

## PEER VERSUS AUTHORITY EFFECTS IN A CORRECTIONAL COMMUNITY

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The "solidary opposition" theory of Sykes and Messinger (1960) provided the first systematic sociological perspective on the prison community.<sup>1</sup> The brunt of this argument is that the inmate suffers from a variety of frustrations and deprivations which are given in or indigenous to the nature of imprisonment itself. The inmate community is said to be organized in response to the collective problem of lessening these "pains of imprisonment." The most crucial element in this response, as McCorkle and Korn (1954: 88) observed earlier, is the inmate's rejection of his rejectors rather than himself. By uniting against the prison administration and staff (those immediately responsible for their suffering) inmates are transformed from a group "in itself" into a group "for itself"—that is to say, a group conscious of its situation, interests, and adversaries.

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This account, which is widely accepted as a general framework for the analysis of juvenile as well as adult penal institutions (see, for example, Grossner, 1958; Ohlin and Lawrence, 1959; Polsky, 1962), is the present-day version of Clemmer's (1965) "prisonization" theory, wherein the inmate primary group is viewed as the prison's most effective socializing agency. Sykes and Messinger extend Clemmer's thought by suggesting that common opposition to the staff is the basis of its effectiveness: inmates are said to form a distinct solidarity within the prison only insofar as they exhibit a common opposition to staff.

For Sykes (1966: 65), the inmate's relation to his family and the civil community is also related to his orientation toward peers. Because the pains of imprisonment have as their ultimate source the inmate's alienation from the outside world, isolation represents a common problem (for which the captor is also immediately responsible) which further unifies those who suffer because of it. This is to say that alienation from civil ties as well as hostility toward staff are instrumental to inmate solidarity, from which attitudes and behavior are presumably derivable. Solidarity thus implicitly stands as an "intervening variable" which mediates whatever effects staff and civilian contacts may have upon inmate behavior and attitudes.

There are, of course, very powerful alternatives to the solidary opposition theory. Research by Grusky (1959), Berk (1966), and Street, Vinter, and Perrow (1968) has demonstrated that the oppositional nature of the inmate group is inherent not in imprisonment itself (as Sykes and Messinger contend) but, rather, in certain forms of prison organization. These investigations show that, within custodial settings, integration into inmate groups tends to promote anti-social perspectives, but that these same groups in treatment-oriented institutions promote solidary *cooperation* with the staff and pro-social or positive attitudes in their members. However, because they focus on the inmate primary group as

the dominant socializing agency—the mediating unit of organizational influence—these more recent investigations present us with a perspective which is similar to the solidary opposition theory they criticize. In both conceptions of the prison influence structure, involvement in prison primary groups is of most central significance.

### THE PROBLEMS

It is of course one thing to assert or demonstrate that inmate groups have, from the official point of view, a beneficial or adverse effect on those who are integrated into them; it is another matter, however, to show that such influence overshadows competing pressures from persons in other (official and extra-institutional) statuses. As we have seen, the latter assumption is common even to those with different perspectives on the prison. One purpose of this investigation is to assess the validity and utility of such a bias in one people-changing organization. We wish to address this problem by first asking whether, within a given institution, staff and family influence is independent of peer influence and, if so, whether staff and family influence is less than, equal or superior to peer influence.

Although these questions are addressed in one (juvenile) institution, they are applicable to all, including custodially-oriented adult prisons. One problem, then, is not to assess the relative effects upon inmates of differing organizational arrangements (as did Berk, Grusky, and Street and his associates) but, rather, to evaluate the sources of influence within a particular institution. At stake in the outcome of such an evaluation is the dominant agency in this institution's influence structure.

By evaluating the extent to which staff and extra-institutional influence is mediated by interaction within the inmate primary group, this report speaks to the problem of whether

rehabilitative modes must address and affect changes in the inmate subculture, or the individual's relation to it, if they are to be successful, or whether institutional staff and extra-institutional contacts may exert correctional influence independently of peer ties.

