

# Probation

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Administrative Office of the United States Courts, Washington, D.C. 20544

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402

# Federal Probation

A JOURNAL OF CORRECTIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

Published by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts

VOLUME XXXXVI

MARCH 1982

NUMBER 1

## This Issue in Brief

**Structuring the Exercise of Sentencing Discretion in the Federal Courts.**—Brian Forst and William Rhodes report results of a major study of Federal sentencing practices, focusing on highlights that have special relevance to the probation community: survey results on the purposes of sentencing, an analysis of recent sentencing decisions, and an analysis of the information contained in the presentence investigation report. The survey revealed that Federal probation officers and judges, on the whole, regard deterrence and incapacitation as more important goals of sentencing than either rehabilitation or just deserts. The judges individually, on the other hand, are divided over the goals of sentencing.

**Zero-Sum Enforcement: Some Reflections on Drug Control.**—This article reflects upon the dilemmas in drug control efforts and suggests that current policy and practices be reviewed and modified in order to evolve a "more coherent" approach to the problem. The authors critique the methods of evaluating drug enforcement efforts and provide a series of rationales that can be employed in the decisionmaking process.

**Inreach Counseling and Advocacy With Veterans in Prison.**—A self-help model of direct and indirect services is provided through a Veterans Administration veterans-in-prison (VIP) pilot program. Authors Pentland and Scurfield describe objectives and methodology of the program, including the formation of incarcerated veterans into self-help groups, organization of community-based resources into VIP teams that visit the prisons, serving veteran-related issues and services such as discharge upgrading and Agent Orange, and a diversionary program for veterans in pretrial confinement.

**The Probation Officer and the Suicidal Client.**—This article by Federal probation officers Casucci and Powell attempts to provide the probation officer with enough information to be able to

recognize and deal effectively with the suicidal client. The authors furnish an overview of the problem of suicide, a profile of the suicidal client, and the therapeutic response of the probation officer in this crisis situation.

**An Experiential Focus on the Development of Employment for Ex-Offenders.**—U.S. Probation Officer Stanley S. Nakamura of the Northern District of California states that a concerted effort

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has been made in his District to establish an employment program that would provide real assistance to those clients interested in working. Integrity, friendship, patience, professionalism, trust, placement, and followthrough are the basis of a successful employment program, he concludes.

***Alienation and Desire for Job Enrichment Among Correction Officers.***—Responses to a correction officer opinion survey suggest that C.O.'s hold attitudes toward their job that are similar to those of other contemporary workers, report Hans Toch and John Klofas. Like other urban workers, urban C.O.'s tend to be very alienated; like workers generally, most C.O.'s are concerned with job enrichment or job expansion.

***BARS in Corrections.***—Evaluating the job performance of employees is a perennial problem for most correctional organizations, according to Wiley Hamby and J.E. Baker. The use of Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) appears to be a viable alternative for evaluating the performance of employees in corrections, they maintain.

***Redesigning the Criminal Justice System: A Commentary on Selected Potential Strategies.***—Selected strategies are highlighted by Attorney Tommy W. Rogers which would appear worthy of consideration in any contemplated alteration of the criminal justice system. Suggestions are made concerning modification of the criminal law detection and apprehension strategies, improving the administrative and judicial efficiency of courts, redressing system neglect of victims, and utilization of research in planning and legislation.

***Strategies for Maintaining Social Service Programs in Jails.***—Social services within jails and community-based alternatives to incarceration are vulnerable to cutbacks, asserts Henry Weiss of the Wharton School in Philadelphia. His article suggests a number of strategies for maintaining the improvements in service delivery that have been so painstakingly won over the past 15 years.

***Promises and Realities of Jail Classification.***—The process by which jails reach classification decisions has rarely been studied due to the preoccupation of the field with predictive models, assert James Austin and Paul Litsky of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency Research Center. The authors' opinions expressed in this article are based on their findings of a comparative process study of four jail classification systems.

***Crime Victim Compensation: A Survey of State Programs.***—Compensating crime victims for injuries sustained as a result of their victimization has evolved into a highly complex practice, report Gerard F. Ramker and Martin S. Meagher of Sam Houston State University. Their study showed that the state compensation programs in existence today are subject to similarities in certain organizational characteristics and also appear to share certain disparities.

***Probation Officers Do Make a Difference.***—This article by Marilyn R. Sánchez of the Hennepin County (Minn.) Probation Department examines the successful interaction between probation officer and client. Her article discusses a three-issue model for feedback from probationers: (1) the "exit interview" with the probationer, (2) presentations in schools, and (3) the postprobation checkoff list.

All the articles appearing in this magazine are regarded as appropriate expressions of ideas worthy of thought but their publication is not to be taken as an endorsement by the editors or the Federal probation office of the views set forth. The editors may or may not agree with the articles appearing in the magazine, but believe them in any case to be deserving of consideration.

