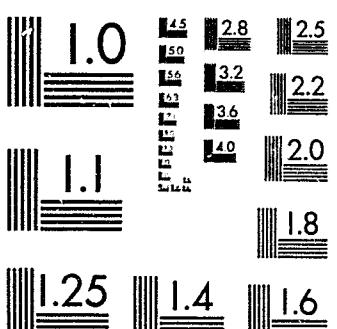


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JAILHOUSE POWER PLAY POLITICS, RECREATION
DYNAMICS and SYSTEMS CHANGE Part 2

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JAILHOUSE POWER PLAY POLITICS, RECREATION
DYNAMICS and SYSTEMS CHANGE Part 2

by Delpaneaux V. Walakafra-Wills, Ph.D.

"In order to effect positive systems program and operational change in a jail, such change must include the inter-political play of both the jails' formal and informal systems"

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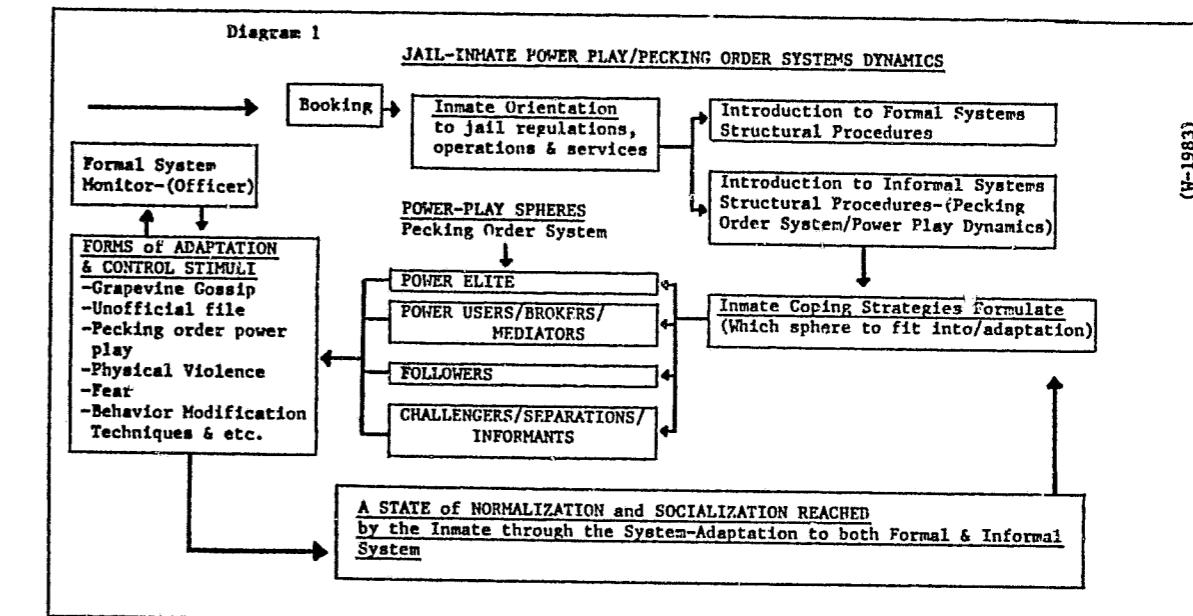
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INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to systematically analyze the intrusion of the Positive Indirect Recreation Approach (PIRA), on systems change at the Sacramento County Main Jail, it is valid to examine how PIRA affected change on two levels; inmate-officer behavior and jail power-play politics within both the jails' formal and informal systems of management and control operations.

Part 1, basically reviewed the intrusion of PIRA on the jail setting and its effect on both inmate and officer behavior in response to the change both groups were obtrusively exposed to. Solutions to the problems developed were analyzed and corrective recommendations were introduced. The PIRA method proved to be an effective intervention agent application for program systems design, systems change and satisfactory in its attempt to rapidly design a viable, comprehensive and constructive jail inmate recreation program.

PIRA's ability to analyze the jail systems' operation mechanics and modify areas of contention within a given time frame is an invaluable management tool for jail administrators. The concept of Human Systems Planning Dynamics (HSPD), for jails is an important new and innovative approach to assist local community and county jails, as well as, prisons up-grade, improve and create new programs and services for inmates. The HSPD model is based solely on acquiring determined needs for a particular direction from inmates, officers and jail administration/staff preferences by using a measurement tool application. Programs and services are designed around the needs assessment tool analysis and measured for effectiveness and responsiveness by a series of feedback mechanisms, as in the PIRA method.

