

**Correctional Officer Professional Orientations toward Prisoners, Pluralistic Ignorance, and  
Barriers to Resolution**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
with Honors in Psychology from the University of Michigan 2016**

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## Abstract

This paper reviews and evaluates the literature about correctional officers' professional orientations, the pluralistic ignorance demonstrated by officers about their peers' orientations, and social conditions that perpetuate the pluralistic ignorance. The professional orientation of correctional officers toward inmates is well-documented and tends to be more rehabilitative than stereotypes of officers suggest. Less well-documented is the existence of pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers, where officers consistently overestimate the punitive orientation of their peers. Officers' lowest status within the prison employee hierarchy makes their pluralistic ignorance especially difficult to resolve. Relationships with inmates and prison management are perceived as threatening, creating a need for solidarity among a group of correctional officers, resulting in an officer subculture. To outsiders, the subculture appears to have punitiveness at its core. In reality, officers' chief concern is maintaining solidarity in the face of perceived antagonistic relationships, primarily with prison administration and secondarily with inmates. The subculture of correctional officers is a response to antagonistic relationships both above and below them within the prison hierarchy.

*Keywords:* correctional officers, professional orientation, rehabilitative, punitive, pluralistic ignorance, attitudes, solidarity, prison administration, inmates

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Correctional officers are subject to harsher stereotypes than other workers, sometimes described as sadistic, corrupt, ignorant bullies who find satisfaction in exacting punishment from defenseless inmates (Pearson, 2010). While the stereotype is more myth than reality, there is still enough of a grain of truth in it to stigmatize the majority who do not conform to the stereotype. For example, the 2015 *New York Times* article “A Brutal Beating Wakes Attica’s Ghosts”, is an account of three correctional officers in New York awaiting trial for physical abuse of an inmate, George Williams. According to neighboring inmates, the beating was a disciplinary response to a minor infraction—yelling a profanity—and the guards actually had the wrong man. Williams could not walk when they ordered him to because the officers had broken his ankle. Neighboring inmates expressed surprise to investigators that the matter went to trial because these beatings were considered commonplace at Attica (Robbins, 2015). News stories like this leave a lasting impression on the public who may perceive correctional officers to be the same sadistic, merciless beasts as often portrayed in movies and remembered from Abu Ghraib and the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, 2007).

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that correctional officers really do tend to be sadists, and that is why they chose their job. However, that assumption reflects a common tendency when judging others: To underestimate the influence of the situation and to overestimate the role of personal disposition, a mistake recognized in psychology as the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977). This error distracts from the diverse professional orientations of correctional officers which vary by location, population density, age, tenure, rank, ethnicity, and gender (Cullen et al., 1989; Farkas M. A., 1999; Kelly, 2014; Toch & Klofas, 1982).

Correctional officers' professional orientations—that is, their attitudes towards inmate—are most often associated with two dimensions. The first is the rehabilitative orientation, sometimes referred to as a human services orientation or treatment orientation. Precise definitions vary, but they generally indicate support and optimism about the possibility for inmates to achieve personal improvement. The second is the punitive orientation, alternately described as a custody orientation (Cullen et al., 1989; Farkas, 1999; Kelly, 2014). The punitive orientation implies more use of restrictions and punishment to deter misbehavior, whereas the custody orientation is more about keeping inmates safely restrained and does not necessarily prioritize punishment. Nevertheless, the terms are often used interchangeably (Kelly, 2014).

Officers who are rehabilitative-oriented are usually less punitive-oriented, and vice versa. But these orientations are not always dichotomous, and so two additional dimensions—social distance and corruption of authority—will also be explored to help explain this discrepancy (Toch & Klofas, 1982). While much research has documented officers' professional orientations, very little has examined discrepancies between officers' private attitudes and public attitudes toward inmates. This paper summarizes previous findings of the professional orientations of correctional officers, the existence and nature of pluralistic ignorance among them, why pluralistic ignorance may be particularly difficult to extinguish in a prison environment, and the consequences of this pluralistic ignorance for individual officers, correctional officers as groups, and inmates.

### **Theory of Pluralistic Ignorance**

Pluralistic ignorance is essentially a state where the majority of group members misperceive a group norm – a state of false consensus. Group members who do not agree with the misperceived group norm privately consider themselves to be deviant, when in reality they

are not (Gilovich, Keltner, Chen, & Nisbett, 2013). A wealth of social psychology research has documented pluralistic ignorance in a variety of contexts. When group members' private attitudes conflict with what they erroneously perceive to be the attitude of the majority of their peers, those group members may conceal their private attitude and adopt a public attitude to give the appearance of conformity, in the interest of group loyalty (Katz & Allport, 1931). This conformity further exacerbates the illusion that the attitude is universally accepted by the majority, resulting in a state of pluralistic ignorance in the group (Schanck, 1934). Group members who are concerned with their self-image within the group are vulnerable to pluralistic ignorance, especially in groups where toughness is prioritized (Matza, 1964).

Since the initial identification of this phenomenon, a multitude of studies have confirmed Allport and Katz's original observation that private attitudes are sometimes suppressed and masked with public attitudes that are more consistent with group norms. Researchers have often found a conservative error bias, that is, an incorrect assumption by group members that the group norm is more conservative, with a majority of members concealing attitudes that are more liberal than the group norm (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Kauffman, 1981; Schanck, 1934). However, a study of Princeton drinking behavior found exactly the opposite—a liberal bias—with a majority of students concealing their apprehension about heavy drinking, when heavy drinking was the group norm (Prentice & Miller, 1993). Taken together, these findings reveal a pattern of bias in whatever direction has already been established by the group.

The Princeton researchers observed that when group members are faced with the dilemma of private attitudes in conflict with group norms, individuals have three potential routes of resolution: 1) change the private attitude; 2) change the group norm; or 3) reject the group altogether (Prentice & Miller, 1993). A change of private attitude can occur when the attitude is

not well-established, as noted by Breed and Ktsanes (1961) in their discussion of “fair-weather liberals” who changed their private attitudes to support racial segregation when the wind was already blowing in that direction in their community. The need to balance private attitudes with group attitudes is a well-established phenomenon. According to Heider’s balance theory, in any social situation involving person “A” and person “B”, A and B must agree in their like or dislike of a third person or object “X.” This commonly manifests as two friends who must find equilibrium in their attitudes about another friend (X) over whom A and B initially disagree: A and B must agree to both like X or both dislike X to achieve cognitive balance. And according to Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance, failure to resolve this imbalance results in cognitive dissonance for the individuals, a psychologically stressful state that motivates individuals to restore balance by eliminating the source of dissonance – most often by rationalizing the behavior (Gilovich et al., 2013).