# Promises and Realities of Jail Classification

BY JAMES AUSTIN, PH.D., AND PAUL LITSKY

Research Center, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, San Francisco

## The Promise of Jail Classification

Jail and prison administrators have been urged by correctional standard setting organizations, prison reform groups, and more recently by the Federal courts to establish formal classification systems in their institutions. The American Correctional Association, Criminal Justice Foundation, and many state correctional agencies have issued specific standards to define the format and function of classification systems. In several lawsuits filed against overcrowded state correctional systems, the absence of formal and equitable classification systems has been implicated as one of the major causes of prison overcrowding (*Pugh v. Locke* [Alabama]; *Trigg v. Blanton*; *Nelson v. Collins* [Maryland]; *Ramos v. Lamm* [Colorado]). The National Institute of Corrections has invested considerable resources into the funding of classification research and policy development grants.

Classification, as it is applied to jail and prison inmates, has three main purposes: (1) management, (2) prediction, and (3) planning. From the management perspective, formal classification criteria are necessary to ensure that rational and equitable decisions are made by the staff at institutions. This philosophical approach represents a justice model of classification. Ideally, decisions pertaining to custody level, medical treatment, mental health care, and program participation should be based on standardized and precise criteria understood by staff and inmates. The justice model assumes that a formal classification process, clearly communicated to staff and inmates, will reduce tensions fueled by perceptions that decisions are unfair and unpredictable. Lines of authority and accountability will be clearly set forward.

Predictive classification models assume it is possible to predict inmate behavior by studying and analyzing the inmate's individual socioeconomic and psychological attributes. This approach, grounded in the positivist social science ideology, has been used to predict everything from disruptive inmate behavior to future criminal ac-

tivity. Properly diagnosed inmates can be assigned to the most appropriate custody setting (e.g., those violent prone or escape prone would receive the most secure housing assignments). Institutions interested in the goal of rehabilitation could use predictive classification models to identify those inmates who need social services and would respond to such services.

Finally, classification can serve important planning and monitoring functions. Classification implies the need for a process of systematic data collection and analysis of the data to guide administrative decisions on future correctional policies. Centralization of data collection and analysis tasks makes it possible to evaluate trends in population flow, inmate characteristics, jail decisionmaking processes, and the impact of programmatic, administrative, and legal reforms on staff and inmate behavior. Systematic analyses of these data should allow jail administrators to rationally develop new correctional policies based on empirically derived needs.

Two recent examples of classification data being used for policy development occurred in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the California Department of Corrections. Both correctional systems developed new classification systems that were partially based on a systematic statistical analysis of their inmate populations. Based upon these data and the recommendations of correctional staff, a "point" system was established to better "objectify" the classification process. Using this new point system, it was learned that correctional staff had historically placed inmates in custody settings higher than actually needed. California has since revised its projected plans for massive expansion of its current maximum security bedspace and is reallocating departmental resources towards expansion of less expensive minimum security bed institutions and community-based settings. This shift in correctional policy (e.g., toward less severe and costly classification decision practices) would not have been possible without some historical knowledge of past classification practice and inmate characteristics.

Philosophies of classification, whether they improve management, predict inmate behavior, or plan and evaluate correctional policies, can be reduced to the simple tasks of collecting and analyzing data for the broad purpose of deciding what to do with persons sent to jail. A classification system can be likened to the functions of the human brain. It collects, stores, and analyzes data and, in turn, triggers administrative actions which shape the conditions of confinement, punishment, and program participation. Without this "brain," prisons and jails will react haphazardly or against mandated standards, policies, and laws. A commitment to the continued monitoring of the classification system, especially as it relates to the goals and objectives of the institution, is necessary to insure that prisons and jails retain rationality in their daily decisionmaking.

## Understanding the Process of Jail Classification

When the topic of classification research is raised, most people assume it is related to the development and verification of predictive classification models. However, in this article we will be limiting our discussion to the process of classification management models. While predictive models have their place, there is a paucity of research on the implementation and actual use of classification systems in jails.

Jail classification systems differ from prison classification systems only in relation to the institutions they serve. Jails are more limited in their facilities and the inmates' length of stay (frequently less than 60 days). Consequently, turnover of population is more rapid, meaning that the execution of classification decisions is both a rapid and constrained process. Jails do not have the luxury of 30-60 day diagnostic periods to conduct extensive medical, social, and psychological inventories. The limited nature of their physical structure, custody levels, and programmatic resources also means that decision criteria need not be overly complex. It makes little difference if a person needs vocational training in computer programming or intense psychiatric intervention if he will be released in 60 days.