A second and related purpose of this research is to determine whether inmate orientations toward persons within the institution (peers and staff) are to be explained by its structure alone or, as well, by the kinds of social backgrounds that inmates bring into this structure. If the latter determinant is important, we face the question of how that which an inmate brings into and confronts within an institution interacts in the shaping of his attitudes and behavior.

#### **THE INSTITUTION**

This investigation was conducted in Glen Mills, a penal institution for delinquent boys who are residents of Pennsylvania. Glen Mills is located 22 miles west of Philadelphia, from which it draws most (69%) of its inmates. The majority of other boys comes from counties surrounding Philadelphia. The population is predominantly (81%) Negro. The correctional program is organized around practical work experience as well as academic and vocational training. However, a strong social work orientation is embedded in Glen Mills' authority structure: both the superintendent and director of social service (the latter being responsible for the formulation and implementation of correctional goals) have degrees in social work, as do three of its caseworkers. The social service unit also contains a full-time psychologist and part-time psychiatrist. In general, Glen Mills corresponds very closely to the "reeducation/development" institutional model outlined by Street, Vinter, and Perrow (1968: 21).

## MEASUREMENT

In connection with a broader study (Schwartz, 1970), questionnaires and background information were collected for 194 (out of a total of 199) inmates. Case folders provided us with 19 variables by which inmates could be characterized prior to their commitment. These background variables are listed below in Table 3. Length of confinement (in monthly units) was also ascertained through case folders. From the questionnaire data six scales were constructed, all of which satisfied the Likert criterion (see Edwards, 1957: 149-171) for a scale and the Guttman criteria (Stouffer, Guttman, and Lazarsfeld, 1966: 159-163) for a quasi-scale (which correlates just as highly with an outside criterion as a perfectly reproducible scale). Three of these instruments indexed our independent variables; and three, our dependent variables.<sup>2</sup> The independent variables were measured by the following scales:

(1) *Integration into Prison Primary Groups.* This scale consists of eight items requiring information on frequency and intensity (friendships) of interaction with other inmates and willingness to "stick together" with them.

(2) *Staff Orientation.* This seven item scale calls for information on degree of inmate liking, friendliness, and close relations with staff.

(3) *Family Contact.* This measure involves three items indexing letters sent and received, and visits.

With a view to assessing whether the impact of the involvement variables described above may be more forceful on some levels than on others, three dependent variables were employed. First, prisons are often evaluated on the basis of whether they inhibit or facilitate the further development of criminal value orientations. Indeed, Ohlin (1956: 29) suggests

that "the central task of penal administration is to affect changes in the criminal value system of the imprisoned inmates." We therefore developed a *Criminal Value-Orientation Scale*, consisting of fourteen items which tapped admiration of criminal exploits, cynicism about the honesty of the allegedly respectable, acceptance of certain mitigating circumstances excusing criminality, effect of criminality on self-respect, and the like.

Although the values to which he orients himself may contribute to an inmate's being in prison, they do not directly influence his conduct therein; norms perform this function more directly. Therefore, a measure of *Conformity to the Inmate Code*, similar to Wheeler's (1961) index, was developed. These nine items contain hypothetical situations in which staff and inmate norms are in conflict. By endorsing hypothetical courses of action, inmates order themselves on this dimension.

The inmate is also faced with alternatives on the level of identity. Therefore, we constructed an *Inmate-Peer Identification Scale*, which consists of seven items calling for information on the respondent's psychological distance from or sense of sameness with other inmates.

For the sake of brevity, we shall refer to the dependent variables<sup>3</sup> collectively as "inmate perspectives."<sup>4</sup>

## RESULTS

### STAFF-INMATE RELATIONS

By examining the correlations between Integration into Prison Primary Groups, Staff Orientation, and Family Contact in Table 1, we may draw inferences about the relationship between inmates and staff in Glen Mills, and also about the position of the family relative to these two groups.