How is cognitive dissonance reduced? The theory suggests that when a group attitude is well-established, dissenting group members are left with two options for reaching attitudinal equilibrium with the group, either by changing the norm or by rejecting the group. Changing the group norm may be (or appear to be) far too difficult and rejecting the group bears a high social cost (self-ostracism). This leaves the group member to fall back on a fourth option: Tolerating the asymmetry. In order for the group member – who believes himself to be a lone dissenter – to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship with the group, he may give the outward appearance of conformity. In doing so, he supports the appearance of homogeneity in what is misperceived to be the group’s attitude (Newcomb, 1953). When a significant proportion of a group consists of isolated dissenters who mask their private attitude with a public attitude that conforms with group norms, the group is left in a state of pluralistic ignorance, with group

members incorrectly believing the publicly accepted group norm to be truly representative of majority opinion.

**Pluralistic ignorance causes and solutions.** A recent study of the causes of pluralistic ignorance in organizations found two group characteristics to be most predictive: 1) a vocal minority that influences others' perceptions of group norms; and 2) members' desire to maintain in-group identity (Halbesleben, Wheeler, & Buckley, 2007). Both characteristics are highly relevant to groups of correctional staff. Researchers have agreed about how to end pluralistic ignorance: The illusion of universality must be shattered, accomplished by exposing the illusion to group members (Halbesleben, Wheeler, & Buckley, 2007; Prentice & Miller, 1993; Schanck, 1934). In one case, the results of a survey of group attitudes were shared with affected members (Prentice & Miller, 1993); in another case, the illusion was broken simply through open, honest dialogue facilitated by a researcher (Schanck, 1934). Thus, the best antidote to a group's pluralistic ignorance is communication of accurate information about the group.

**Special challenges in resolving pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers.** The nature of prisons makes honest communication about their attitudes regarding correctional philosophy extremely difficult for correctional officers. Officers work in a high-stakes job where the risks of inmate attempts at manipulation, disobedience, violence and even murder are a constant source of stress. What really stresses out officers the most are not inmates, but rather the antagonistic relationships officers tend to have with prison management. Officers report high levels of frustration with management due to disagreements over policies, officers' lack of input into making policy changes, and seemingly contradictory goals coming from management for officers to both restrain inmates and promote rehabilitation, a problem called role conflict (Duffee, 1974; Lombardo, 1985). Furthermore, within prisons, there are often "subculture

custodians” (Klofas & Toch, 1982), correctional officers who actively support the misperceived group norm and enthusiastically encourage their peers to do so. These subculture custodians are also significantly more likely than their peers to assume that their views are shared by the majority of the group (Kauffman, 1981; Klofas & Toch, 1982). So, honest communication cannot occur unless the influence of these subculture custodians is overcome, in order to diminish the perpetuation of the misperceived group norms. It would be wise also to anticipate occasional resurgences of subculture custodians armed with propaganda to sway others to adopt their professional orientation, and with it, the occasional need to make the true norms transparent to the group

#### **Correctional Officer Professional Orientations Matter**

Why should officers’ professional orientations matter? First and foremost, officers are the most important figures of authority in the daily lives of inmates, and it would behoove society not to impress upon inmates—most of whom will eventually return to society—that authority should be resented. Sociological research has observed that officers must use their discretion to decide when, if, and to whom precious limited prison resources—including education, counseling, and treatment programs—are allocated. A mismatch of resource availability and inmate demand forces correctional officers to consider inmate requests with skepticism. Officers’ awareness that resources are inadequate has been linked to a more punitive orientation toward inmates, especially when these perceptions are accurate (Shannon & Page, 2014). The quality of correctional officers’ relationships to inmates also appears to matter, because community correctional officers who demonstrate more pro-social attitudes are associated with lower rates of recidivism (Kennealy, Skeem, Manchak, & Loudon, 2012).



**Comparison of international incarceration and recidivism trends.** While it is difficult to draw a causal connection between the professional orientations of correctional officers, incarceration rates and recidivism, it helps to observe examples of success overseas that suggest there is a relationship. Whereas the U.S. imprisons 698 people per 100,000—the second highest incarceration rate in the world<sup>1</sup>—incarceration rates are dramatically lower in Iceland (45 per 100,000), Sweden (55), Denmark (61), the Netherlands (69), and Norway (71) (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2016). There is currently no reliable international measure of recidivism rates, making international comparisons notoriously difficult. The United States collectively reports recidivism based on re-arrest, which inflates our rate when compared to other countries that only report recidivism based on re-incarceration. When comparing 3-year re-incarceration rates, the United States reports an overall 36% recidivism rate among 23 surveyed States, a rate similar to most Scandinavian nations (Fazel & Wolf, 2015). Thus, when comparing only recidivism rates, the United States appears to be on par with its Scandinavian peers. However, the U.S. has 9-15 times as many people imprisoned per capita at any given time, and this high rate is continuously replenished as 45% of U.S. prisoners return to prison with five years, averages across the 23 states surveyed (Fazel & Wolf, 2015). This raises the questions: What are other nations doing that the U.S. isn't doing, and what is the U.S. doing to make things worse? Some known factors for high U.S. incarceration rates are that we impose harsher penalties for non-violent crimes (especially drugs), have higher levels of socioeconomic inequality, and has a more politicized penal system. What is less obvious is that the strong focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation leaves prisoners with insufficient skills to succeed outside prison, increasing their likelihood of recidivism (Deady, 2014), meaning that the high

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<sup>1</sup> Seychelles has the highest incarceration rate, at 799 per 100,000. The total population of Seychelles is about 89,000 (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2016).

incarceration rate is unable to shrink down to levels more consistent with our Scandinavian peers. One feature that distinguishes these prisons from ours is the orientation of correctional staff – theirs is decidedly rehabilitative. Furthermore, the correctional officer job is considered prestigious in these nations (Ward, et al., 2013), unlike in the United States, where the role is highly stigmatized (Jacobs, 1978).