We do know that every jail has a classification system of some type. Each day decisions are made by staff about where to transfer inmates, what programs they will be allowed to participate in, how inmates will be punished for disciplinary infractions, who will receive medical attention, and so on. The process may be extremely formal or may be carried out by inmates and staff making infor-

mal "gut" reactions. Decisions may involve the simple choice of placing an inmate in one of two available cells that look pretty much alike, or it may require a much more complex choice from a range of diverse housing, security, and program options.

Little attention has been directed toward an evaluation of those formal and informal processes which make up the classification system. Jail administrators seem to have little interest in understanding (1) the criteria by which their staff makes decisions, (2) the consistency of their decisions, and (3) the impact of their decisions on inmates, staff, and the community. If jails are the least understood component of the adult justice system, jail classification processes represent an even more mysterious and unstudied phenomenon.

Although there have been many classification schemes and incredible amounts of data collected in the classification of offenders for the past 75 years, very little evaluation has been done. It seems that there are many "pet" classification systems and numerous typologies produced by academics, but no systematic evaluation (IIT, 1975: 254).

Evaluations of classification systems per se will not tell us how to improve jails. Correctional policy is and will continue to be shaped by the political and economic ideologies and values that dominate our society and the criminal justice system. However, evaluations can inform administrators if their jail is operating as intended, can identify its impact on staff and inmates, and can suggest more powerful means for replacing costly and ineffective correctional practices.

Having summarized the competing expectations of jail classification, what are the realities of classification as presently practiced? How are these decisions reached and what factors impede successful implementation? Findings are drawn from a recently completed study of jail classification in four jails (Boulder, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; New Orleans, Louisiana; Springfield, Massachusetts) (Jail Classification Evaluation, NCCD, 1981). The study represents a year long process study of how classification decisions are made using standardized qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The study included descriptions of the classification systems in operation at the four jails and the criteria used by staff in making decisions. Findings presented below identify organizational and political factors that impede and distort the implementation of any classification system regardless of its sophistication and validity.

**Realities of Jail Classification**

Little has been accomplished in the implementation of formal jail classification systems despite their ascribed theoretical and pragmatic importance noted above. Most of the Nation's 4,000 plus jails continue to operate without a formal written policy to guide inmate handling and correctional procedures. Instead of a carefully reasoned and empirically derived process, classification decisions, more often than not, reflect the subjective biases of inadequately trained staff. Attempts to reform or formalize classification decisions are thwarted because (1) criteria are ambiguously stated, (2) the model or criteria are not properly communicated to staff and inmates, and (3) classification decisions are subverted by lack of space and services with the jail. Each of these organizational impediments to jail classification are discussed below using current findings from the comparative jail classification study. Also discussed are some of the unanticipated consequences of a haphazard classification system.

**Ambiguously Defined Classification Criteria**

Formal systems of inmate classification, when they exist at all, rarely have the intended result of ensuring more rational and equitable decision-making. These systems often become impractical because the formal criteria established to implement the classification systems are open to subjective interpretation by a wide range of jail staff and administrators who make the classification decisions. Further, the broad ranges of criteria used in the process may result in classification decisions that are at worst *illegal* and at best merely *unreliable*.

Criteria such as "medical needs," "male and female," and "juvenile vs. adult" and "black vs. white" are precise distinctions that require minimal specification. However, as noted later, even diagnosis of medical needs established by a thorough examination performed by competent medical staff becomes an important factor for classification decisions within an overcrowded facility. Thus, even when classification criteria definitions are relatively unambiguous, wide variations in decisionmaking can exist.

Most criteria, however, were found to be subjective and ambiguously stated. Frequently, these criteria reflected an adherence to medical or pathological models of criminal behavior. Inmates, by virtue of their presence in jail, were assumed to have some personality defects which led to their present incarceration. In this study, clinical

diagnosis frequently was performed by staff without advanced degrees in the behavioral sciences and earning \$10,000 to \$16,000 per year. Clinical judgments, regardless of their validity, can result in inmates experiencing severely differential conditions of confinement. And, placing inmates in more secure custody settings that may deprive them of access for services based upon such a psychological profile as perceived by untrained staff may be an unlawful criterion.

In one jail, inmates were labeled as being "passive" or "aggressive." Inmates considered passive were housed in a tank while aggressive inmates were placed in single or double cells. Inadequate information collected at booking means that these initial decisions were predicated on behavior exhibited by inmates at booking. For example, staff indicated they had minimal data for such basic information such as number of prior escapes, FTA's, etc. The following are notes from field observations of the classification process at this jail illustrating the search for psychological factors.

Staff asked, "What is his attitude like—is he aggressive?" "Does he have any known enemies?" Discussion is hampered because of no files or lack of information in the files.

