts on that community's safety (1985:24)."

This report also found positive property value differences between prison and control cities. Using the change in assessed valuation per capita occurring between 1979 - 80 and 1982 - 83 as the measure, cities with a prison had a higher aggregate growth, and property values rose at a higher rate than in 11 of the 15 control communities.

#### Oregon:

A series of studies on prison impact conducted in Salem, Oregon have come up with a rather different set of conclusions about prisons and crime. The studies were done under the auspices of three different agencies: the Bureau of Governmental Research & Service, University of Oregon; the Oregon Corrections Division; and the Salem Police Department. The situation in Oregon is a unique one. Up until late 1985, all prisons (with the exception of one camp) were located in Salem, the state's capital. A similar condition prevailed for most of the state's mental hospitals. This concentration of institutions had concentrated as well many of the services customarily offered to former patients and prison parolees, and appears as a consequence also to have concentrated certain prison impacts.

The research by the Oregon Corrections Division (1987) looked at the residences and residential changes of inmate visitors. It thus addresses the frequently raised questions about whether the presence of prisoners in an area also brings in a group of "undesirable" family members and friends. The researchers found that most visitors lived within commuting distance of the institutions and that the distribution of visitor residences was similar to those from which inmates were committed. A small number of visitors did move into the Salem

area while the individual they were visiting was incarcerated: a nearly equal number of inmate visitors had moved out, making any increase a negligible one.

Callier & Versteeg (1988), working through the Salem Police Department, did identify several incidents in which locally resident inmate family members (who had moved to the area because of the institution) produced a disproportionate impact on area law enforcement. This suggests that numbers of such families alone may not be the most critical determinant of their effects. Callier & Versteeg also found that the Salem area had twice the number of correctional clients released into the community as had originally resided there, and that a sample of such releases had a high number of rearrests.

These conclusions are supported in greater detail in the research done through the Bureau of Governmental Research (Seidel & Heinkel 1987; & Seidel et al 1987). In these reports, the researchers noted the increased residence of released felons in the Salem area due to the location of the state's prisons. They found that nearly half of these individuals were likely to commit additional crimes while living in Salem, and that they made extensive use of a broad range of publically supported social services, particularly drug and alcohol treatment. In the most recent report, Salem was compared with a control city and found to have a substantially higher crime rate, a finding viewed as linked to the presence of the large offender population.

#### STUDIES INCLUDING ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENT ATTITUDES

The studies of prison impact summarized above share a tendency to be limited in scope and method: most have utilized existing statistical data and none have incorporated any assessment of resident attitudes or responses. There are a few studies of prison effects on local communities which are not so restricted and thereby provide a more personal and in many cases more comprehensive account of what a prison means to its host community. Oregon again serves as the locale for one such study. In this research, the attention is directed to a new prison, converted from a former mental hospital, located in a small, rural city in the eastern part of the state (Millay 1989).

#### Oregon:

Millay assessed the new prison's initial impacts through interviews with local residents and review of existing data. He found that despite fears and predictions to the contrary when the prison was opened, the community had seen no substantial influx of inmate families or friends, no increase in crime rates, and no increased resident concerns about personal safety. Former hospital employees and other local residents made up the prison's primary workforce, and the institution had become the community's largest single employer. Social service agencies did note that some of those families who had moved in presented disproportionate problems, and law enforcement and the courts

system had experienced workload increases due to cases involving inmates.

With plans underway to more than double the prison's population in the near future, the community's presently positive attitude was also a qualified one: residents were somewhat uncertain that current conditions could be sustained. This uncertainty was strongest within the criminal justice system, where prison-related demands had already begun to strain resources. Millay emphasized the tentative nature of this city's generally favorable reactions to prison impacts, a response which was subject to change and reinterpretation should conditions alter.

British Columbia, Canada:

The oldest of this group of studies was done in British Columbia, Canada, by W.W. Zarchikoff and his associates for the Canadian Ministry of the Solicitor General (1981). This research examined three institutions, maximum through minimum security, located in a single rural area. A matched community without prisons was used as a control. In addition to compiling indicators on economy, property value, crime, escapes, inmate families and the like, Zarchikoff et al also looked at employee and resident attitudes about the area, the prisons, and their sense of security. The primary methodology involved a telephone survey of a sample of residents and prison employees; additional survey and other data was collected from local businesses and service providers.

Zarchikoff and his colleagues found the impact of these prisons to be primarily positive in regard to the local economy; neutral in terms of direct effects of inmates and inmate families; and without influence on the incidence of crimes. The attitudes of area residents present a less positive picture of prison impacts: a majority felt their families were not safe because of the prisons and believed that the quality of life in the area had been changed by their presence; 47% thought prisons were a menace and 45% identified them as a disadvantage. Residents further felt that there had been an increase in crime because of prisons, that inmates were a threat to their security, and that their neighborhoods were less safe than they had been prior to the prisons. Residents did feel least concerned about the likelihood of inmate escapes from the maximum security institution and most concerned about those from the minimum security facility.