### **Purpose of this Literature Review**

This paper draws on past research in psychology, sociology, and criminology to explore the psychological situation in which American correctional officers find themselves – their professional orientations, private attitudes that differ from their public attitudes, and why this disparity persists. It is my hope that correctional officers, by re-focusing their duties around rehabilitation, can help themselves to achieve greater job satisfaction through helping to rehabilitate inmates, an outcome that also benefits inmates. This requires both a group norm shift in the direction of rehabilitation, and the empowerment of officers to act upon the rehabilitative orientation, which in turn requires the elimination of pluralistic ignorance about the prevalence of the rehabilitative orientation among correctional officers. If the social climate becomes more accepting of rehabilitative attitudes, officers may be empowered to act upon their rehabilitation inclinations (sufficient training and resources are also critical, but that is beyond the scope of this paper). First, the matter of pluralistic ignorance must be addressed so that officers feel safe to be openly rehabilitative toward inmates.

While it is difficult to draw a direct connection between prison correctional officers' behavior and reduced recidivism, it is well-established that correctional officers are often the gatekeepers to rehabilitative resources within prison walls. Officers' professional orientations are linked to their willingness to give rehabilitative resources to inmates who ask for them.

Resources aren't plentiful enough to be distributed to all inmates who ask for them, requiring officers to reject many requests, an environmental situation that is who to increase punitive attitudes toward inmates. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that correctional officers have at least an indirect impact on recidivism, which is partly contingent on the availability of resources for inmates, but also on officers' perceptions of resources availability – regardless of actual availability (Shannon & Page, 2014). Clearly, sufficient resources are a major factor for correctional officer attitudes and successful inmate rehabilitation, but it is beyond the scope of this review.

Pluralistic ignorance acts as a social barrier for officers interested in supporting rehabilitative goals. By eliminating that pluralistic ignorance, we put a stop to counter-productive group norms that leave dissenting officers feeling stressed and alienated, and which interfere with the implementation of new and improved correctional policies (Toch & Klofas, 1982). Simultaneously, resolving pluralistic ignorance is an important step toward improving inmates' chance to refrain from crime through improved distribution of rehabilitative resources (Shannon & Page, 2014), and inmates are helped through the imprinting of pro-social relationships with authority figures who model pro-social behavior (Lasswell, 2010; Sykes, 1956). In the following sections, I will discuss research findings on officers' professional orientations the occurrence of pluralistic ignorance among officers regarding their peers' professional orientations. I will also explore some social conditions that appear to foster and maintain pluralistic ignorance among officers, and its consequences.

### **Actual Correctional Officer Orientations are Diverse and Tend to be More Rehabilitative and Less Punitive**

Various instruments have been used to quantify the professional orientations of correctional officers toward inmates, but the most popular and reliable so far is the Klofas-Toch version (Toch & Klofas, 1982). It measures attitudes across four dimensions: 1) counseling roles; 2) punitiveness; 3) social distance; and 4) corruption of authority (Whitehead et al., 1987). Officers are presented with a list of statements such as “Sometimes a guard should advocate for an inmate” and asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each one. Unlike some instruments that measure correctional officer attitudes towards inmates on a bipolar continuum such as “pro-social vs. anti-social” (Grekul, 1999), the Klofas-Toch instrument has the advantage of allowing officers to report ambivalence. For example, officers may simultaneously want to assist inmate treatment and while also believing in strict rule enforcement.

#### **Rehabilitative Orientation**

The first dimension, “counseling roles”, reflects officers’ perceptions about counseling as a function of the correctional officer role. It poses questions such as, “Rehabilitation programs should be left to mental health professionals”, and are reverse-scored (Toch & Klofas, 1982). The counseling dimension overlaps with other orientation descriptions such as “rehabilitative” and “treatment”, but goes farther to measure an officer’s desire to be more involved in the rehabilitative process. Early studies generally found strong support among correctional officers for counseling duties as part of the correctional officer role and observed that expanding their role into human services might satisfy an expressed need for job enrichment and greater job satisfaction (Kauffman, 1981; Toch & Klofas, 1982). A more recent study of jail correctional officers found that the majority supported counseling roles, albeit less strongly than prison

officers (Cook & Lane, 2014). However, a 1999 study found a slight majority disfavored counseling roles, with 63% agreeing with the statement, "Counseling is a job for counselors, not correctional officers" (Farkas, 1999). A Northern Ireland study found correctional officers to have very little interest in counseling as a function of their duties (Kelly, 2014). It is important to note that these trends vary widely across demographics such as age, location, and gender and that even within demographics there are environmental variables influencing officer attitudes away from what might normally be predicted. Unique characteristics of individual institutions (i.e., a specific prison's "personality") may limit the generalizability of demographic findings.

Rank and function have consistently been strong predictors of the rehabilitative orientation, with higher management and treatment personnel favoring rehabilitative ideology and programs more than correctional officers. This difference appears to depend on the nature of the job as defined by prison management, its goals and resulting job satisfaction, rather than the frequency of contact with inmates (Farkas, 1999; Kelly, 2014; Toch & Klofas, 1982). Rank overlaps with tenure, so that more senior officers are found to express more positive attitudes about rehabilitation than their junior counterparts (Szejner, 2009; Toch & Klofas, 1982).

Management can make policies intended to improve the success of rehabilitation, but correctional officers tend to be suspicious of such policies as they are often made without correctional officer input about their real-world practicality. As a result, correctional officers often feeling powerless as they are expected to implement programs that they do not feel well-equipped to implement (Duffee, 1974). Even while officers may personally value the rehabilitative goal, an ongoing antagonistic relationship with management is certain to make the best rehabilitative intentions impossible. Officers will be reluctant to cooperate with changes that come from superiors whom they distrust, perceive as a threat to their autonomy, and who create

the problem of role conflict for officers by setting contradictory prison goals. Realistic support from correctional officers for rehabilitative strategies demands including them in the decision-making process for the development and implementation of programs and policies (Toch, 2014).

**Age and tenure.** Broadening the measure of counseling roles to include overall support for rehabilitation programs reveals a positive relationship between age and support for rehabilitation, as well as between tenure and support for rehabilitation (Cook & Lane, 2014; Cullen et al., 1989; Farkas, 1999; Lasswell, 2010; Toch & Klofas, 1982). Age and tenure seem to help officers to become less punitive and more rehabilitative over time (referred to as “mellowing out” in corrections research), but officers who disfavor rehabilitation may also be likely to burn out and quit sooner. This would mean that a combination of both mellowing out and employee attrition may be responsible for the relationship between age, tenure, and professional orientation. Night shifts, which are often populated by younger and less-experienced workers, have been found to be less rehabilitation-oriented (Cullen et al., 1989). On the other hand, night-shifters also report favoring more rehabilitation programs, possibly out of a need to structure the time of restless inmates (Farkas, 1999).