And

Caseworker in charge of the intake and reclassification floor gave the name, weight, race, charge of inmate when he was last in jail, and suggested a particular placement for each inmate. There was a little interchange between committee members, although this was primarily a discussion between the caseworker and the CS. Comments included "Let's make (section) 1-2 as passive as we can." "Put him in a section, he couldn't make it in a tank" as the inmate was "too slow" and "would get run over" by the more aggressive inmates assigned to tanks.

In another jail, inmates were booked into a maximum security intake module. If behavior was defined as "good," the inmate could move progressively from the maximum security area to medium security to minimum security, and finally work release. The criterion used for reclassifying the inmate was the inmate's behavior, as assessed by the line staff and subject to the staff's perceptions. Inmate personalities were evaluated at staffing "ceremonies."

Areas discussed included (the inmate's) family background, early childhood, personal characteristics, service background, interpersonal relationships, past prison experiences and charges. The staff member related her analysis of these experiences of the inmate to his present behavior and self-concept of a "fighter," yet he is fearful. She felt he needs structure, a parental model and a role model. She felt he lacked understanding of cause and effect, and how others interpreted his actions.

The most extreme case of ambiguously stated criteria was located in one jail that used the "objective criteria" shown in Exhibit A. Not only were many of the categories difficult to define operationally, but the categories of (1) "true," (2) "more true than false," (3) "more false than true," and (4)

**EXHIBIT A  
JACKSON COUNTY'S CLASSIFICATION FORM**

**CLASSIFICATION**

Inmate Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_  
 Admit Date \_\_\_\_\_ Master No. \_\_\_\_\_ Booking No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ht. \_\_\_\_\_ Wt. \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_ Bond \_\_\_\_\_ Charge \_\_\_\_\_

	True	More True Than False	More False Than True	Untrue	Don't Know
1. Juvenile/Protective Custody Ordered?					
2. Present Charge/Violent Crime?					
3. Prior History of Violent Crime?					
4. Release Program Risk?					
5. Drug or Alcohol History?					
6. Physically Small?					
7. Immature or Timid?					
8. Possible Signs of Emotional Difficulty?					
9. Severe Emotional Problems Requiring Referral?					
10. Communication Difficulties?					
11. Possible Mental Deficiency?					
12. Depressed/Despondent?					
13. Manipulative/Unreliable?					
14. Indifferent to Feelings of Others					
15. Easily Influenced/Intimidated?					
16. Likely to Dominate Others?					
17. Aggressively Prejudiced?					
18. May Respond Aggressively to Provocation?					
19. Impulsive?					
20. Unpredictable?					
21. Disrespectful/Likely to Require Close Supervision?					
22. Fraternalizes/Seeks Personal Favors					
23. History of Discipline Problems?					
24. Escape Attempt?					
25. Withdrawn?					
26. Prior Incarceration?					
27. Refuses to Participate in Programs?					

"untrue" were equally imprecise. Formalization of unclear criteria is more likely to further the drama of classification rather than validate reliable decisionmaking.

Broadly defined classification schemes as illustrated in the above examples lead to considerable inconsistency. Table 1 illustrates this phenomenon. Variations in the rates of inmates assigned to various categories by individual members of the classification committee are considerable. For example, staff person A classified higher proportions of inmates as perceived as requiring special assignment for medical, psychiatric, and age related reasons compared to other staff classifiers. Conversely, staff person B classified a higher rate of inmates as "gang-affiliated." Unless staff, for some reason, systematically encounter unique populations in the course of their work, these data demonstrate that classification decisions are based not only on inmate characteristics but also on the characteristics of staff making these decisions.

**Communication of the Classification System Model**

Even the best classification system will fail if it is not communicated to jail staff who must implement it and inmates whom it affects. Lacking knowledge of the formal mechanics of the system, staff are likely to revert to informal methods which

counteract the administrative goals of classification. Inmates need to be informed of the mechanics of requesting cell transfers, program participation, and the rules governing the institution in which they are housed. Inadequate understanding of the classification procedures is likely to increase tensions within the jail. Violence may be the eventual outcome of a poorly communicated classification system.

In the three jails where the staff and inmate surveys were administered, most staff knew of the existence of a formal classification system (table 2), but only 62.4 percent knew the rules specifying how inmates should request transfers. Far fewer inmates had knowledge of the classification system (58.7%), and even fewer knew the rules specifying how to request a transfer (38.5%). Very few inmates claim they were told the results of classification decisions while a vast majority felt that they should have been told. They were less likely than staff to agree with the statements that cell and program assignments were fair. It is clear from table 2 that both staff and inmates lack knowledge of the classification system and that inmates desire such knowledge.