Few prison employees were included among the area residents: less than a third of the institutions' employees lived in the communities studied, with the employees living elsewhere citing dislike of the area as a primary reason for this. Employees made few local purchases, and those who were non-residents were less committed to corrections work than their fellows and tended to have been employed in the corrections field for a shorter time.

Zarchikoff et al concluded that small towns would tend to be more adversely affected by prisons than urban areas because of

the greater visibility of a prison in the rural context. There was, however, no evidence that residents of rural communities would be less safe during escapes or that crime rates would increase. The contrast between this empirical finding and residents' perceptions and fears was the topic of several of the study's concluding recommendations. Visibility and attitudes also served as the topic of a published paper based on this research (Maxim & Plecas 1983).

This more detailed analysis of a portion of the Canadian community survey data focused on residents' perceptions of vulnerability and the relationship of these to prior victimization, proximity to the prisons, and life cycle status. The resulting analysis produced inconsistent and somewhat intuitively contradictory results. In seeking to understand this, Maxim & Plecas raised a point that may be critical to the understanding of resident attitudes in existing prison locales: those with the greatest concerns may have left the area, while those who remain may be accommodating to cognitive dissonance for staying. In either case, positive attitudes among residents of an extant prison host community are liable to be a poor reflection of initial resident responses to a prison.

#### COMPREHENSIVE STUDIES

Reports included in the last group of studies reviewed have in common a more comprehensive look at prison effects. In the first two of these, this comprehensiveness is attained through use of multiple methods and the inclusion of several prison locales. In the third and last report, research efforts are concentrated on an in-depth, long-term analysis of prison effects in a single, new prison community. These studies also share a considerable degree of ambiguity and complexity in their findings, revealing a combination of positive and negative prison impacts.

Florida, Arizona, Tennessee, & Idaho:

The effects of seven institutions in four states were looked at by Kathleen Abrams and her associates at Florida International University (Abrams et al 1985; Abrams & Lyons 1987). The first study included three Florida prisons; the second, supported by the National Institute of Corrections, added another state prison, two county jails, and a federal prison in three other states - Arizona, Tennessee, and Idaho. All the facilities had been operating for 6 to 10 years and all were located in metropolitan areas; two also had other correctional institutions in the same area. The 1987 study generally expanded on that of the previous research, and is the one covered here except where otherwise noted.

The research used both existing data and resident and business surveys, contrasting findings from the prison vicinity, or target area, and a control area. Abrams and Lyons utilized a variety of different definitions of target and control areas,

depending on the variables being assessed and the characteristics of the locale. The target areas uniformly consisted of that region immediately adjacent to the institution and extending from 2 to 10 miles in every direction. Control areas were typically selected from those contiguous to this target area, matched according to several demographic factors. For the most part, these methodological boundaries did not coincide with any actual municipal or county territorial distinctions, and also were not constructed with any attention to resident identification of community or geographic significance.

In all the institutional sites covered, the researchers found property values to be generally unaffected by the prisons, with most realtors surveyed citing little or no negative impact. The institutions had significant positive impacts on the local economies, with the greatest effects occurring with large facilities located in either relatively smaller or slow growth communities. One aspect of prison effects covered extensively for the Florida institutions and highlighted in the 1985 report concerned the value of free inmate labor to local projects. This proved to provide an additional economic benefit to communities hosting a prison.

Public safety and local law enforcement impacts were found to be quite minor: crime rates in the target areas were below those in controls with a single, urban-core locale exception. Escapes were not numerous for any facility, plans for appropriate response to escapes were in place, and escapees had committed no known local crimes except for a few auto thefts to aid in leaving the vicinity. Local law enforcement agencies reported no impression that prison visitors were involved in local crimes. In terms of workload, law enforcement agents cited only the additional need to respond to incidents in the institutions or assist with escapes: they evaluated the "burden" of their local corrections facility as minimal or non-existent.

Abrams and her associates conducted telephone surveys with random samples of target and control area residents in each of the states: three of the four facility locales covered in these surveys were prison hosts. More than 90% of all survey respondents felt their institution had created no problems, and a substantial majority felt unthreatened by escapes. Most rated their neighborhood's quality of life as acceptable and without decline. In a less favorable vein, more of the residents living where a prison was located were likely to see the institution as a disadvantage rather than as neutral or an advantage, and target area residents were more negative on this issue than residents of control areas.

After being told of the benefits brought to a community by a prison, a small majority of the target area residents in two prison locales agreed that the benefits from a facility outweighed the disadvantages; those in another site did not alter their negative opinions. This particular facility had been the focus of a bitter siting dispute when it was built, and Abrams

and Lyons conclude their 1987 report with an assessment of prison siting difficulties and some proposed solutions.

