

En el debate Martinson-Palmer se vio muy claramente que los sistemas correccionales atraviezan un periodo de turbulencia en sus métodos y en sus metas. El autor clarifica los puntos de controversia y explora varias alternativas. También demuestra deficiencias en las conclusiones y recomendaciones de Martinson.

Environmental Effects on Violent Behavior in Prisons

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VIOLENCE in prisons is a serious problem. And it is not merely, nor perhaps even primarily, a problem for society at large, nor for its immediate representative, the administration. First and foremost, it is a problem for the community of prisoners. Prisoners behave violently toward other prisoners and toward staff members. These actions must be prevented, controlled or punished for the institution to survive and for its inhabitants to feel relatively secure. There are also acts of violence, often alleged and sometimes proven, by staff members against prisoners. The occurrence of such events is beyond a reasonable doubt; but data are much less available than those on assaults in the reverse direction. There is also much less knowledge about the dynamics that affect violence on the part of staff members. This is truly astounding: given the almost complete lack of data about violence committed by prisoners, it is difficult to imagine that there could be an area that we know less about!

Paranthetically, it has become popular among some people recently to talk about the violence of the prison system itself, incorporating in the term "violence" all of the bad things about prisons from lack of meaningful work through the unexciting nature of the cuisine. In my opinion, this is a misuse of the word that accomplishes nothing except to blur the issues. Physical assault is frightening enough, frequent enough, and important enough not to be lumped indiscriminately with the fact that being imprisoned is generally an unpleasant experience.

As I have implied, there has been relatively little research concerning the factors that affect the incidence of violent behaviour in the prison. For one thing, there has been relatively little systematic research on prisons at all (Sommer, 1976). Even individuals trained in behavioural science methods frequently abandon their professional habits and points of view when they go through the gates of the penitentiary. Instead, they rely on unsystematic observation, casual discussion, or their own emotional responsiveness. Fortunately, there are studies on the interaction between human beings and their physical environment that can be used as sources of insight and applied to the prison. Similarly, research in social psychology has given us some information about the important

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All of these factors may increase the incidence of violent acts, particularly on the part of individuals who are already inclined toward and have a history of violence.

Spatial Intrusions

The first variable on the list, spatial intrusions, includes high population density, the lack of privacy and of a territorial home base, and the forced intensity of environmental and social interaction. These are related to one another, sometimes causally, but each has its own individual impact on the adjustment of the prisoner and to a lesser extent of the custodial officer.

The effects of crowding have been dramatically reported on animal populations by Calhoun and others (e.g., Calhoun, 1962). This research alerted behavioural scientists to the fact that populations left to increase with abundant food and water, but within a rigidly limited space, would eventually reach numbers that resulted in levels of density leading to social breakdown, intense fighting, interruption of sexual and nurturing behaviour, prolonged immaturity, and resultant decrease in the population. The effects are obviously quite severe, and the parallels to what is perceived as a social breakdown of large metropolitan areas was quickly seized upon by a number of popularizers and some researchers.

Whether these findings are in fact paralleled by the effects of crowding on human beings is a matter of considerable controversy. To begin with, it has become quite clear that cognitive variables play an important role in the human reaction to any environmental condition. It is crucial to distinguish between density as the perception of individuals inhabiting a given space and crowding as the perception by those individuals that the amount of space available to them is inadequate (Stokols, 1972). It is clear that the perception of being crowded is not merely a function of density. One must also consider additional physical stress factors such as heat, noise, and body odours; cultural background as a determinant of customary and expected density levels; the social context of the situation, since high density at a party, for example, may be pleasant whereas the same level in a subway train may be maddening; and individual variables such as experience and mood.

Complex models are needed to predict or to explain the reactions of members of a complex species to complex environments. The multidimensional analyses made by Stokols and others provide examples that should be attended to more carefully. Such attention might reduce the popularity of simplistic theories which hold that density is an overriding issue, and that high density is necessarily damaging either to groups or to individuals. As a matter of fact, the data are extremely mixed, with considerable disagreement as to the nature of the relationship between the number of people per

aspects of the social environment that are frequently difficult if not impossible to untangle from the parameters of the physical milieu. In this discussion, I would like to concentrate on the latter; sometimes, however, the social organizational aspects of the situation will be dragged along because there is no way to amputate them.