Table 3 shows wide differences between staff and inmate knowledge of how to request transfers to another cell. Staff and inmates are operating under entirely different systems within the same jail. The wide diversity of responses leads to the conclusion that it is not clear to either staff or in-

**TABLE 1  
VARIATION IN CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS BY SUPERVISING STAFF**

CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES	PERCENT CLASSIFIED BY INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISING STAFF					
	TOTAL	PERSON #A	PERSON #B	PERSON #C	PERSON #D	PERSON #E
MEDICAL NEEDS	(88) 14.7	17.9%	9.3%	8.3%	13.4%	11.5%
PSYCHIATRIC NEEDS	(54) 7.9	13.4%	1.9%	6.3%	8.4%	4.9%
AGED	(32) 4.6	8.5%	1.9%	2.1%	6.7%	0.8%
YOUNG APPEARANCE	(254) 37.3	40.2%	38.0%	32.3%	37.8%	38.5%
SEX OFFENDER	(30) 5.1	2.2%	6.5%	7.3%	6.7%	2.5%
ESCAPE RISK	(33) 5.9	4.0%	4.6%	8.3%	6.7%	2.5%
GANG AFFILIATION	(80) 14.5	5.4%	23.1%	18.8%	12.6%	8.2%
KNOWN INFORMER	(15) 2.2	5.4%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%
VIOLENT BEHAVIOR	(120) 17.8	19.2%	14.8%	19.8%	16.8%	18.0%
INMATE REARRESTS	(105) 15.5	9.8%	3.7%	37.5%	14.3%	21.3%
NUMBER OF CASES	(811)	(282)	(113)	(135)	(148)	(133)

Percents are based on the percentage of all inmates classified within a specific category.

**TABLE 2  
SELECTED RESPONSES TO STAFF AND INMATE QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED AT THREE JAILS\***

QUESTION:	PERCENT WHO ANSWER "YES"	
	STAFF	INMATES
KNOW IF CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM EXISTS AT JAIL	94.0%	58.7%
KNOW RULES TO REQUEST INMATE TRANSFER	62.4%	38.5%
INMATES ARE TOLD OF CLASSIFICATION DECISION	55.3%	27.7%
INMATES SHOULD BE TOLD OF CLASSIFICATION DECISION	69.6%	81.0%
KNOW HOW INMATES REQUEST TRANSFERS	92.8%	85.1%
STAFF NEVER EXPLAIN WHY MORE REQUESTS DENIED	11.7%	60.9%
STAFF NEVER EXPLAIN WHY PROGRAM REQUEST DENIED	6.5%	60.9%
PRESENT AGREE: CELL ASSIGNMENTS FAIR	82.1%	67.1%
PROGRAM ASSIGNMENTS FAIR	87.1%	62.7%
INMATES HAVE NO SAY WHAT GOES ON IN JAIL	21.1%	62.2%
THERE IS TENSION IN THIS JAIL ALL THE TIME	14.1%	47.6%

\*Number of cases varies from question to question. 543 inmates and 269 staff were surveyed.

Source: Inmate and staff surveys

**TABLE 3**

**STAFF AND INMATE PERCEPTIONS OF WHO MAKES CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS**

RESPONSE	STAFF	INMATES
DON'T KNOW	19.0%	80.9%
CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE	36.1%	0.7%
CLASSIFICATION OFFICER	3.7%	0.2%
CLASSIFICATION BOARD	—	0.4%
CLASSIFICATION CASEWORKER	1.5%	1.1%
CORRECTIONS OFFICERS	3.0%	0.2%
LIEUTENANT	1.5%	0.4%
FLOOR SUPERVISOR/WATCH COMMANDER	8.9%	0.4%
OFFICER AT FRONT GATE	1.1%	0.9%
OTHER GUARDS	1.9%	1.8%
CAPTAIN OR WARDEN	1.9%	0.2%
SHIFT ADMINISTRATOR	1.9%	—
STAFF CASEWORKER	11.5%	6.2%
INTAKE SCREENER	3.7%	0.2%
JUDGE	—	3.3%
POLICE	0.4%	2.0%
DOCTOR	—	0.7%
SOCIAL WORKER	—	0.2%
NUMBER OF CASES	269	544

Source: Inmate and Staff Surveys

mates how the formal procedure for requesting cell transfers works.

Both inmates and staff need to know who is responsible for making formal classification decisions. Frustrations are likely to increase if inmates are kept unaware of the authority for making decisions that affect so many aspects of their daily life. Yet 80.9 percent of the inmates surveyed did not know who made classification decisions. The diversity of responses for the remaining 19.1% reveal a general lack of knowledge of written classification procedures. Staff also reported a wide range of responses, indicating either a general lack of knowledge of the classification system or a wide dispersal of authority among staff for making classification decisions. In either case, formal classification in decisionmaking did not exist due to a lack of any specifically known body that could be held accountable for classification decisions.