#### Washington:

The most recent multi-institutional study on prison impacts was conducted in Washington state (Lidman 1988). At the request of the state Legislature, the Department of Community Development contracted with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to assess the effects of all six of the state's institutions for medium and maximum security inmates, including the facility housing females. Information on the effects of the state's newest facility, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, was summarized from the results of a larger study and is dealt with separately below (Carlson 1989). The following review covers findings for the other five institutions.

Methods used in the Washington state study included both identification of control communities in a manner similar to that used in the California study (demographic matching), compilation of existing data, and interviews with community leaders and service providers. The state's three largest prisons served as the study's principal focus: impacts of the other two facilities, the women's institution and a former federal facility located on an island, received a more cursory review because of their locations and the absence of any particular local resident concerns. All the prisons are in or close to metropolitan areas, and all the communities have had corrections facilities for many years.

Lidman and his associates found that the effects of the prisons varied from site to site. While payroll, prison purchasing, and capital expenditures were a consistent economic plus in all communities, the significance of benefits received depended on the size of the area relative to the size of the prison: larger prisons in smaller areas made greater contributions to the local economy. In no prison site were property values or retail activities negatively affected because of the institutions, and the facilities often made substantive contributions to local tax revenues through contracts for services and state tax redistribution. Business and development leaders in one prison site did note the need to overcome a "prison town" image when dealing with potential investors, but this seemed not to impede development.

This community was Walla Walla, site of the state's largest and oldest prison, and including maximum security prisoners among its inmate population. It is a comparatively isolated city in a primarily agricultural area. Unlike other Washington prison sites, Walla Walla is located across the state and some distance from the region's urban and population corridor from whence come the majority of the state's inmates. In all but this community, the presence of inmate families was small and their activities had no consistent and verifiable negative effect.

In contrast, inmate families had apparently moved to Walla Walla to be close to prisoners: an estimated 93 to 200 families

lived in the area, approximately 10% of the facility's inmate population. This presence contributed to added problems for local law enforcement. While the extent of criminal activity among this group was apparently not disproportionate to their percentage of the local population, local criminal justice providers argued that this group was only in the area because of the prison, and thus any effect they might have was a negative impact of the institution. The greater tendency for inmate families to move to this prison community was seen to be a consequence of the longer sentences for many prisoners, the difficulties associated with commuting for visits, and the area's relatively modest cost of living (Parcells & Farrington 1988; 1989).

In contrast to the findings of studies elsewhere, comparison of crime rates between the three major Washington institutions and their control communities found those of the prison locales to be equal or above the controls. The crime rates for Walla Walla, in particular, were above those of its control communities' average in both crimes of violence and property offenses. Walla Walla's law enforcement community felt their city's crime rate was high because of the activities of inmate families and prison employees, an impression which was supported by some criminal justice statistics.

These statistics were most notable in the areas of juvenile crime and drug offenses. In both, participation of those connected with the prison, either as employees or family members of employees or inmates, was disproportionate to their percentage in the population. Parcells & Farrington (1989) conclude that while the data to substantiate a causal link to the prison for these and other criminal justice problems is sometimes sketchy, Walla Walla clearly has a disproportionate share of such problems.

The effects of internal prison disruptions on community resident attitudes was noted in both Walla Walla and Monroe, a Washington suburban community with a complex of three prisons. These facilities had experienced inmate riots and unrest in the late 1970's, significantly and negatively affecting resident acceptance of the prisons in their midst. In Monroe, these feelings produced concerted community resistance to the siting of the third prison in the early 1980's. After several years of institutional calm and community outreach efforts, relations between Monroe and its prisons were again cordial at the end of 1988 (Hodge & Staeheli 1988). Similarly positive relations have resumed in Walla Walla, where the community is now looking forward to the benefits of the siting of a new minimum security institution and expansion of the existing facility (Parcells & Farrington 1989).

The most recent study of prison impacts and the last to be reviewed here is also the most comprehensive look at a single prison. This research assessed the effects of a new 500 bed medium security institution in a very small (population 1200), rural Washington community (Carlson 1989). The study was funded

by the National Institute of Justice and administered through the Sheriff's Department in the county where the prison is located. The community had solicited the prison in order to reverse a decline brought about by the loss of its major employer, but there also was a substantial group of residents who opposed the prison's construction.

The research began in 1985 prior to the facility's opening and continued over the first three years of its operation. The study's methodology was based on assessing prison-induced change through several different Time 1 - Time 2 measures: population censuses, existing data, community resident and prison employee surveys, interviews, and participant observation in the community.