Of the three zero-order correlations in Table 1 only one is significant beyond the .10 level—namely, the direct correla-

**TABLE 1**  
**CORRELATIONS AMONG MODES OF INTERACTION**

	Staff Orientation	Family Contact
Integration into Prison Primary Groups	.232*	.111
Staff Orientation		.049

\*Asterisk denotes significance at or beyond the .10 level in this and in later tables.

tion between Integration into Prison Primary Groups and Staff Orientation. This finding is inconsistent with the basic assumption of the solidary opposition model, stated most plainly by Ohlin (1956: 14) that "the essential character of the relationship between the administrative staff and the inmates is one of conflict." Because integration into inmate primary groups is associated with a positive attitude toward the staff we may assert that formal and informal organization in Glen Mills, at least at the affective level, are more in concord than in conflict.

It can also be seen that Integration into Prison Primary Groups is significantly more highly correlated with Staff Orientation (.232) than is Family Contact (.049); those with favorable orientation toward staff are therefore more likely to be closely bound to other inmates than to their families. Although the correlation between the Integration into Prison Primary Groups and Family Contact variables (.111) barely misses statistical significance, it is important to note that its direction is positive. This outcome suggests that inmate groups tend to recruit boys who have close rather than loose ties with their families; involvement in primary groups within Glen Mills does not therefore presuppose alienation from primary groups outside of it.

The fact that inmates' ties with peers, staff, and family are all positively related in Glen Mills confronts us with the possibility that we are dealing with solidary cooperation rather than solidary opposition. It may be argued that solidary cooperation is more likely to be found in reeducation/development institutions such as Glen Mills than in

custodial or obedience/conformity institutions. (For evidence, see Grusky, 1959; Berk, 1966; Street, Vinter, and Perrow, 1968: 22-54.) The former type, according to Street and his associates (1968: 21), "provides more gratifications and maintains closer staff-inmate relations" than does the latter, wherein solidary opposition would therefore be more likely to prevail.

Having said this, we may have made at least some sense out of the pattern of correlations in Table 1. However, by distinguishing between institutions in which solidary opposition and cooperation are most and least likely to prevail, while simultaneously recognizing the kind of institution that Glen Mills is, we are not speaking directly to our objectives. The above distinction is indirectly relevant because the data that it helps interpret provide an essential background for our main analysis; however, the distinction is irrelevant because opposition and cooperation models are identical in that they both focus on relationships within the inmate group as the dominant socializing process. It is precisely this dominance that we wish to evaluate by allowing the impact of the inmate group to compete with other sources of situational influence.

#### **MODES OF INTERACTION AND INMATE PERSPECTIVES**

Before taking up this problem, we need to insure that effects on inmate perspectives observed for Integration into Prison Primary Groups, Staff Orientation, and Family Contact are independent of their covariation with inmates' pre-institutional or background characteristics. We must, in other words, disentangle the influences of the present from those of the past. And because we wish to measure the relative effects of these three variables, we need to disentangle the influence of one from that of another. Both objectives are achieved in Table 2 where regression coefficients for each of the three independent variables (Integra-



TABLE 2  
REGRESSION OF INMATE PERSPECTIVES OVER MODES OF  
INTERACTION WITH PRE-INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS  
CONTROLLED AND UNCONTROLLED<sup>a</sup>

Inmate Perspectives	MODES OF INTERACTION					
	Integration into Prison Primary Groups		Staff Orientation		Family Contact	
	Uncon- trolled	Con- trolled	Uncon- trolled	Con- trolled	Uncon- trolled	Con- trolled
Pre-Institutional Factors						
Criminal Value-Orientation	.180*	.134*	-.590*	-.504*	-.058	.064
Conformity to the Inmate Code	.147*	.126*	-.512*	-.468*	.002	.058
Peer Identification	.130*	.115*	-.127*	-.107*	-.084	-.043

a. All regression coefficients in the right-hand columns were obtained with all variables in the regression equation; coefficients in the left-hand columns were obtained with pre-institutional factors and length of confinement excluded from the equation.