In such instances we observed informal interactions among inmates and staff controlling the classification decisionmaking process. Staff and inmates labeled as "credible" and having access to those with authority to classify, engaged in bartering ceremonies to secure the most desirable housing, work, and program assignments. In one jail, those inmates and staff with frequent access to classification officers had the greatest influence in having their views heard and in influencing decisions. As in all decisionmaking ceremonies, the "facts of the case" will be shaped by access to

authority and the credibility of those presenting data.

**Consequences of Overcrowding on Jail Classification**

When jails become overcrowded, classification policies are discarded and decisions are shaped by the conditions of overcrowding. This situation is known as "capacity driven" classification decisionmaking. Housing, program participation, and disciplinary actions are determined not upon the formal "objective" criteria written as policy, but upon what available cell space exists to house inmates. Clements (1980) points out that although classification has been shown as an effective tool for reducing prison overcrowding, it is the problem of overcrowding that often paralyzes rational decisionmaking.

When an institution becomes overcrowded, classification criteria become distorted to meet the needs of the overcrowded facility and not the needs of the prisoner. Inmates who could qualify for minimum security, if space existed, are told they do not qualify because excessively strict custody criteria were established due to limited placements available. Instead of constructing additional minimum security beds, officials may perpetuate the vicious circle of "molding" classification decisions to inadequate physical structures. However, it is the inmate and not the facility who is characterized as "inadequate."

But the "space available" approach has even broader implications. It means that we mold prisoners to the system rather than trying to modify the system to accurately reflect the realities of inmate needs and requirements. If services, programs, and facilities aren't available, there is strong pressure to not classify people as needing them. This ap-

proach results not only in poor programming for the individual, but also in a costly failure to collect and analyze valuable information for purposes of long-range planning. (Clements, 1980: 5)

Each of the four jails evaluated had written policies and procedures to guide the handling of inmates. However, each of the four jails also complained of being either chronically overcrowded or overcrowded for substantial periods of the year. When these jails are overcrowded, their written policies become inoperative and even the most elementary forms of differential handling become impossible.

One example of this phenomenon can be observed in one jail that was chronically overcrowded (12 percent average daily population above rated capacity). This facility, by current jail practices, has an excellent medical screening and care unit. However, as illustrated in table 4, even with such resources, proper classification of inmates with special medical and psychiatric needs is not always achieved. The table lists the special medical and psychological needs of inmates as listed by staff and compares the percentage of these cases that actually received special classification at booking. Although the rates of proper classification differ for the different types of inmate needs (from 34.7 percent to 85.9 percent), the consistent pattern is only partial compliance with emergency inmate needs. For example, of the 138 cases where the inmate was diagnosed as needing immediate medical attention within 24 hours, only 48 cases were specially assigned to a medical unit or to a unit where intensive supervision was possible. Unless resources exist to differentially classify inmates, proper diagnosis will be of little value.

**TABLE 4**  
COMPARISONS OF SPECIAL INMATE NEEDS AND RATES OF SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT DECISIONS

SPECIAL INMATE NEEDS	IDENTIFICATION*	SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT**
NEEDS IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION WITHIN 24 HOURS	(138) 100%	( 48) 34.7%
NEEDS IMMEDIATE PSYCHIATRIC ATTENTION	( 35) 100%	( 18) 51.4%
HISTORY OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS	(121) 100%	(104) 85.9%
HISTORY OF MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITALIZATION	( 83) 100%	( 69) 83.1%
PHYSICALLY DISABLED	( 21) 100%	( 17) 80.9%

\* Represents number of inmates identified as exhibiting the special inmate need.

\*\* Represents number of inmates actually assigned to a special housing setting.

Interview and field observations of classification decisionmaking validated the quantitative data. Discussion on inmate needs was ultimately reduced to the basic question of inmate placement.

We could use a point system here to classify people. But the problem is that we have no housing options. It's all maximum security and we're always overcrowded. (Field Notes)  
Overcrowding of the facility is a problem for classification. Maximum capacity of the jail is 105 inmates, but the effects of overcrowding are felt when the population exceeds 80. At this point, inmate movement slows down dramatically. Classification decisions then become based on the bed space available. Inmates are often pushed through the system to allow for new inmates coming in. (Field Notes)