**Race.** Research on the association of race and rehabilitation has produced inconsistent results. An early study of Illinois correctional officers found minority officers to be less treatment-oriented than white correctional officers, contrary to the predictions of the researchers, who expected minority officers to be more empathetic than their white counterparts (Jacobs, 1978). One explanation is a “double-marginality” status such that Illinois’ minority guards were accepted neither by their white fellow officers nor by the inmates. Later studies have found no difference in race when measuring counseling or rehabilitative orientation (Farkas, 1999; Whitehead et al., 1987) or have found minorities to be slightly more supportive of treatment

programs while simultaneously less supportive of a rehabilitative prison ideology (Cullen et al., 1989).

**Gender.** Gender-related trends in professional orientation are difficult to assess because of the small percentage of female correctional officers. That said, some studies have found male officers to be less supportive of counseling roles and rehabilitation than female officers (Farkas, 1999; Lerman & Page, 2012; Shannon & Page, 2014). However, females in Farkas' study also reported higher levels of punitiveness than their male counterparts (Farkas, 1999), a seemingly contradictory result that will be discussed later.

While not all correctional officers see counseling as a function that they would like to add to enrich their jobs, there is a general consensus among officers that they consider rehabilitation to be an important goal of corrections. Agreement with the statement "Counseling is a job for counselors, not for officers" ranged from 26.8-63%, however, overall disagreement with rehabilitative statements ranged from 29-53% (Cook & Lane, 2014; Farkas, 1999; Toch & Klofas, 1982). Since the dawn of the punitive era<sup>2</sup> officers' desire to include counseling in their duties has dwindled but some support remains. Efforts to remove treatment-oriented duties from the correctional officer role and narrow job scope to "security specialist" (all officer duties pertain to custody) was predicted to improve officers' job satisfaction by redefining the role as a specialization that might lead to other law enforcement jobs (Jacobs, 1978). Other researchers have contested this perspective, claiming that a greater human-services orientation is linked to greater job satisfaction (Cullen & Link, 1985; Lombardo, 1981; Toch & Klofas, 1982). In particular, this orientation is believed to act as a coping mechanism for the high stress level induced by the job and to add a sense of greater purpose (Cullen & Link, 1985). Not all officers

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<sup>2</sup> The beginning of the punitive era is generally understood as the years following the 1974 publication of "What Works" by Robert Martinson, and which was broadly reinterpreted by many academics and policy makers as "nothing works" for inmate rehabilitation (Martinson, 1974; Phelps, 2011).

appear to share in this value, and it is uncertain whether officers who oppose a human services orientation can later adopt one and derive personal satisfaction from it. A proposed solution is a “two-track” career model where officers may elect to develop a focused security specialization, or develop human services skills through extra training and add treatment-oriented duties to their role (Farkas, 1999). This may, in turn, help resolve another known correctional officer dilemma, the need for professional advancement.

### **Punitive Orientation**

Another dimension of the Klofas-Toch measure, “punitive orientation”, includes questions such as, “Improving prisons for inmates makes them worse for officers.” Punitive orientation is often viewed as the opposite of a rehabilitative orientation and it is true that higher punitive orientation is often associated with low rehabilitative orientation. However these orientations are not mutually exclusive: Officers may value both simultaneously, resulting in a problem known as role conflict<sup>3</sup>, discussed in more detail later.

Early studies found that even as the punitive trend was gaining public and political favor, correctional officers did not follow that trend (Jacobs, 1978; Kauffman, 1981). In the first study utilizing the Klofas-Toch instrument, there was an average of 40% officer agreement with punitive-oriented statements (Toch & Klofas, 1982). Farkas (1999) arrived at similar results at 41%, and the study of jail officers actually found a drop in punitiveness at 34% (Cook & Lane, 2014). These results suggest that something other than a punitive ideology drives correctional officers’ custody-oriented behavior; a topic connected to the social distance and corruption of authority dimensions that will be discussed later.

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<sup>3</sup> Role conflict in correctional officers occurs when they feel a duty to goals that are or that seem mutually exclusive (Cheeseman et al., 2011; Pogrebin, 1978).



**Regional characteristics.** Other studies reveal the impact of location and setting on punitiveness. A recent comparative study between correctional officers of California and Minnesota found the California officers to be significantly more punitive, even though officers in both states expressed support for rehabilitation programs (Lerman & Page, 2012). Local population density around a given prison can also be associated with punitiveness, with officers at rural prisons sometimes reporting lower punitive scores than city-based officers in metropolitan prisons (Toch & Klofas, 1982). This is surprising at first glance because rural officers tend to be more politically conservative and city officers more liberal, but political orientations do not consistently appear to have a significant effect on officers' professional orientations.

**Political orientations.** Two recent studies reported very different results about the relationship between political views and professional orientation, with a prison study in Northern Ireland finding conservatism to predict higher punitiveness levels (Kelly, 2014). The other, a study of Florida jail officers, found that even though only 17.9% of officers described themselves as liberal the average agreement with punitiveness was only 33.6% (Cook & Lane, 2014). Thus, while it is tempting to assume that a conservative political orientation will correlate to a punitive professional orientation (and likewise for liberal to rehabilitative), in reality, political orientations are not a reliable predictor.

**Age and tenure.** As with the rehabilitative orientation, age and tenure are among the best predictors of a punitive orientation. Younger and less experienced correctional officers consistently report higher punitive attitudes than their more tenured counterparts (Kelly, 2014; Klofas & Toch, 1982). However, officers who begin their job at a more mature age tend to start with a more rehabilitative orientation (Cullen et al., 1989). Therefore, tenure is most

closely linked to punitiveness for officers who begin their job at a young age. Officers who work the night shift also tend to report more punitive attitudes, which is not surprising considering that new officers are often trained on the night shift (Farkas, 1999). The night shift brings special challenges not faced by day shift officers: Restless inmates without structured time.