tion into Prison Primary Groups, Staff Orientation, and Family Contact) are obtained with the two others, along with nineteen background variables and length of confinement (whereby we free our data from the contamination of time) in the regression equation and thereby controlled. For comparison, the regression coefficients in the left-hand column were obtained with background variables and length of confinement uncontrolled.<sup>5</sup>

These data provide grounds for rejecting the hypothesis that the influence of Staff Orientation on inmate perspectives is mediated by Integration into Prison Primary Groups, for the two are directly related to one another but correlated with perspectives in opposite directions—with Staff Orientation rather than Integration into Prison Primary Groups displaying the higher coefficient in two cases. Taken together, all of this means that Staff Orientation and Integration into Prison Primary Groups are operating as suppressor variables with respect to each other and that the control of one will increase, rather than diminish, original correlations. This point will be enlarged upon later, in connection with other data.

Turning to the material at hand, we find that Staff Orientation is almost four times more closely associated with the Criminal Value-Orientation variable than is Integration into Prison Primary Groups: the regressions of Criminal Value-Orientation over these two independent variables are  $-.504$  and  $.134$  respectively; corresponding coefficients for the Conformity to the Inmate Code variable are  $-.468$  and  $.126$ . In both cases the difference between regression coefficients is significantly different from zero; we therefore attribute more explanatory power to Staff Orientation than to Integration into Prison Primary Groups. On the other hand, when Peer Identification is the dependent variable, Staff Orientation and Integration into Prison Primary Groups have approximately equal, though opposite, effect ( $-.107$  and  $.115$  respectively). Finally, the effect of Family Contact on all three dependent variables is negligible.

The above patterns are for the most part independent of pre-institutional and temporal influences.

#### **THEORETICAL AND FURTHER EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Our data permit us to give a confident, affirmative answer to Schein's (1961: 280) question of "whether 'authority influence' produces different results from 'peer influence' in terms of type and degree of influence accomplished." Finding that the effect of "authority influence" (measured by Staff Orientation) on Criminal Value-Orientation and Conformity to the Inmate Code is almost four times as great as the "peer influence" (measured by Integration into Prison Primary Groups)—and equally great when Peer Identification is dependently variable—conforms to Mathiessen's (1966) assertion that inmate primary group affiliation is unduly stressed in current theories of the prison insofar as its analysis causes us to overlook the functions of administration and staff. These particular data specify such an assertion by raising doubts about the theoretical centrality of relation-

ships among inmates in three interrelated senses: (1) as a process that *mediates* the influence of staff members on inmate perspectives and, consequently, (2) as the sole or, at least, (3) the major determinant of inmate perspectives. It seems, then, that we have gone a modest step beyond providing more documentation for the idea that the quality of inmate-staff relations does make a difference in rehabilitative endeavors. Actually, more elaborate evidence for this idea may be obtained from other sources (see, for example, Glaser, 1964; Studt, Messinger, and Wilson, 1968; Wilson and Snodgrass, 1969). What our data demonstrate is that in one or some class of penal institutions, the quality of inmate-staff relations makes *more* of a difference in accounting for certain types of behavior than the quality of inmate-inmate relations.

However, we should not hesitate to speculate about the generalizability of these data. It may be emphasized that the notion of inmate primary group relations as a mediating process was treated in this study not as a *perspective*, as in the earlier studies cited, but, rather, as an *hypothesis*. Because no mediatory function was found and because there is no compelling rationale to explain its default in the particular institution that we studied, we are inclined to consider the theoretical centrality of inmate-inmate relationships as at least problematic in all penal organizations, including adult maximum security prisons, where the problems here addressed have not yet been posed.