**Unanticipated Consequences**

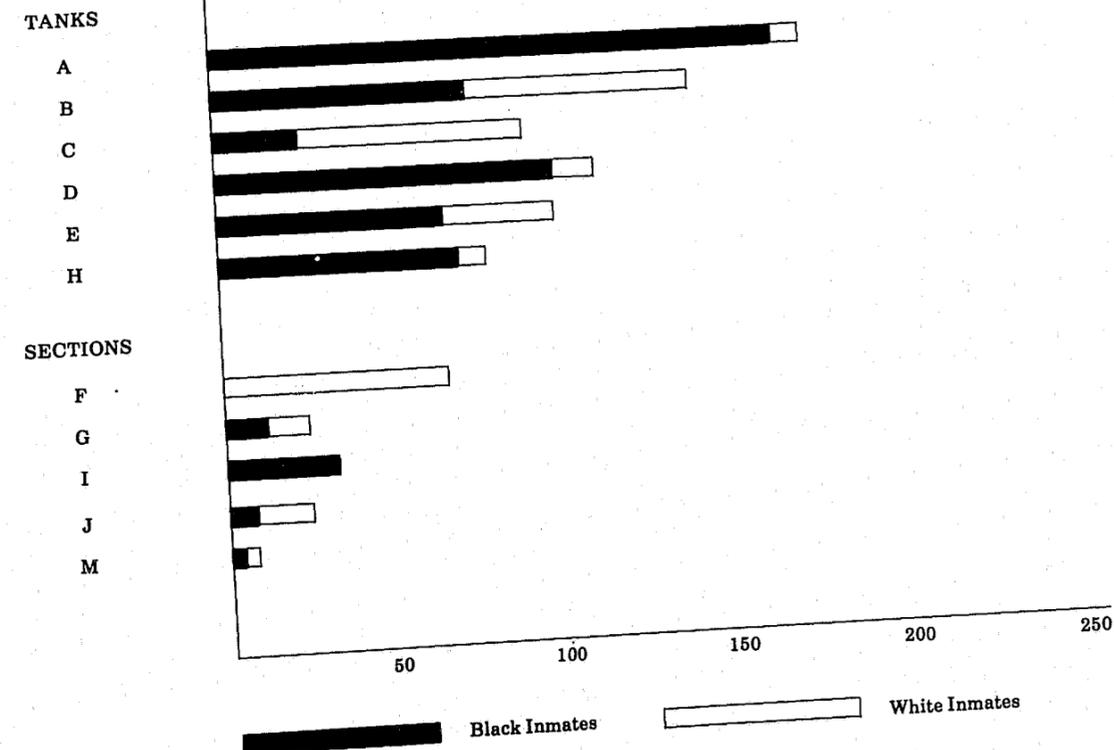
The three organizational impediments to successful classification systems often combine in such a manner that not only are the goals of classification not achieved, but a variety of unanticipated and unwarranted results occur.

As stated earlier, the "passive-aggressive" criteria for classifying inmates were used at one of

the jails. These ambiguously stated criteria were used to screen inmates for housing assignments. Jail staff made the assumption that misdemeanants had to be less aggressive than felons, since felony charges are more serious and include assaultive offenses. A strategy was developed to separate felons and misdemeanants. However, since felons so outnumber misdemeanants (2,348 felons versus 162 misdemeanants) and bed space is limited because of severe overcrowding, the felons were housed in the less secure but larger tanks while misdemeanants were housed in single cells. Consequently, felons were placed in the least restrictive settings within the jail despite the fact that the charges against them were far more serious.

A far more serious consequence of disfunctional classification systems is their need to justify racial segregation within an institution. Two of the jails in this study classified inmates according to race. Exhibit B demonstrates the nature and extent of racial segregation at one of the jails. Examples of

**EXHIBIT B**  
RACIAL DISTRIBUTIONS OF INITIAL ASSIGNMENTS IN JACKSON COUNTY



segregation are apparent both within and among different types of housing structures. Tanks A, D, and H are primarily black, tank C is primarily white, tanks B and E are more integrated. Sections F and I are completely segregated.

Staff acknowledged this practice was not desirable but felt there were no alternatives. Most inmates were said to have voluntarily requested placement in white or black dominated sections. Requests for segregation were viewed by staff as reflection of cultural differences among the inmates coupled with the physical nature of the cells: In large 48-person tanks or 4-person sections, achieving racial homogeneity in cell assignments makes administrative tasks easier. One clear example is television. Where only one television is available to multiperson cells and television is the primary recreational outlet, conflicts and controversies may easily develop over the seemingly insignificant questions of what program to watch. A frequent controversy in institutions concerns inmate disagreements relative to watching shows such as *Soul Train* or *American Bandstand* which often are aired simultaneously. When multicell units are housed according to race, such disagreements are minimized. This example sim-

ply illustrates how racial segregation within insecure and inadequate jail facilities is used as an administrative tool to ease management problems. When racism is a problem within the larger society, it becomes intensified within total institutions such as jails and prisons.

A primary assumption of treatment-based classification models is that inmates with obvious treatment needs receive appropriate services. Many inmates enter jails with well-established health and emotional needs. The test of a successful treatment model hinges largely on the ability of jails to provide these inmates with appropriate services. If this does not occur, for whatever reasons, classification will fail in reaching its goals of modifying inmate behavior.