**Race.** As already discussed with the rehabilitative orientation, among the most startling revelations is that professional orientation is sometimes correlated with race. Contrary to what early researchers predicted, white officers were found to possess a more rehabilitative orientation than their African-American counterparts. Toch and Klofas explained this as a product of a dual-minority role in that they are a racial minority among correctional staff, but at the same time do not possess any camaraderie with African-American inmates, a significantly over-represented demographic in prisons (Jacobs, 1978; Toch & Klofas, 1982). However, those early findings may be a product of the culture of those institutions because later studies did find minority officers to be equally or less punitive than their white counterparts (Cullen et al., 1989; Whitehead et al., 1987).

**Gender.** As already stated, the relationship of professional orientation to gender has been difficult to ascertain because of a small percentage of female officers in most studies, and the studies that have captured gender trends have delivered mixed results. A study attempting to address this question found no significant difference between male and female jail officers in their attitudes towards inmates (Zupan, 1986). A more recent study found that while female prison officers expressed greater interest in counseling roles – associated with a rehabilitative attitude – they also expressed stronger punitive attitudes than their male counterparts (Farkas, 1999). While this may seem contradictory, it may be explained by the alienation that the small

minority of female officers experience an environment full of male machismo. Female officers may focus on rules more strictly to avoid the criticism of their male peers (Farkas, 2000).

### **Social Distance and Corruption of Authority**

Two closely related dimensions of the Klofas-Toch instrument help to explain seemingly contradictory attitudes of support for the rehabilitation and punitive orientations. Social distance and corruption of authority are both custodial orientations linked, but not synonymous with punitiveness (Cook & Lane, 2014). Social distance refers to the degree of social intimacy between officers and inmates, measured by a survey with items such as, "Officers should work hard to earn inmates' trust". Corruption of authority refers to the degree of concern that officers have over their vulnerability to inmate manipulation, or appearance of manipulation, measured by survey items such as, "You can't ever completely trust an inmate" (Toch & Klofas, 1982). While social distance and corruption of authority do not directly speak to officers' correctional ideology (rehabilitative or punitive), they both reflect a perception of the need for a punitive orientation in practice, to maintain order and security. It is possible for officers to report high scores in either of these categories and yet also report low punitive and high rehabilitative orientations. Corruption of authority measures officers' level of trust in inmates, and has long been recognized as a central challenge to correctional officers. The social distance dimension measures officers' preference for maintaining a professional distance from inmates, and thus is seen as a means of preventing corruption. The difference in average response to the social distance and corruption of authority dimensions is striking. Whereas officer agreement with social distance items tended to be moderate, corruption of authority survey items tended to receive very strong agreement (Cook and Lane, 2014; Farkas, 1999; Toch and Klofas, 1982). Officers who experience the most daily contact with inmates must use discretion about which

infractions are important enough to warrant disciplinary action. On the other hand, using discretion may give the appearance of being too soft, or even open the door to blackmail by inmates (Sykes, 1956). Corruption of authority appears to be an especially important mediating factor for professional orientation. A study that found female officers to express high support for counseling simultaneously also found them to express higher punitive orientations and higher concern for corruption of authority than their male counterparts (Farkas, 1999). This finding illustrates the role conflict that officers experience between punitive and rehabilitative goals and the mediating role that corruption of authority plays between officers' attitudes and behavior.

#### **Summary of Correctional Officer Professional Orientations**

Contrary to stereotype, a majority of officers at most institutions studied place moderate to high value on rehabilitation as a goal of corrections, with aggregated dimension scores ranging from 29-53%, reported as not supportive of counseling roles. Officers reported modest to moderate support for the punitive orientation, ranging from 34-61%. In studies using the Klofas-Toch measure, most individual items on this dimension received less than 50% agreement (Cook & Lane, 2014; Farkas, 1999; Toch & Klofas, 1982). The only study that found a preference for the punitive orientation was the comparative study which found 61% of California officers to favor the punitive orientation (Lerman & Page, 2012). There is less interest in enriching their jobs with counseling and treatment duties in the last two decades than there was before and the degree of that interest varies widely by institution – possibly a consequence of the culture of the institution in which they work. However, there is enough interest in counseling among some correctional officers to warrant a path of professional advancement for those who are interested. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that officers are concerned about their options for career advancement regardless of any specific interest rehabilitative duties. On the other hand, there are

plenty of officers who find job satisfaction as security specialists, and who only seek to expand upon aspects of that role. As stated earlier, one suggestion that would satisfy both types of career goals is a two-track solution allowing officers to select a path of advancement that best suits them (Farkas, 1999). Those who wish to expand upon human services for inmates face the great challenge of peer approval of such goals, discussed next.

### **Pluralistic Ignorance Findings Reveal Consistent Conservative and Punitive Bias in Perceptions of Fellow Officers' Attitudes Toward Inmates**

Pluralistic ignorance has been documented in a wide variety of social settings, including churches, small towns and neighborhoods, college campuses and fraternities, gangs, and among both prisoners and correctional officers (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Grekul, 1999; Klofas & Toch, 1982; Matza, 1964; Prentice & Miller, 1996). In the context of correctional officers, the pluralistic ignorance may look something like this hypothetical scenario: Correctional officer "Joe" believes that rehabilitation should be an important goal for inmates, and is maybe even interested in expanding his duties through additional training to learn to counsel inmates. However, he feels that this attitude is not socially acceptable in his peer group, that the accepted group norm is to be strict and unwavering with inmates. Better to appear too harsh than too soft. Besides, Joe does not want to appear disloyal to his peers by breaking valued norms – by doing so he risks socially alienating himself in an environment where officers depend on each other for back-up when violence erupts. Therefore, Joe masks his private attitude by adopting the group norm for his public attitude. Joe maintains an incongruence between his public attitude and his private attitude because although he thinks rehabilitating inmates is important, he also knows that being loyal to fellow officers is a critical part of his job. The incongruence between his public and private attitudes and his inability to bring them into equilibrium causes Joe ongoing,

unresolved stress. What Joe probably does not realize is that there are many other officers who feel the same way he does, each one of them an isolated dissenter who wants to act on pro-social values with inmates but is afraid of the social and professional consequences of doing so. This hypothetical example illustrates the phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers.