Carlson recorded a variety of positive economic benefits from the prison for its host community and for the general area. In addition to salaries paid to employees, all of whom lived in the county, the prison made from 20 - 53% of its goods and services expenditures in the county. The business climate in the host community, previously severely depressed, had improved substantially, and local taxable retail sales had increased 48% since the prison opening. Demands for real estate, especially rental properties, reflected a 19% growth in the community's population. The community's school experienced an enrollment increase of 44%, concentrated in the elementary grades. All of these were desired outcomes of the prison.

From the community standpoint, many of these benefits were nonetheless below those anticipated or possible because of the high proportion of prison employees (64%) living outside the host community. Some of these residence choices were made from necessity because of a local rental housing shortage; others were because of a preference for a more urban locale. Residents also resented lower than expected hiring of local job applicants, although again, a number did come from the county's other communities. Further, almost no direct prison expenditures occurred in the host community.

It was also the case that few inmate families had moved to the community, and visitors to the prison were below predictions. Some of the few resident inmate families were identified with criminal activities, however, and families and visitors were seen as a problem for local law enforcement and social service agencies: 35% of the respondents to a 1988 community survey had negative attitudes toward inmate families and friends largely because of direct experiences or reports of such encounters. Outside of the host community, county-level providers generally reported no significant extra service demands due to the presence of inmate families or visitors.

The proximity of residences of prison employees to those of inmate relatives in this small town created additional concerns and stresses. Many employees cited this and the rural isolation of the community as difficult to live with, and as factors in their plans to make their residence in the community a temporary one. The turnover rate among staff was above that of other state

prisons and high-demand or specialized positions had been difficult to fill.

Crime rates in the community during the three year period since the prison had opened showed an upward trend greater than that elsewhere in the county and in excess of population growth. For the most part, these increases were not in property crimes (with the exception of bad checks, up 220%), but rather were in crimes against persons. While numerically small, the percentage increases were substantial, including a 79% increase in simple assault and a 150% rise in domestic violence. Some of these crimes were attributed by criminal justice authorities directly to prison employees and their families, others to inmate families, and others to prior local residents.

The prison had had several escapes, the majority as a consequence of an interim operation as a minimum security facility during its first year. No serious crimes were committed by these inmates while at large and all were eventually recaptured. In one case, however, the search for an escapee centered in a residential and business area and lasted for several days.

Residents' reactions to perceived and actual crime increases and escapes included attitudes of increased fear and wariness, and a rise in keeping loaded weapons: 48% reported keeping a loaded gun at home after two years of the prison operations, compared to 32% previously. On the 1988 community survey, 51% of the respondents viewed "risks from escaped prisoners" as a prison effect, an outcome expected by only 38% of the respondents two years previously. Respondent assessment of prison-caused increased demands on law enforcement (61%) were below expectations (70%); perceived increases in crime (54%) exceeded pre-prison expectations (45%). Survey respondents gave the prison mixed reviews after more than two years of operation: 28% rated its impact on the community as beneficial; 39% viewed prison effects as neutral; and 33% evaluated prison impacts to be negative.

Carlson concluded that the institution's initial operation had been neither as good as its proponents had hoped nor as bad as its opponents had feared. Economically, the prison was seen by many as having saved the community, and there is no question but that business and employment had improved because of the prison. Many residents also felt that the lifestyle of the community had been changed for the worst: there was some animosity between prison employees and local residents, new residents had not involved themselves in the majority of community activities, and transiency due to high employee turnover had adverse effects on schools, housing, and the residents' sense of community. Many of these negative prison effects were thought to be temporary consequences of community change, with residents expected to either better accommodate to the prison's presence in the future or leave the area. Plans to nearly double the facility's population may delay or preclude this process of accommodation.

## IMPACTS AND THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES

The studies reviewed above have many differences in terms of their scope, sophistication, methodology, and the specifics of their research questions. They also differ in the relative size and character of the communities and the prisons studied. Taken alone, even the most comprehensive of these reports presents an incomplete picture of prison impacts. Together, however, they begin to indicate not only what impacts are likely, but also the conditions under which particular impacts will tend to be realized. These indications of prison impacts and their circumstances fit into the categories familiar from siting disputes: the economy, inmate escapes and inmate families, the criminal justice system, and community lifestyle.

### Economic Impacts:

In terms of prison benefits, contributions to the local economy stand out as by far the most significant. Prisons do indeed bring jobs, and generally add to other areas of the economy as well. These economic pluses come with a few caveats. First, the relative importance of any prison-related economic benefit depends on the size of the prison and the size of the area in question: large prisons in small communities provide the biggest boost; prisons in large cities make similar contributions, but their proportionate significance is clearly reduced.

The boundaries of the area considered impacted also influence the determination of prison economic benefits. Employees in rural prisons may not live or purchase in the host community, and thus while a county or region may derive benefits, those accruing to the immediate local community may be more modest. Differences in state prison purchasing practices, and again, size-related differences in a community's retail or wholesale offerings, also affect the extent of any economic boon.