The classification process was not successful in matching needs to services. Table 5 tabulates program participation with the needs of inmates as determined by classification at intake. There is little relationship between inmates' needs and the programs they participate in. None of the inmates under the influence of alcohol or drugs at intake received alcohol or drug therapy. Only 2.2 percent of the inmates with a history of alcohol abuse, and 1.5 percent of those with a history of alcohol treat-

TABLE 5

INITIAL SCREENING AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION	INMATES FOUND TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING NEEDS AT INTAKE					
	IMMEDIATE HEALTH PROBLEM	UNDER THE INFLUENCE	IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION	MEDICAL ATTENTION WITHIN 24 HOURS	IMMEDIATE PSYCH. ATTENTION	UNDER DOCTOR'S CARE
EDUCATION	2.5%	0.0%	3.6%	2.1%	0.0%	2.6%
COUNSELING	2.0%	0.0%	0.6%	3.1%	8.5%	2.6%
VOCATIONAL TRAINING	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%
DRUG-ALCOHOL THERAPY	0.8%	0.0%	1.8%	1.0%	2.1%	0.5%
LEGAL AID	5.3%	3.6%	4.8%	5.7%	6.4%	5.2%
RELIGIOUS	1.6%	0.0%	0.6%	2.6%	2.1%	1.0%
RECREATION	9.3%	3.6%	11.4%	10.9%	8.5%	10.4%

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION	INMATES FOUND TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING NEEDS AT INTAKE					
	HISTORY ALCOHOL ABUSE	HISTORY ALCOHOL TREATMENT	HISTORY DRUG ABUSE	HISTORY DRUG TREATMENT	HISTORY MENTAL PROBLEMS	HISTORY MENTAL TREATMENT
EDUCATION	1.1%	1.5%	2.3%	1.0%	3.1%	0.9%
COUNSELING	3.4%	1.5%	2.3%	2.9%	4.4%	1.7%
VOCATIONAL TRAINING	2.8%	3.1%	2.3%	2.9%	1.9%	1.7%
DRUG-ALCOHOL THERAPY	2.2%	1.5%	1.1%	1.0%	0.6%	0.9%
LEGAL AID	2.8%	1.5%	3.8%	6.9%	3.8%	3.5%
RELIGIOUS	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	2.0%	1.9%	1.7%
RECREATION	11.2%	7.7%	12.6%	18.6%	12.5%	13.0%

ment received alcohol or drug therapy. The highest percentage of inmates receiving counseling were those with a history of mental problems (4.4%) and those needing immediate psychological attention (8.5%). However, these percentages are still small, again substantiating the findings that the vast majority of inmates who have emotional problems or need professional care are not receiving appropriate services.

**Political and Economic Realities**

Three organizational sources of impediment to successful implementation of classification systems have been identified: ambiguously stated criteria, inaccurate communication of the model, and overcrowded facilities. Of the three, overcrowding is the most damaging and pervasive. Jail administrators and staff often perceive themselves as helpless victims at the mercy of political and economic factors that fuel the overcrowding problem. Influencing police, prosecutorial, and court policies is perceived as beyond their organizational "turf." Legislative reforms designed to increase the numbers of persons sent to jail are passed without the active resistance of correctional agencies or unions who will feel the "heat" of legislation likely to worsen overcrowded jail conditions. And, the fiscal supports needed to accommodate the increase in inmates are becoming increasingly difficult to secure from a public wary of waste and fraud in government and opposed to increased taxes.

Improved classification criteria, properly communicated to staff and inmates, represent the more

easily accomplished administrative reforms to improve classification. However, jail classification cannot be achieved until the jails are depopulated and upgraded to minimum standards in all areas of the facilities operations.

The task of improving jail classification is extremely difficult at best. The road to solving jail overcrowding and, eventually, improper classification is a political process. It includes securing legislatively mandated jail capacity limits, greater authority to cite misdemeanors and felons, expansion of minimum and medium security settings, and sufficient fiscal resources to meet minimum standards. These reforms are political in nature and will not be achieved unless administrators are willing to actively seek them. Jail administrators must shed their traditionally passive political stance which has perpetuated their chronic management problems; otherwise, they will view themselves as "victims" and continually be in search of the classification system or computer application that will solve their management problems for them.

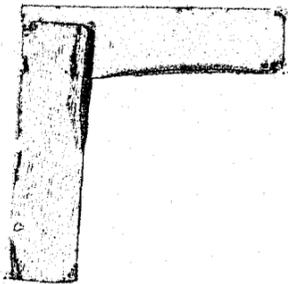
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JAILS have made significant strides in the past decade in part because of their own effort, in part because of assistance on a Federal level.  
—PAUL KATSAMPES, D.R.A., AND THOMAS C. NEIL, PH.D.



**END**