Environment and Arousal

The environmental factors that may increase the likelihood of violence—and please note that I am not implying that they necessarily determine the occurrence of violent behaviour in the sense of being solely responsible for it—can be categorized under three major headings: spatial intrusions, monotony, and external control. The first of these includes characteristics of the prison setting that make it impossible or at least extremely difficult for the individual to maintain the inviolability of spaces that people in normal environments consider to be their own and to be not subject to invasion by anyone without their permission. The second is self-explanatory, relating both to the lack of variability within the environment at any one particular time, and to the lack of change in the environment over time. The third refers to the fact that the first two factors, as well as other aspects of the situations, are determined by the administration or the guards, and are neither controlled nor predictable by the prisoner himself. As has been discussed in Suedfeld (in press), the same problems arise in other total institutions such as hospitals.

All three of these conditions represent dramatic differences between the prison milieu and those in which healthy adults in our society normally behave, and thus are something that the prisoner has to make major adjustments to be able to cope with. Furthermore, they are conditions that increase the general arousal level of the individual, frequently and perhaps chronically. Arousal, a generalized state of the organism to be ready to respond, has several consequences that are related to the occurrence of violent behaviour. The three most prominent ones are:

1. Spontaneous, unconsidered reactions are more likely to be expressed immediately to any stimulus.
2. Excessive arousal is a source of tension and stress, an aversive state that an individual is motivated to reduce. In the prison setting this reduction may be accomplished by violently defending one's territory, seeking excitement, or reaffirming control of one's own fate.
3. Under conditions of high arousal, the dominant behaviour in the individual's response repertoire becomes even stronger, so that the probability of finding more complex, less habitual behaviours becomes even lower than it would be normally.

Consequences of crowding

realized. Last, one should bear in mind that there are consistent cross-cultural differences in the size of personal space. Particularly in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, whose populations represent an ethnic mix, interaction distances that are acceptable to the majority may be inappropriate for some subgroups. One study in the United States, for example, found that blacks had larger interaction distances than either whites or Mexican Americans (Baxter, 1970); once again, completely innocent intrusions in heterogeneous racial or ethnic pairs may be perceived as stressful by one of the two participants.

Related to both crowding and interpersonal distance is the concept of territoriality. Ethologists have known for a long time that in a large number of species, individuals or groups mark off areas as belonging to them and defend these areas when invasions occur. The generalization of these findings to human beings was done in a highly popular version by Ardrey (1966). Whether or not the concept can be generalized to human groups in general (or, more accurately, to whatever degree it can be so generalized), there are data to indicate that members of closely confined groups do exhibit a need for a "home base" (Altman and Haythorn, 1967). When pairs of volunteers were confined in a small room for several days or weeks, they quickly developed implicit territories whereby particular areas of the room and particular pieces of furniture were perceived as belonging to one or the other person. Unauthorized intrusions or appropriations were met with resentment and hostility, and in fact occurred relatively rarely.

It appears that in situations of high proximity and low privacy, one way to maintain one's sense of individuality and occasional psychological separation from the other is to have a space which is seen as an extension of oneself. This space is marked off by mutual understanding, by physical boundaries such as walls or lines on the floor, and by the disposition of one's personal possessions within it. Incidentally, cross-cultural differences have been found in the methods for establishing privacy (Bossley, 1976) and territoriality. One of these findings is that groups of blacks define their territories more explicitly, observe territorial boundaries much more strictly, but perceive their own territories as being shared by other members of the ingroup, to a greater extent than whites (Hall, 1971). This may cast light on some sources of conflict within prisons, particularly in the United States; here, as in the matter of preferred interpersonal distance and other similar issues, there is a deplorable lack of research on the major ethnic groups represented in Commonwealth institutions.