The community's pre-prison economic status is a further condition which influences any economic impacts and their interpretations. It is increasingly the case that communities seek and obtain prisons because their own economies are in decline. Places with more diverse and prosperous economic conditions may view the necessarily limited contributions of a public industry with less favor. The stigma associated with a prison seems not to be a detractor when there are other industries present in the community. It may be more of a detriment, however, when the prison is the dominant industry. When prisons are the only major industry a community is likely to attract, this obviously is not an issue.

Finally, prisons brought into a community because of their anticipated jobs for current local residents may or may not fulfill expectations. The suitability of the local available labor force, their interest in prison work, and the proximity of other communities and their workers all need to be taken into account. Nearby communities, especially if they provide more

attractive or preferable residential options, also may erode local growth and benefit. The extensive literature on rural industrialization (Summers et al 1976) reports the same qualifiers for predicting impacts from other industries. Prison proponents need to modify their expectations for economic benefits where such conditions are present.

#### Inmate Impacts:

In most regards, conditions of incarceration and inmate characteristics are of little concern to prison host communities. They are internal features of prison life, and affect local residents only indirectly. These usual boundaries between the prison and the community are violated with an escape, however, and thus the potential for escapes and the likely actions of escapees often become a focus of resident concern.

Most of the studies reviewed above treat escapes only in statistical terms, e.g. rates of incidence and their outcomes. According to this data, escapes are relatively rare occurrences with almost always benign community consequences. There are other indications that resident attitudes toward escapes are much less sanguine, regardless of the actuality of redundancy or risk. People expect prisoners to remain in custody, an expectation that is shared by corrections' emphases on security and control.

Where these studies have included assessment of community attitudes about escapes and escapees, the usual indication is that these are viewed as negative prison impacts whenever they occur. The significance residents give to escapes varies depending on the priority given other factors, such as economic benefits, and again, the relative size of the community. It seems that negative evaluations of escapes involve more than assessments of actual risk or real danger. They also are unfavorable judgements of the lifestyle and attitude changes that are felt to accompany escapes and their potential, and an assessment that these are not outweighed by any benefits. The research by Abrams and her colleagues (1985; 1987) does not fit this pattern, but the urban locations of these institutions and the artificial construction of community in these studies may account for this.

Escape risks are very different for minimum custody or work release facilities, and most of the literature reviewed dealt with medium custody prisons or above, with two notable exceptions where both types of institutions were included. In these, residents have been found to feel more secure with maximum security institutions where escape risks are low (Zarchikoff et al 1981); they also have indicated feeling more threatened when the security level of escapees is higher (Carlson 1989). Overall, the conclusion for understanding the impacts of escapes and escape risks is that they do escalate resident worries about personal security and safety, and those escapes perceived as involving more dangerous inmates or more dangerous circumstances cause the greatest concern.

More favorable findings for prison proponents come from the assessment of the presence of inmate associates. Prisons do not uniformly bring an influx of inmate families and friends. The exception to this trend occurred where the prison had a combination of inmates with longer sentences, was in a locale remote from the residences of most families, and where the community offered an affordable choice of residences. In other prison host communities where the presence of inmate families was assessed, no substantial numbers were found. As is the case with escapes, however, impacts are not simply a matter of numbers.

Inmate families seem to be a population with a higher than average level of problems and prospects for criminal activity. It also is the case that any transgression associated with them is likely to be noted by community residents as a negative impact of the prison and thus be accorded extra significance. Where communities are small and prisons are proportionately large, and where services may be few, this combination of problematic behaviors and visibility will tend to produce an assessment of negative impacts independent of the numerical proportion of inmate associates.

Inmates themselves may contribute to positive prison effects when they are involved in some form of service work in the community. This type of service work was provided by both internal and community-based work crews, and in either case, was typically viewed by community residents as an asset. Inmates also can contribute to an increase in negative impacts when they remain in an area after release.

This latter effect is most likely when families also are resident in the area, further contributing to antipathy to inmate families. It also is likely when services for released inmates are concentrated in the vicinity. Policies requiring release to county of origin and concentrations of services in these areas rather than prison locales appear to discourage former inmates from remaining in prison host communities. Ironically, if prisons were more commonly located in the urban communities and areas where convicted criminals disproportionately resided before incarceration, this and related issues would be moot.

Finally, while a prison's internal operation may not directly affect its host community, there are indications that internal institutional features still do contribute to prison impacts. Length of sentence is a definite example of this, with institutions holding maximum security inmates being more likely to attract relocation of inmate families, especially when the prison's location is remote. Internal order or disruption also influences how the community views the prison and its risks. This in turn affects employees and their job satisfaction: employees bring home to their families and their residences their job problems and frustrations, and through them, the prison walls are very permeable indeed.