Extremely few studies have examined the existence of pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers' attitudes toward inmates, but the research that has been done reveals interesting results. Overall, officers appear to consistently overestimate the punitive orientation of their colleagues and underestimate their rehabilitative orientation (Kauffman, 1981; Klofas & Toch, 1982; Cook & Lane, 2014). A study in Connecticut found that an overwhelming majority of officers supported a hypothetical peer who was interested in changing roles, either to treatment officer or to gun tower. Interestingly, support for the hypothetical peer interested in treatment was considerably higher than for gun tower, at 91% versus 79%, respectively. However, officers' perceptions of peer approval reveal a striking divergence and a conservative bias for both items. Perception of approval for the officer interested in treatment programs was only 65%, a 26-point reduction, but perceived approval for the gun tower job change, at 88%, reflected a 9-point increase. Also interesting was the 83% approval of a correctional officer defending a treatment officer who is under verbal attack by another correctional officer, while only 53% believed that their peers would approve of such an intervention (Kauffman, 1981). This pattern reflects a consistently conservative, punitive bias in officers' judgment of their peers' attitudes toward inmates.

A New York study completed shortly after Kauffman's, and for which the Klofas-Toch instrument was developed, found results remarkably similar to Kauffman's. Of the fourteen

items that reported both actual attitude and the perceived attitudes of peers, every single item reflected a pessimistic, conservative, and punitive bias in the perceptions of peers' attitudes. Furthermore, the difference between actual attitudes and perceived attitudes was very large. For instance, the smallest difference was reported for agreement with the statement, "The inmate rule book<sup>4</sup> means nothing these days." Just 42.8% of officers surveyed agreed with this statement, but officers estimated that 61.6% of their peers would agree, a differential of 18.8 points; this was the smallest difference between self and peer agreement assessed in the study. The rest of the estimation differentials ranged from 20 points to 35.4 points, all with a conservative bias about peers' attitudes. The greatest discrepancy was reported for estimates of peer agreement with the statement, "Rehabilitation programs are a waste of time and money." 43.7% of officers agreed, but officers estimated that a whopping 79.1% of their peers would agree. Only 29% of officers agreed with the statement, "Counseling is a job for counselors, not for officers," but they estimated 58.3% of their peers to agree. The statement receiving the lowest agreement, "The C.O.'s only concern is with security," received 17.4% agreement, but officers estimated 52.7% of their peers would agree (Toch & Klofas, 1982). These findings represent the only study of prison officers' pluralistic ignorance that published itemized officer agreement, and so there is a strong need for replication with itemized agreement percentages. Nevertheless, these early figures are consistent with other studies of pluralistic ignorance in environments that are vulnerable to a conservative bias, and with correctional officers, the bias can be remarkably strong. A recent study of correctional officers in Florida jails utilized the Klofas-Toch instrument to assess pluralistic ignorance among the jail officers. Despite the different nature of jails, where inmate turnover is significantly higher and treatment programs are far less available,

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<sup>4</sup> Inmate rule books are guides provided to inmates when they are incarcerated, which inform them of prison rules and suggestions for good behavior. Rule books are specific to individual institutions.

misperceptions of peer attitudes regarding counseling roles versus punitive orientation were remarkably similar to the results of the New York study (Cook & Lane, 2014).

A study of pluralistic ignorance among Canadian correctional officers revealed that the officers were not only vulnerable to incorrect estimation of peer approval, but they were even worse than inmates at estimating officer approval in estimating officer approval. For example, officers were asked if they would approve a hypothetical inmate's request to participate in an anger management program, even though it was not part of the inmate's case plan. The difference between officer approval of the inmate's participation in the additional program, 99%, and officers' estimation of fellow officer approval, 58%, is staggering, a -41 point difference. Inmates also demonstrated a conservative bias in estimating officers' approval, but only by 19 points. Thus, inmates were significantly more accurate in assessing officers' attitudes than the officers themselves (Grekul, 1999). As with previous studies, it appears that officers consistently demonstrate a conservative, pessimistic bias when assessing fellow officers' approval of inmate treatment.

### **Consequences of Pluralistic Ignorance for Correctional Officers**

Pluralistic ignorance has negative psychological consequences for individuals who hold values that conflict with group norms where that conflict cannot be resolved. Numerous studies have linked pluralistic ignorance to feeling alienated and experiencing higher levels of stress, and correctional officers are no exception. They experience even higher rates of illnesses, cardiovascular problems, burnout, turnover, and divorce rates higher than police officers (Cheek & Miller, 1983; Griffin, Hogan, & Lambert, 2012). All these problems point to a magnitude of stress that is detrimental to the well-being of correctional officers.



The consequence of pluralistic ignorance for correctional officers is the mistaken appearance of a subculture that has a punitive orientation toward inmates at part of its core. Klofas & Toch (1982) describe the subculture as a “myth” because it does not actually reflect the true attitudes of the majority of group members. Due to the nature of their work, officers perceive solidarity as synonymous with survival on the job (Kauffman, 1981; Lombardo, 1985). Thus, it is better to err in the direction of group norms than to diverge and disrupt group stability, which may make the group vulnerable to conflict with inmates and/or correctional management. True professional orientations vary widely: some officers actively propagate conservative and punitive norms—the “subculture custodians”—while some support the norm despite private disagreement in order to maintain group cohesion, termed the “lonely braves.” Others, the “supported majority” actually do recognize the true norms and so are unconvinced by subculture propaganda (Kauffman, 1981; Klofas & Toch, 1982). The size of each group varies, depending on the magnitude of pluralistic ignorance and the strength of support for extreme attitudes. When an extreme attitude has been internalized by a majority it is considered crystallized and thus no longer can be called pluralistic ignorance.

#### **Summary of Pluralistic Ignorance Among Correctional Officers**

There is limited research on the occurrence of pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers, but research has yielded consistent and significant results indicating a strong conservative bias in officers’ perceptions of peer attitudes toward inmates. In order to end pluralistic ignorance, the illusion must be shattered by exposing the misperceptions for what they are to the entire group. Past studies have accomplished this by sharing survey results that showed pluralistic ignorance, compared to the true attitude averages. How to accomplish this in a prison setting is another matter, and cannot occur without the consent of prison management to

not only permit such a study, but to also permit the sharing of results with officers. Furthermore, in the current punitive era, prison management may actually prefer a pluralistic ignorance that results in a conservative and punitive group norm to true norms, out of a belief that it is better for officers to err on the side of caution. However, erring on the side of caution may have unintended consequences for inmates in that they do not have pro-social behavior modeled for them, do not have sufficient access to treatment resources, do not learn to get along with authority, and ultimately will have difficulty refraining from future crime, post-release.