To summarize this aspect of the paper, the possible sources of environmentally induced aggression can be seen as those characteristics of the physical and social world of the prison that violate

unit of space and a variety of sociological and psychological dependent measures (Freedman, 1975; Milgram, 1970). However, it is relevant to the consideration of the prison environment that crowded males fairly consistently either behave more aggressively or indicate that they feel more aggressive (Freedman et al, 1972; Stokols et al, 1973).

One aspect of crowding that is relatively clear-cut and relevant to incidences of violence and aggression in prisons is the matter of personal space. In his pioneering work, Hall (1966) studied the preferred distances at which individuals interact with each other, and found consistent differences that in turn significantly affected interpersonal interactions. Hall found that among Americans, preferred distances between interacting individuals depend partly upon the kind of interaction, including the relationship of the persons involved, the setting and topic of the interaction, and their feelings. Thus, for example, intimate interactions usually take place at distances from 0 to 18 inches, whereas more casual social interactions are performed in a setting where the participants are from 48 to 144 inches apart. When the distance is inappropriate for the perceived nature of the relationship, the individual may experience a sense that his personal space has been invaded. This results in attempts at restoring personal space, escaping from the situation, and possibly aggression. Personal space, then, is a protective bubble or buffer zone that we carry around with us.

Several aspects of this line of research are particularly relevant to the penitentiary situation, aside from the fact that high density necessarily leads to more violations of personal space. One of these is that individuals react differentially to intrusions of personal space depending on the perceived status of the intruder. For example, students sitting in a library tend to move away when a faculty member chooses a chair very close to them, whereas they are more likely to request a fellow student to give them more room (Barash, 1973). Perhaps more importantly, it appears that individuals with psychological problems at least in some categories may need greater personal space than the average. This has been reported with schizophrenics, and even more relevantly with individuals who have a history of violent assault. In one study, violent penitentiary inmates had a body-buffer zone or personal space that was almost four times as large as that of a group of non-violent inmates (Kinzel, 1970). If guards are not aware of this difference between violence-prone prisoners and the average inmate or nonincarcerated citizen, the potential for interpersonal difficulty is obvious. It may well be that stress or general arousal triggers violent behaviour among individuals for whom that kind of response is relatively dominant in the repertoire. Thus, incidences of assault may be due to an inadvertent invasion of the body-buffer zone more frequently than is

concentric circles of perceived possession. Within prison excessively high density is inescapable and pervasive. It also violates norms that are learned in free society but are never explicitly recognized, so that even people suffering from its effects may not identify the cause of their problem, and therefore may not be able to adjust their response appropriately. Frequently, perceived overcrowding represents a major source of frustration, over-stimulation, and excessive arousal. This is exacerbated by intrusions into one's personal space, including not only inappropriate interpersonal distances in conversation but also such extreme invasions as the strip search. Further aggravation stems from the denial of territoriality where the individual's right to his own possessions as territorial markers may be limited, where he may be moved from cell to cell arbitrarily and at short notice, where his space and possessions may be subject to search or rearrangement at any time, and so on.

All of these factors are likely to lead to tension and general high arousal. As generations of learning theorists have demonstrated, individuals who are highly aroused are likely to respond with the most nearly automatic response in their repertoire of behaviours. Individuals who are prone to violence may find this the most dominant response under the circumstances, and particularly so given the fact that they are more likely to experience frequent invasions of territory since their need for a spatial buffer is even greater than those of normal individuals. They are also more likely to be transferred around, both within and among institutions. It is thus predictable that high density, lack of privacy, and intrusions upon the personal buffer area and living space of such prisoners will evoke an aggressive and sometimes violent reaction.

Monotony

The most unpleasant and debilitating kind of environment may well be that which combines high absolute levels of stimulation with low levels of stimulus change and diversity (Suedfeld, in press). In addition to the tension induced by high-stimulus spatial intrusions, prisons increase chronic levels of arousal by environmental monotony. The drabness of the surroundings, the lack of varied stimulation in any sensory modality, which characterize most prisons lead to high levels of boredom. The colossal and depersonalizing scale of much prison architecture adds to this effect. As one might expect, boredom leads to attempts to increase the variability of stimulation.