### Criminal Justice System Impacts:

Inmate criminal behavior within the institution is the most consistent criminal justice impact of a prison. Investigation and prosecution of such crimes typically falls to the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where the prison is located. The degree to which such responsibility presents a difficulty for these agencies depends again on the size of the institution relative to that of the agency in charge. State policies for reimbursement also vary. Prison service demands were referenced as a problem by agencies who felt themselves overburdened and inadequately compensated; in other jurisdictions, they presented little difficulty.

Prison impacts on host community crime rates produced the most mixed and ambiguous results. Prisons were associated with stable crime rates, decreased crime rates, and increased crime rates. While some of this diversity may be the result of inappropriate control communities or areas in the research projects themselves, there are other factors which transcend these methodological issues. As a group, those prison communities with higher crime rates tended to be either smaller, more isolated, with a greater population influx of some type, or some combination of these.

The common factor in all these settings and under these varied circumstances is, once again, relative institution to community size. Small communities with large prisons, and larger cities with similarly disproportionate prison populations were more likely to exhibit increased crime rates. In addition to this comparatively straightforward relationship between community and prison size, several studies also identified characteristics of those committing the additional crimes. Some of these increases seemed related to the numbers of inmate families (Parcells & Farrington 1989); some to released inmates (Callier & Versteeg 1988; Seidel & Heinkel 1987); and some to a combination of families, prison employees, and long-term residents who were apparently reacting to community stress and change (Carlson 1989).

Neither inmate families, former inmates, or correctional employees can contribute significantly to an area's criminal activity unless they are proportionately numerous or disproportionately active. It is where both conditions are apparently present that crime rate increases are associated with prisons. This suggests a combination of causal factors, ranging from employment practices through "crime prone" tendencies in certain populations. The methodology in none of these studies allows such questions to be systematically examined beyond the stereotypes of prison families and staff.

The data collected in Clallam Bay, Washington by Carlson (1989) suggests that stresses associated with community change and conflicting attitudes may be contributing factors in new prison settings. In both new and older prisons, law enforcement capacity and responsiveness also may make a difference: when facilities are remote and indigenous populations are

comparatively small, movement of contraband may be difficult to control. Transiency by both visitors and staff may contribute to a climate where low community investment shows up in community crime increases.

The research conducted thus far indicates that prisons in and of themselves apparently do not lead to increased community crime rates; prisons in combination with community size, community character, and the characteristics of residents may contribute to such increases.

#### Community Lifestyle Impacts:

The category of community lifestyle includes a variety of attitudinal and behavioral prison impacts on daily life and community identity. In most of the studies reviewed above, these impacts were not assessed; in a few, information was collected about the views of local leaders and service providers; and in three, general resident attitudes were surveyed.

Insofar as the prisons studied tended to improve the local economies and provide few service burdens, local leaders and service providers perceived the institutions favorably. Where services were burdened, as in Salem and Walla Walla, these attitudes were much less bullish. In these cities, where institutional size was proportionately large, these informants felt the prisons drew resources from other citizens and in this regard, presented a negative impact.

In the three studies where the attitudes of a more eclectic sample of residents were assessed, evaluations of prison impacts on lifestyle issues tended to be decidedly mixed. Perceived and actual increases in crime, and heightened concerns for neighborhood and family safety because of crime, or inmate escapes or escape risks, contributed to the negative evaluations. Other lifestyle impacts involved the presence of employees or new residents with different values and degrees of community investment. The influx of new residents due to a prison also contributed to positive lifestyle changes, increasing community population and restoring some portions of its civic and service vitality.

In general, the assessments of prisons as disadvantages to the community and detriments to residents' quality of life tended to be combined with acknowledgements of prison contributions or neutral effects. Residents did not uniformly condemn their prisons in any of these communities. Abrams and her associates (1985; 1987) found that negative evaluations could be moderated when positive economic impacts were considered, a finding similar to the diverse assessments of various prison impacts noted by Zarchikoff et al (1981) and Carlson (1989). Individuals living in communities with prisons appear to be engaged in an ongoing assessment of its benefits and detriments, with either view able to be elicited. Attitudes to impacts are thus always subject to change, even in prisons that have been in place for many years, by events that seem to influence the balance of these continuing assessments.