**The Occupational Context: Social Structural Factors that Enable and Perpetuate  
Pluralistic Ignorance**

The organizational structure of any given prison is composed of a clear hierarchy with a prison warden as its chief executive, responsible for overseeing all prison operations. Deputy wardens report directly to the prison warden, and they individually oversee departments such as management (basic operations), custody (operations involving security), programs (training, health, and rehabilitative services), and industries (inmate employment). Correctional officers are part of the custody organizational branch, and they are notably also the lowest-status employees in the organization, only ranking higher than inmates in prison status. Officers are judged by how well they manage inmates, and to do so they need inmates to cooperate. This puts officers in a role conflict position where their success in satisfying management requires the cooperation of inmates, giving inmates a means of controlling officers' success (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2013). Officers are highly sensitive to this conundrum, finding themselves caught between two layers of prison hierarchy that when combined, make their work life extremely difficult. This social quandary is the impetus for correctional officer subcultures.

Subcultures in of themselves are not harmful, but I have identified the correctional officer subculture as a major source of the problem of pluralistic ignorance. The officers' subculture is a response to real and imagined threats within the management structure of the institution, threats of inmate violence and manipulation, and a perpetual lack of trust, even among fellow officers (Duffee, 1974; Lombardo, 1985). Whether or not correctional officers form their own subcultures within the institutions they work at has been a subject of much debate by researchers, with good reason. The stereotype of correctional officers as favoring punishment and rejecting rehabilitative efforts is something of a false perception because group norms are not genuine, and in this sense, the existence of pluralistic ignorance contradicts the stereotypical correctional officer subculture (reflecting correctional officer stereotypes at a group level) (Klofas & Toch, 1982). More simply put, punitiveness does not bond officers into a subculture. So then, what is the foundation of the correctional officer subculture?

The correctional officer subculture is based principally on solidarity in response to perceived threats from both below (inmates) and above (administration) (Duffee, 1974; Lombardo, 1985). The nature of the inmate threat is fairly straightforward in that officers must be vigilant against threats of violence and any attempts to corrupt officer authority. Inmates may be motivated to simply make life difficult for correctional officers in order to salvage some of their self-esteem, such as filing strings of petty grievances to administrative officials (Toch, 2014).

What is interesting is that officers tend to perceive much stronger conflict with administration than with inmates (Duffee, 1974; Freeman, 1999). The explanation lies with contradictory expectations of officers set forth by institutions, a problem known as role conflict. These conflicting expectations include: 1) restrain the inmate; and 2) rehabilitate the inmate.

Officers' responsibilities concerning inmate restraint are extremely clear and well defined, whereas their responsibilities concerning rehabilitation tend to have no guidelines or means of measuring success. Officers feel the institutional pressure of both goals. The goal of rehabilitation may speak to personal values, but the lack of guidelines leaves officers frustrated and ultimately more comfortable with the goal of restraint, where the rules are clear (Pogrebin, 1978).

Another factor contributing to the perception of administration as the greater threat may be that it is management who wields power over officers. One of officers' most common complaints is that they are not consulted in advance about new policies, which they are expected to implement. Officers are demoralized by their lack of opportunity to express their opinions about decisions that affect their daily routine, and may see these decisions as unrealistic given how things work "in the real world" (Duffee, 1974). While administration may actually just want to improve prison procedures and have no intention of antagonizing officers, the officers nevertheless perceive management as highly antagonistic. The perceived antagonistic relationship with prison administration seems to be the true impetus for the correctional officer subculture, and also what sustains it – a vicious circle of antagonism, resentment, solidarity against the threat, reinforced threat perception, heightened sensitivity to antagonism, and so on. The subculture is held together in part due to their attitudes towards inmates, but more significantly by their attitudes about prison management.

While the bulk of research on correctional officer subcultures was performed over two decades ago, recent research indicates that these subcultures still exist. Patterns of pluralistic ignorance still appear to exist (Cook & Lane, 2014; Grekul, 1999) indicating a need for further study – particularly in U.S. prisons, since the only published U.S. prison studies of pluralistic

ignorance were all in the 1980's<sup>5</sup> (Kauffman, 1981; Toch & Klofas, 1982; Whitehead et al., 1987). A clearer indication of modern prison subcultures are the events of excessive violence used against prisoners, as described in the case of George Williams of Attica, NY. The excessive use of force is deeply connected to officer subculture (Rembert & Henderson, 2014). Even in an early study guards were divided on their approval of fellow officers' use of "rough-ups"<sup>6</sup> on inmates. Rough ups are a form of physical violence (mild to severe) used strategically by officers against an inmate to reinforce their power and authority over inmates (Kauffman, 1981). Unnecessary uses of force, both great and small, are intended to remind the inmates just who is in control of the situation. Fellow officers may not approve of unjustified officer violence, but violating the solidarity of the group by reporting inmate abuse can be seen as a much more serious threat. Whistleblowers may be rejected by the group or even receive death threats (Rembert & Henderson, 2014).

### **Summary of the Occupational Context**

As previously stated, the solidarity of correctional officers is a response to perceived threats from above them and below them in the prison hierarchy, manifesting as an officer subculture. Pluralistic ignorance persists because of the need for a sense of solidarity against these perceived threats. Research on officers' support for counseling roles indicates that there are plenty of officers who value the rehabilitative goal and some who even show interest in pursuing additional training for inmate treatment. However, the absence of peer approval will prevent these private goals from becoming a reality because they are seen as socially unacceptable in the context of a group that places loyalty and solidarity above other values. Furthermore, any initiative that comes from prison administration and excludes correctional

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<sup>5</sup> Cook & Lane (2014) studied jails, not prisons, and Grekul (1999) studied Canadian prisons, not American prisons.

officer feedback in its development will be perceived as yet another threat on account of the antagonistic relationship officers perceive they have with prison administration. It seems likely that any top-down changes will likely be implemented by officers half-heartedly at best, in turn irritating management, in turn reinforcing the group's threat perception and the need for solidarity in the face of hierarchical conflict.

Evidence of correctional officer workplace stress manifests as unusually high levels of job burnout – even more than police officers. Their burnout is strongly linked to an absence of job autonomy and job variety (Griffin, Hogan, & Lambert, 2012). At a glance, this first appears to contradict officers' lack of comfort with a democratic approach to managing inmates, because the general assumption is that a democratic work environment is linked to lower stress – so why wouldn't officers want more democracy in the workplace (Duffee, 1974)? Yet, officers report moderate to high approval for developing a more military-style prison regiment – a clear indication that they don't favor democracy, despite high stress levels (Cook & Lane, 2014; Farkas, 1999). Correctional officers' greater comfort with the custody role is understandable given that it is clearly defined, whereas the human services role is not (Pogrebin, 1978). Officers who favor counseling roles have even expressed lower levels of personal accomplishment than those who do not (Whitehead et al., 1987). This can probably be explained by a lack of clear guidelines for what such a role might look like, and how success is to be measured for the officer (Pogrebin, 1978).