If the environment permits, such attempts may be productive: an involvement in educational programmes, a search for meaningful work, programmes of self-improvement or group activity. But when the availability of socially desirable sources of stimulation is low, or when the convict code discourages inmates from turning to such

sources, excitement can be had by less desirable means. Zimmerman (1964), who spent 25 years in prison, said: "Anything is welcome that breaks the boredom. If you are a 'queen,' it's a love affair; if you are not, in nine cases out of ten, it's a fight: a tooth-breaking, lip-splitting, rib-crushing, head-cracking fight" (p. 154). It is quite clear from the autobiographical accounts of prisoners that attacking custodial officers or other inmates, the planning of escapes, riots, or other breaches of the good order of the institution, and even self-slashing or engaging in pseudo-suicide attempts, are frequently motivated by the desire for a change of scenery, a break in the routine, and a chance to be the focus of attention (Suedfeld, 1978). This is particularly crucial in view of the fact that individuals with antisocial personality disorder, who tend to comprise a high proportion of the violent, trouble-prone inmates of any institution, have in several studies been shown to have abnormally high needs for environmental stimulation (for a review, see Suedfeld and Landon, 1978).

Actually, there appears to be little if any reason why the prison environment needs to be as monotonous as it usually is. In some institutions, attempts have been made to diversify both the natural and the built environment, getting a double benefit by allowing inmates to perform creative work in landscaping and mural painting while at the same time beautifying the institution inexpensively. It may be true that prisons by their very existence induce depression and violence no matter how much they may be "disguised amid green and pleasant fields or by antiseptic chrome and spacious glass" (Cooper, 1973). Further, we know that modern and impressive living spaces are not necessarily preferred to old and dilapidated ones (e.g., Sommer, 1974), and in fact may be associated with the deterioration in the relationship between custodians and prisoners (Prestholt et al, 1976). I would not be surprised if the functional lines beloved by many contemporary architects turned out to be at least as adverse to prisoners as the medieval castle design favoured by the planners of 19th century prisons.

Still, an optimal level of environmental stimulation can be achieved without making the milieu depersonalized. There is no particular reason why interior walls cannot be made different colours, why furniture cannot be ordered in a variety of designs, why recreational facilities cannot be provided with diverse configurations, sizes, and materials, and why food cannot be diversified even without greatly increasing the cost. This would seem to be a sensible step to avoid violent actions motivated by the need to reduce boredom and monotony.

Control and Predictability

In each of the factors mentioned previously, one of the assump-

Do find out how to control the environment

Prisoners

removes the individual from the emotional support that he could derive from others members of his group (Haythorn, 1973), which may have adverse effects (or desirable ones for the institution, depending on the group).

We should remember that stress, including environmental stress, is not necessarily bad. Human beings have learned over their lifetimes to solve a variety of problems, and in fact they benefit from having problems with which to cope. However, it would be to the benefit of the prisoner, the institution, and society to reduce the severity and pervasiveness of the problem to manageable proportions. This would also be a desirable step toward training prisoners to solve problems in socially desirable ways.

One could not ever expect violence in prisons to be eliminated by environmental changes alone. Its causes are complex, and many would remain even if the negative features of the environment were to be greatly improved. The very fact of being in prison may lead to depression and violence (Cooper, 1973), and to a variety of psychopathological reactions (Ellenberger, 1971; Sommer, 1976). The psychopathic portion of the population is likely to be involved in incidents of disruption, which may easily include violence, and there is at present no demonstrably effective method by which psychopathic tendencies can be eliminated (Suedfeld and Landon, 1978). Many convicts come from cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds where physical assault is not perceived as anything unusual or necessarily deplorable. For all of these reasons, one cannot expect that environmental changes will solve the problem of violence in the correctional system. However, appropriate changes would be likely to reduce violent interactions, and make those that are unavoidable at least somewhat more predictable and therefore subject to delimitation and control. These would certainly be improvements over the current state of affairs, and would facilitate the application of productive and socially acceptable types of solution to the difficulties engendered by the conditions of confinement.