Another assumption which our data did not support is that which attributed importance to the amount of contact an inmate maintains with his family. Because frequency of such communication had no explanatory value, we may say that it is the face-to-face communicators who participate most directly in shaping the inmate's values, behavior, and self-conception during his confinement. This finding suggests that that aspect of the "total institution" framework which emphasizes the inmate's alienation from the outside world is valid in the present case not in terms of the frequency with

which this world penetrates the institution's boundaries<sup>6</sup> and establishes contact with its inhabitants but, rather, in terms of the effect of this contact on their perspectives.

Another important fact that we discovered is that, while Integration into Prison Primary Groups and Staff Orientation are directly correlated, they exercise contradictory effects on inmate perspectives. It is in this respect that integration into inmate groups and orientation toward the staff are "oppositional"—not in the sense that they repel each other, as Sykes, Messinger, and others have claimed. This paradox raises a question about another implication of the solidarity opposition model that is related to the ones we have already discussed—namely, that hostile relations between inmates and staff provide the condition under which assimilation into inmate groups promotes undesirable perspectives. This assumption is supported by the separate findings of Grusky (1959), Berk (1966), and Street et al. (1968).

The present data seem also to bear out the above implication, but only when it is made with the following specified reference. In Table 2 we find that when Staff Orientation (and all other variables) is held constant, Criminal Value-Orientation and Conformity to the Inmate Code are significantly related to Integration into Prison Primary Groups. However, when, in a separate analysis, the nineteen background characteristics and length of confinement alone are controlled, with Staff Orientation free to vary, we observe an insignificant twentieth order partial correlation coefficient of .034,<sup>7</sup> with Criminal Value-Orientation as dependent variable, and a comparably insignificant figure of .038 for Conformity to the Inmate Code. Thus, when Staff Orientation is uncontrolled, and thereby freed to exercise its effect, the significant associations between Criminal Value-Orientation, Conformity to the Inmate Code, and Integration into Prison Primary Groups vanish. What this means is that good relations with the staff suppress the undesirable functions of inmate group affiliation (because they are directly correlated with it).

Let us now examine this same process as it operates on Peer Identification. In Table 2, with variation in Staff Orientation controlled, Peer Identification is seen to be significantly associated with Integration into Prison Primary Groups; however, when, as before, Staff Orientation is permitted to operate freely, the relationship between Peer Identification and Integration into Prison Primary Groups remains significant, with a partial correlation coefficient of .169. This result means that inmate groups may exercise a negative influence *in the absence of* the staff-inmate tension and antagonism that, in both the solidary opposition and cooperation models, is so essential to the development of "prisonized" identities. Thus, if our interpretation of the facts is correct, we may say that the "gulf of fear and distrust" referred to by Ohlin (1965: 14) as "separating the authorities on the one hand from the inmate body on the other" may play less of a part in the development of "prisonized identity" than is currently thought. This is not to say that staff-inmate relations fail to influence the way an inmate thinks of himself; on the contrary, we have seen that they compare equally with inter-inmate relations in this respect. What we do mean is that a favorable climate of inmate opinion regarding the staff (indexed by the direct correlation between Integration into Prison Primary Groups and Staff Orientation) does not neutralize the negative effects on identity of assimilation into the inmate community; nor, as far as we could tell, did the *extent* of favorable staff orientation mitigate these effects. In another separate analysis, no discernible pattern of correlation between Integration into Prison Primary Groups and the three inmate perspectives was found among those classified as strongly and moderately pro- or anti-staff.<sup>8</sup>

From a correctional standpoint, our results for Peer Identification are therefore at once encouraging and discouraging. While they show that positive inmate-staff relations contribute to the development of favorable or "non-

prisonized" identities, they also suggest that such relations, however positive, do not neutralize the negative functions of assimilation into inmate primary groups, as they do for Criminal Value-Oriented and Conformity to the Inmate Code.