The extensive review of lifestyle impacts in the research by Carlson (1989) reveals that in small communities, prisons are likely to be agents of considerable social change. Residents' evaluations of these changes as positive, negative, or tolerable tend to be based on their evaluations of other aspects of prison effects. When prisons are seen as essential industries for community survival, some unwanted lifestyle impacts become simply a necessary if unfortunate trade off. When prisons continue to be seen as unwelcome and unneeded additions to the community, this balancing of positive and negative effects tilts to the negative. This takes us back to our initial consideration of siting. The significance of residents' pre-prison attitudes on latter judgements reinforces current practices by many corrections systems of locating prisons only where there is predominant community support. Carlson found that community residents who identified themselves as initially opposed to the prison were more likely to judge its negative lifestyle effects as significant and as more important than any benefits. This assessment is not a matter of ignorance or lack of awareness of any prison benefits, but a weighing of both benefits and detriments. Over time, both Carlson and Maxim and Plecas (198 ) see these unfavorable lifestyle evaluations as declining, either because residents accommodate to the givens of a prison, or because those who do not move away.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It can be stated as a truism that most people really do not care for prisons, and correspondingly, would rather not have a prison located in their home town. Even where prisons are welcomed by their host communities, it is because of what they can give, not because of what they are. And this welcome itself is contingent on the absence of other alternatives for providing these benefits. Prisons are therefore always entering a community conditionally. Over time, such conditional acceptance may lessen as a prison becomes an accepted feature of the community's identity, but it seems never to be entirely eliminated. Even where prisons had been in place for many years, residents continued to sift and balance their judgements of prison effects. As corrections systems have found, the fact that a community has apparently adjusted favorably to having a prison is no guarantor that expansion or additional prisons will be similarly received.

The contingent quality of prison impacts is revealed in both resident attitudes and in more quantitative measures of prison effects. Community residents are more likely to evaluate the effects of a prison favorably when they feel its benefits have been sufficient to outweigh its inherent disadvantages. In the same vein, statistical indicators of prison effects are likely to include both desirable and undesirable impacts. It is not the presence or absence of positive or negative indicators that

determines the slant of prison effects: it is their relative proportion.

There are six primary factors identified in the research that influence the direction of prison impacts: 1) sizes of the community and the institution; 2) location in regard to inmate origins and employee origins; 3) the host community's capacity to provide needed services, housing, and other amenities; 4) institutional security level and length of inmate sentence; 5) institutional arrangements concerning inmate community work, releases, and visiting; and 6) the local history of the institution, such as siting disputes and promises, community needs, and the occurrence of escapes and their consequences.

By far the most significant of these factors is the first. In small communities with large prisons, or in cities where prison size is proportionately large, both positive and negative prison impacts are heightened. Under such conditions, the other factors appear to be of great significance in contributing to the residents' overall assessment of a prison's effects. Community acceptance of the prison during siting decisions is only one aspect of these contributions. If community capacity is insufficient to allow anticipated or significant benefits from prison location, if the location of the town or the conditions of incarceration are such that they increase negative effects, or if, through bad luck, policies, or management, prison disruption and prisoners themselves spill out to adversely affect the community, initial favorable attitudes may be eroded.

Past experiences with siting opposition and the present impetus for new prison construction have sometimes combined to push aside many of the guidelines for prison location suggested by Nagel (1973) and others and adopted by the American Corrections Association. In many states, it is small, rural communities which are seeking out and being selected as sites for prisons housing as many as two thousand inmates. These are the communities which want and need prison benefits: unfortunately, these also are the communities where prison deficits also will most likely occur.

Community acceptance is important, but without the co-occurrence of other important conditions, it is likely to be insufficient. This does not mean that such communities should therefore not be considered for prison siting. It does mean that their selection as prison locales should include more careful assessment of the factors noted above, and alterations in these where indicated. Prisons with inmate populations equal to or exceeding those of host communities generate the most unstable mix of positive and negative impacts. This needs to be taken into account before and after site selection.

Prison siting is a situation in which both the concerns of opponents and the hopes of proponents are realistic assessments of potential and likely prison effects. The research on prison impacts substantiates the validity of either viewpoint. More importantly, however, it suggests the factors which affect the greater realization of either hopes or fears. In some cases,

these factors can be altered by community changes prior to prison opening. For example, construction of additional or more appropriate housing for employees, selective hiring practices, or needed improvements in community services could do a great deal to increase the likelihood of favorable impacts in some locales.

The message for communities considering prisons and for corrections officials considering communities is to take such steps as are feasible to swing the balance of the effects of having a prison toward the positive. Some negative effects may be inherent in the industry. Their significance is not predetermined, however, and it appears that increasing the positives that can be associated with a prison decreases the evaluative importance of any negatives that also occur.