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tions is that the environment is under the control of someone other than the inmate. In most prisons, the convict in fact has relatively little say over the nature of his surroundings, over the possibility and nature of change from one occasion to another, and the like. To make it worse, these characteristics and changes may be not merely uncontrollable but also unpredictable as far as the prisoner is concerned.

These characteristics may be especially debilitating aspects of being in prison, and may be responsible for a significant proportion of violent outbreaks. The now-classic work of Glass and Singer (1972), supported by later research (Moos, 1976), has shown the unpredictability and uncontrollability of environmental inputs are significant causes of behavioural breakdown. Even extremely unpleasant characteristics of the environment, such as loud noises, can be tolerated relatively well if one knows when they are about to begin and end, and even more so if one can control their onset and termination (even if one cannot avoid or even reduce the intensity of the stimulation). The lack of control over one's own fate that individuals frequently encounter in total institutions (see Ellenberger, 1971) is threatening to many people, especially to those who take pride in their own toughness and dominance. We might logically predict violent reactions in situations where such people lose control of even the simplest aspects of their life space, such as the selection of radio programmes or the turning off of the bulb in one's cell.

Conclusion

I think that a warning against excessive reductionism may be appropriate here. One of the reasons why behavioural scientists have been relatively unsuccessful in bringing about changes in many social systems is our frequent dedication to one variable or one type of variable. Thus, even though environmental circumstances are clearly involved in prison violence, many other causal and contributing factors exist and must be considered.

Furthermore, it is not easy to decide exactly how these changes could be instituted. Many of the problems that I have alluded to arise out of unmodifiable circumstances. For example, when a prisoner may be smuggling contraband or preparing a weapon, the staff must employ strip searches and unannounced shakedowns. Beyond that, the solutions to some problems exacerbate others. For instance, some prisoners find solitary confinement to be a welcome relief from the high levels of intrusiveness and lack of privacy that characterize the general population, but segregation is difficult for some individuals to tolerate (Suedfeld et al, 1976); among such individuals may be those most likely to be subjected to it, such as psychopaths (Hare and Schalling, 1978). Isolation further

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Managing the Man with the Gun*

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Since most homicides, we now know, occur among family members and most involve firearms, there is probably no type of call more frightening to the police officer than one concerning a man with a gun. With such a call, a policeman knows very well he runs a risk of becoming one of those homicide victims. By learning how to approach disturbed people who threaten him and others with firearms, the officer enhances his chances of survival.

THE officer did not have to die. He had been the leader of a five-man team sent to investigate a call from a wife who was concerned about her husband's intentions to commit suicide with a rifle. He and four other officers gathered together on the porch of the white frame home. After ringing the bell, a man who was apparently intoxicated appeared at the screen door. His speech was slurred when he asked what they wanted. The officer explained that they had been called by his wife because she was concerned about him. The man asked to be excused to get a drink. The officers, feeling that the tension which had evoked the call was easing, relaxed momentarily, only to have the subject return with a rifle raised in their direction. The policemen spun out and away from the door, all drawing service revolvers and firing at the same time. Fire from three of his comrades hit the officer, who died shortly afterward on the porch. His death could have been prevented.

Aside from any psychological issues or aspects concerning the subject, five officers should not have gathered together on the porch of the home. They should have anticipated that if it became necessary for them to move quickly or to fire, they would be stumbling over one another. No more than two men should have been on the porch. Two other men should have been stationed on either side of the porch; the fifth should have been located near the rear or side door to cover an attempted escape from that direction.

The officer confronting the subject could have removed his hat, so as to suggest that he and his men had enough time to wait and were in no hurry—a single gesture which usually has a tranquilizing effect and helps calm the disturbed and frightened subject.

They should not have permitted him to leave their view for a drink or any other reason.

Had a dog been present, they would have had to warn the owner that the dog had to be kept under control, removed, or possibly

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