There is evidence that with proper guidance, officers may find pro-social relationships with inmates and their rehabilitative efforts to be intrinsically rewarding, and increase job satisfaction. Among the most productive shifts in correctional officer attitude change emerged through facilitated intergroup dialogue and being included in decision-making. Under controlled

circumstances in which officers participated in discussions of prison conflict and suggestions for resolution over a 52-week period, officers appeared to develop an intrinsic appreciation for the process, and their perspective shifted away from victimhood and toward proactive ways to improve the situation. Central to success was involving officers as trainees rather than targets of change, and changing officers' relationship with their superiors (Duffee, 1974). The literature on inmate behavioral change speaks to internalization of norms as far more effective than forced compliance. The same principle applies just as well for correctional officers who feel subjugated by an administration that doesn't ask what the guards think before changing a policy or program. If officers are involved in the process, they will have the opportunity to feel a sense of ownership over their work and appreciation for its outcome, while simultaneously healing antagonistic relationships with management and with inmates. Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to weigh in as front-line workers on the reality of rehabilitative resource demand versus availability, and what outcome that has for inmates whom management still wants to rehabilitate.

### **Conclusion**

Correctional officer orientations have been shown to be extremely diverse but never consistent with the classic prison guard stereotype of the harsh disciplinarian as found in the example of the Attica story of 2011. In reality, correctional officers may lean toward the left or toward the right, but generally remain moderate, with a few extremist outliers on both sides. Perceptions of fellow officers' professional orientations tend to be inaccurate, with a consistently conservative and punitive bias. This is consistent with previous pluralistic studies that found errors to lie in the direction most supported by a preexisting culture (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Prentice & Miller, 1993). Despite the occurrence of pluralistic ignorance, it should also be stressed that in all studies there was also a percentage of officers who correctly identified their

peers' attitudes. This research did not explore the characteristics of this group, and they are worth further study for their potential influence in managing group attitudes.

This literature review explored past research on the professional orientations of correctional officers, the existence of pluralistic ignorance among officers regarding professional orientations, and the social environment that enables pluralistic ignorance to perpetuate. Findings indicate that correctional officers have diverse professional orientations, and contrary to stereotype, officers generally do not hold a punitive orientation. However, officers consistently overestimate the punitiveness of their peers on every measure in every study – often substantially. This reflects a pattern of pluralistic ignorance with a conservative bias, a finding consistent with other pluralistic studies among social groups with conservative tendencies. Group loyalty plays an important functional role in creating and maintaining pluralistic ignorance, and correctional officers are particularly susceptible in this regard because of a strongly felt need for solidarity against perceived hierarchical threats. Officers will not openly express treatment-oriented attitudes when: 1) they believe to be out of line with the majority point of view, even when that perception is false (pluralistic ignorance); and 2) when they fear that expressing dissenting views will lead to ostracism. This situation is likely to continue as long as the group perceives themselves to be threatened by inmates and especially by prison administration. As a consequence, ethical concerns about inmate treatment may be set aside in the interest of protecting the group. Even democratic and humanistic dissent may be considered to be a violation of group solidarity and its stability, and thus may be considered a worse offense than an incident that triggers an officer's ethical dissent.

Many correctional officers are placed in the uncomfortable position of feeling alienated from pro-social values that do not agree with group norms, and cannot be acted upon without



jeopardizing themselves socially and risking the stability of the group. Furthermore, acting upon these values may be seen as futile with too few resources and too little decision-making ability permitted by management. In an era that is highly concerned with unsuccessful inmate rehabilitation, it behooves us all to remember that our daily relationships can have a dramatic influence on our successes and failures, and that correctional officers play a central role in the daily lives of inmate, and therefore can potentially contribute to the success of rehabilitation. Professional orientations vary from officer to officer, but all officers are vulnerable to the mediating role of group norms between private attitudes and actual behavior. In the context of a strong need for solidarity in a high-stakes work environment, private attitudes lose out to the accepted group norms because acceptance by the group is believed to depend on it.

The purpose of this paper is to identify a trend in the U.S. prison system of pluralistic ignorance among correctional officers, with officers believing that their own rehabilitative goals deviate from accepted norms. Correctional officers have been shown to have diverse professional orientations and do not all conform to the traditional stereotype. True professional orientations are generally moderate to supportive; however, officers consistently misjudge their fellow officers to hold more punitive views than reality in all measures throughout every study. The consequences of this error for individual officers are job stress, alienation, and eventual burnout. Group consequences stem from a subculture that perceives itself to be at odds with its superiors and its subordinates, leading to a perpetual feeling of conflict and ineffective implementation of new policies. The consequence for inmates is a prison experience that is less devoted to their rehabilitation, increasing their likelihood of recidivism.

### **Implications**

The correctional officer stereotype that was described at the beginning of this paper does not hold up in the light of the plethora of studies on correctional officer orientations. Nevertheless, subculture custodians are quite effective in maintaining that stereotype, a stereotype incorrectly assumed to be the core of their subculture. Young new officers are particularly vulnerable to indoctrination, and ensure that as older punitive officers retire, there is always a new crop of subculture custodians to promote a strongly punitive orientation. The nature of the prison environment makes undoing pluralistic ignorance a particularly difficult task because correctional officers form subcultures in response to perceived threats from inmates and especially from prison administration. Officers' individual differences of opinion about professional goals take a backseat to group solidarity. Any attempts to eliminate pluralistic ignorance will not have lasting effects unless the underlying institutional conflicts that trigger the subculture of solidarity can be resolved. Even altruistic policy changes from administration will seem threatening to officers unless they feel that they have a genuine say in the decision-making process. In order to make changes a reality, the same principle ought to be applied to correctional officers as ought to be applied to inmates, for lasting change – internalization. Allowing correctional officers to be an active part of the process has the potential to reveal to officers the intrinsic, altruistic rewards of helping inmates to rehabilitate. Then, correctional officers might not just be happier, but also may become new advocates for inmate rehabilitation, contributing a wealth of insights acquired from years of firsthand experience.

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