The approaches taken in the HSPD, the Human Systems Recreation Dynamics (HSRD), and the PIRA method are conceptually formulated from an environmental/behavioral Delphi Technique originally used by the author to seek out inmate needs during a lock down period at Huntington Prison in Pennsylvania in 1978 developed in the Man-Environment Relations Program at Penn State University. Its applications were modified and expanded to be applicable to the complexed systems operations of a jail settings' power play political mechanics and aesthetic/facility and constraint designs.

Through experience, fighting to implement PIRA and learning to work within the system, I learned how such a method does and does not work and where and when to apply PIRA. Unlike other jail support services like Alcohol/Drug Abuse Counselling and Detox, Bible Study, Remedial Education Programs, Medical Services, Psychiatric Services and others, Recreation falls under more internal jail power play politics than any other program in a jail. Recreation affects inmates, as well as, officers because both need it, use it and see it as a way to ease the boredom and problems found in the jail on a daily basis. Unlike the other services that might fall under the direction and budget of various county governmental services or community volunteer groups, a jails' Recreation Program is usually under the direction of the Sheriff's Dept or local community law enforcement agency. Civilian staff who run such programs are more open to adversity and negative interventions in getting programs implemented than those jail staff answerable to civilian supervisors and local governmental programs outside the jail.

INFORMAL vs FORMAL SYSTEMS

In any jail there exist two forces; law enforcers and law breakers. These two forces live and operate separately but mutually support each other at various times of need. Within these two forces exists two separate management operational systems. The first and most powerful system is the formal system comprised of officers, the law that runs the jail and the politics through the local municipal government that

keeps the jail financially secure to carry out its goals and purpose; to isolate and warehouse individuals who have committed deviant acts against society and the community.

On a dialectical end, opposed to all formal laws and norms are those who have committed deviant acts against the community and have designed for themselves a counter-structure, molded out of "street behavior and socialization" so politely referred to as the informal system.

Both systems do not trust one another, yet they exist in harmony with each other for only one purpose, to maintain and bring order. One is legitimate the other no one wants to know about or discuss.

Formal Systems Structure - is designed by the very institution it belongs to. It is the mechanics of law enforcement management and operations design, the structure of the law enforcement agency operating the jail and the laws, regulations and orders that give the agency its power to incarcerate, warehouse and maintain a safe environment for the community it serves.

The bulk of power in the jail rest in the hands of the officer on the floor. He/she has the ultimate power to structure an inmates' setting, physical treatment and make life rough or easy, bad or good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory for the inmate. Yet, with overcrowding and less officers to monitor what is going on in each cell/tank, the officers power does not decrease but rather increases, as the officer becomes a power-broker player by using inmates to keep other inmates in line and to maintain order, structure and norms. The officer uses his authority and power as the keeper to reward or punish violators under his/her domain or sphere of control.

The officer may use commissary, other inmates and/or other behavior modification techniques to maintain order within his/her sphere of control. In most cases, control is maintained through the manipulation of inmates by using the "Pecking Order System" instinctively developed by inmates as a primate need to dominate others and/or be dominated.

The Informal Systems Structure (ISS) - is a dialectical system to that of the formal system. It is the "street system" of the strongest, meanest and toughest shall survive, dominate and control and the weak shall follow and serve. The informal system is guided by two principles "What ever you own someone will take it away, if you are not strong or if you are not protected by someone who is tough and strong" and "Establish yourself within one of the four categories as soon as possible". Both principles are contingent upon man's first instinct, survival, by any means possible. These four categories make up the informal systems' chain of command and pecking order system;

1. Those on the Top with Power or Power Elite - those that come into the jail

with a name, reputation, gang affiliation leader and/or with powerful crime connections outside the jail. Power Elites may change often due to the transiency of the jail.

2. Power Users, Brokers and/or Mediators - those that understand the system, serve the power elites, realize how to manipulate others and have been in the system a long time. These individuals are the main power base force and answer to the power elites or elements. As power-brokers they are usually wards of the court(Trustees), those inmates with 2 or more years in the jail awaiting sentencing and those inmates who have been highly recidivistic in the jail, ie., in and out of the jail more than 6 times in a given year.

3. Followers - those that are afraid of the system, scared and weak. Those who are not strong enough to challenge the system or individuals in it. 75% to 85% of all inmates in jail fall under this classification. They become a part of the system in hopes of adapting and being protected until they are released. They give power to the power elites and power brokers because they support them and look to them for protection, socialization and security.