There are still gaps in our knowledge of prison impacts. Existing studies are neither numerous or complete enough to enable us to take into account all factors influencing prison effects and their direction. More research, especially that which is comprehensive in scope, is needed. Further, the next stage in prison impact research should be to examine the ways in which prison host communities and their residents accommodate and adjust to their industries over time. We need to know a great deal more about what communities have done and can do to make prison effects predominantly positive. Without this understanding, we can do little to systematically intervene where prison impacts have taken a negative turn.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, Kathleen S., James Nicholas, Bill Opinate, Beverly McDermott, Ann Deister, Jerry Beloit, Arthur Heise, & Hugh Gladwin  
1985 The Socioeconomic Impacts of State Prison-Siting on the Local Community. North Miami, Florida: Florida Atlantic University/ Florida International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems.
- Abrams, Kathleen S. & William Lyons  
1987 Impact of Correctional Facilities on Land Values and Public Safety. North Miami, Florida: Florida Atlantic University/ Florida International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems. National Institute of Corrections Grant #R-84-P-02.
- Alabama Department of Corrections  
1982 Impact of a Prison on a Community. Montgomery, Alabama: Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit.
- Ashwood, Ross & Ted Long  
1987 Inmate Visitor Study. Salem, Oregon: Oregon Corrections Division, Planning & Program Review Unit.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics  
1989 "Prisoners in 1988," April Bulletin.
- Carlson, Katherine A.  
1988 "Understanding Community Opposition to Prison Siting: More Than Fear and Finances." Corrections Today: 84 - 90, April.  
  
1989 Twice Blessed or Double Whammy? Prison Impacts on Small Towns. Final Report of the Clallam Bay Project, Port Angeles, Washington: Clallam County Sheriff's Department. National Institute of Justice Grant #85-IJ-CX-0022.
- Callier, Mark W. & Karyn D. Versteeg  
1988 Preliminary Conclusions: Correctional Institutions' Impact on the City of Salem Police Services. Salem, Oregon: Operational Support Section, Salem Police Department.
- Hawes, Jerry A.  
1985 Cities with Prisons: Do They Have Higher or Lower Crime Rates? Sacramento, California: State Senate Office of Research.

Hodge, David C. & Lynn Staeheli

- 1988 "Monroe, Snohomish County, and Three Facilities." In Lidman, R. ed, Impact of Washington State's Correctional Institutions on Communities. Olympia, Washington: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. For Department of Community Development.

Lidman, Russell M., ed.

- 1988 Impact of Washington State's Correctional Institutions on Communities. Olympia, Washington: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. For Department of Community Development.

Maxim, Paul & Darryl Plecas

- 1983 "Prisons and Their Perceived Impact on the Local Community: A Case Study." Social Indicators Research 13:39-58.

McGee, Richard A.

- 1981 Prisons and Politics. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books.

Millay, John R.

- 1989 "From Asylum to Penitentiary: The Social Impact of Eastern Oregon Corrections Institution Upon Pendleton." Paper presented at the 1989 meeting of the American Criminological Association: Reno, Nevada.

Nagel, William C.

- 1973 The New Red Barn: A Critical Look at the Modern American Prison. New York: Praeger.

Parcells, Keith & Pete Farrington

- 1988 "Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, and the Washington State Penitentiary." In Lidman, R. ed, Impact of Washington State's Correctional Institutions on Communities. Olympia, Washington: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. For Department of Community Development.

- 1989 "Asset or Liability? The Economic and Social Impacts of the Washington State Penitentiary Upon the City and County of Walla Walla." Paper presented at the 1989 meeting of the American Criminological Association: Reno, Nevada.

Pagel, Al

- 1988 "Prejudices Set Aside...Communities Woo Prisons." Corrections Compendium XII(10), April.

Rogers, George O. & Marshall Haines

- 1987 "Local Impact of a Low-Security Federal Correctional Institution." Federal Probation 51(3):28-34.

Seidel, Karen M. & Carol Heinkel

1987 Salem Area Institutions: Correctional and Mental Health Institutions and the Ex-Institutional Population. Eugene, Oregon: Bureau of Governmental Research and Service, University of Oregon.

Seidel, Karen M., Kevin Knudtson, & Ken Viegas

1987 Salem Area Community Corrections: State Clients, Local Services, and Policy Choices. Eugene, Oregon: Bureau of Governmental Research and Service, University of Oregon.

Smykla, John O., David C. Cheng, Carl E. Ferguson, Jr., Carolyn Trent, Barbara Trench, & Annette Waters

1984 "Effects of a Prison Facility on the Regional Economy." Journal of Criminal Justice 12:521-539.

Stanley, C. E.

1978 The Impact of Prison Proximity on Property Values in Green Bay and Waupun, Wisconsin. Milwaukee: Wisconsin Division of Corrections and Bureau of Facilities Management.

Summers, Gene F., S.D. Evans, F. Clemente, E. M. Beck, & J. Minkoff

1976 Industrial Invasion of Nonmetropolitan America: A Quarter Century of Experience. New York: Praeger.

Zarchikoff, William W., T. J. Segger, & Darryl B. Plecas

1981 An Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of Federal Correctional Institutions on the Communities of Agassiz, Harrison Hot Springs, and Harrison Mills, British Columbia, Canada. Ottawa, Canada: Ministry of the Solicitor General, Evaluation and Special Projects Division.