4. Challengers to the System and Separations - they are inmates who are either ignorant of the system structure and do not adhere to its mandates or know how to function in it and/or to tough acting to want to fit in. In most cases inmates who fall into the "follower category" and the "power broker" classifications use a series of behavior modification techniques to this group of inmates and force them into a "follower". Inmates' classified and isolated from other inmates such as separations, informants and protective custodies usually fall into this category, as well.

The informal system is used by the formal system to maintain control, enforce official policy and maintain an order of authority to those in power in both systems. Power will always dominate over bullies or those in the power broker class. Power is defined as the means by which things get done and by which order is given in reference to position, respect and charisma an inmate uses to control, dominate and manipulate others. The informal system dictates that you do anything a cop says, anything an elite says, obey structure and procedures and respect the natural order of things, the "Pecking Order System".

Control by the power-elite is maintained through three functional methods; Grapevine Gossip which are rumors generally directed or brought back to an inmate to keep the inmate in a state of fear, submission or isolation through supplying smut, gossip or hearsay information to the inmates' unofficial file maintained by the formal system and through persuasion; ie., threatening, talking rationally or physical violence.

Both systems use each other, yet they both are opposed to one another. Both maintain a structural order that all jails need and both maintain a functional process that indoctrinates, provides social order and fosters belongingness in an otherwise hostile environment.

POWER PLAY POLITICS

With an understanding of both systems approaches you may see why bringing change to a jail is feared and avoided as best possible. I can not say how right or wrong the overall jail systems' milieu is, but any program implementor must acknowledge and deal with both power structures to affect any new approach change or program.

PIRA has built into its design a mechanism to use as an advantage to a program implementor. The whole concept of Human Systems Design (HSD), is based on utilizing all groups involved with their active input and participation in the planning stages of any inmate service or program. Step 3 - Design Stage, Step 4 - Inmate Recreation Needs Assessment, Step 6 - Program/Activity Implementation, Step 7 - Measurement of Responsiveness and Step 8 - Evaluation and Feedback all require input from both systems. An optimal level of cooperation from both systems is ideal and can be reached by incorporating each systems' power-elites and power-brokers into the PIRA design, planning and feedback stages.

PIRA program implementors should use the following six elements when dealing with individuals within both systems;

1. LISTEN - to all sides for ideas, suggestions, comments, complaints and recommendations.
2. COMMUNICATE - openly with all input sources and allow them to express themselves freely.
3. ATTITUDE - is important, you must look, act, talk, feel and project a sense of change, excitement, enthusiasm and expertise in what you are doing.
4. TRUST - comes from effectively using PIRA Elements 1, 2 and 3. It is important to you as a program service provider and as a civilian to be open to both systems and a source by which inmates and officers can turn to you for expert guidance in your area expertise. Never trust an inmate.
5. PLANNING - is vital to a successful program. Map out your strategy and learn who the power play elites and players are, how to seek their support and maintain their backing of your program. Keep your word and deliver any promises. Never go out of your way or against your better judgment.
6. EVALUATE - your position within both systems, your programs direction and effectiveness to determine if your program will succeed. Program evaluation and feedback in determining inmate responsiveness is the key element to a successful program.

SYSTEMS CHANGE

Program operational systems change is difficult to implement in a jail. In such a setting a series of values, norms, attitudes, prejudices, as well as, ignorance dominates daily jail life in both systems. The formal system will always and must al-

ways dominate and control, but Human Systems Dynamics (HSD), dictates using all human systems of socialization to effect change by incorporating them into one planning unit of thought, that of providing the best quality of service for the least amount of cost with the smallest amount of confusion, disruption or disrespect to the systems of operational maintenance and power, is best.

The PIRA method and its HSD philosophy is the system to effectively bring change. It is a change designing tool, implementor and program service that is responsive to present and future needs of a jail and its community.

SUMMARY

Jails need a new national systems methodology to slowly bring their operations out of the dark ages. PIRA is the tool and the solution to an improved jail inmate recreation program.

PIRA helps the formal system get the job done with less threat to security and a decreased potential for inmate violent outbreaks, through comprehensive recreation program participation by inmates. This participation reduces inmate stress, reduces inmate aggressions and hostilities and keeps the inmate constantly interested developing his/her leisure time availability with learnable physical fitness and recreation skills.

END