A bothersome problem on which we might at least speculate is Peer Identification's relatively strong resistance both to Staff Orientation's direct influence and to its suppressive effect on the influence of Integration into Prison Primary Groups. This resistance is understandable when it is considered against the relatively high sensitivity of the Conformity to the Inmate Code variable. It is perhaps because this conformity scale is a measure of orientation to normative (i.e., situational) requirements that it is more responsive than Peer Identification to situational contingencies. These contingencies refer to different degrees of attraction toward staff members with whom the inmate interacts during confinement. We suppose, however, that peer identification is conditioned by the fact that each resident of Glen Mills shares an identical status, and that this sharing is conducive to mutual identification. This being the case, the inmate's liking for the staff does not profoundly affect the objective fact that he is, after all, a prisoner. In contrast, criminal value-orientations are independent of status; they are held by inmates and staff alike and, like conformity, are therefore more responsive to affectional bonds with the staff than is identification with members of one's own status group.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INMATE BACKGROUNDS AND MODES OF INTERACTION**

Having established the way Integration into Prison Primary Groups and Staff Orientation affect inmate perspectives, we are now in a position to push our analysis further. To do this we must ask why some inmates are more closely integrated

into primary groups than others, and why some more than others are favorably inclined toward staff. To show how inmates' interaction with peers and staff affect their perspectives is after all not to explain how these relationships came to be what they are. But if peer and staff bonds are not to be totally explained in terms of one another, as they are in the solidary opposition and cooperation theories (their correlation in our data is .232), where are we to look for their other determinants?

Our assumption is that the relationships which he forms during his confinement are not independent of the predispositions which the inmate brings to the institution from the outside.<sup>9</sup> This being the case, an inmate's perspectives must grow out of the interaction between what he brings into the institution and how that which he imports is responded to by peers and authorities. Accordingly, to better understand the way perspectives are shaped in prison, we need to know how the social relationships in which these perspectives are anchored are themselves grounded in the inmate's past. Unfortunately, the data in Table 3 do not lend themselves to a detailed analysis of this matter, but they do provide enough information to support the assumption that interaction and ensuing perspective formation within a penal institution cannot be fully understood independently of who the inmate was before his imprisonment.

Looking to Table 3 we first take up the case of Integration into Prison Primary Groups. This phenomenon, considered by solidary opposition theorists to be merely an expression of antagonism towards staff, is seen here to be related to dimensions along which inmates characterize themselves *before* imprisonment. As is seen, positive inmate-inmate ties are inversely related to academic achievement, school suspensions, and age at first arrest; they are directly related to age at commitment, number of brothers, and IQ. (It should be noted here that the regression coefficients<sup>10</sup> for age and IQ are in the positive direction.)

**TABLE 3**  
**CORRELATIONS<sup>a</sup> BETWEEN 19 PRE-INSTITUTIONAL**  
**FACTORS AND MODES OF INTERACTION**

Pre-Institutional Factors	Modes of Interaction		
	Integration into	Staff	Family
	Prison Primary Groups	Orientation	Contact
Race <sup>b</sup>	.047	-.212*/	-.086
Residence <sup>c</sup>	-.022	.152*	.132*
Migration <sup>d</sup>	.075	.143*	.083
Age at commitment	-.040/	-.092	-.112
Family status <sup>e</sup>	-.034	-.010	.069
Family relationships <sup>f</sup>	.035	.136*	-.029
Number of siblings	.068	-.052	-.249*
Number of brothers	.119*/	-.108	-.253*
Age rank <sup>g</sup>	.024	-.079	-.177*
IQ	-.011/	.087	-.000
Achievement	-.144*/	.001	-.054
School grades	-.072	.073	-.038
School status <sup>h</sup>	-.068	.034	-.044
Truancies	.041	.024	-.188*/
Suspensions	-.137*/	-.069	-.161*
Number of arrests	.098	-.026	.030
Number of arrests for violent offenses	.018	-.179*	-.024
Age at first arrest	-.158*/	-.019	-.034
Prior commitments	.069	-.018	-.228*/
Multiple correlation	.362	.345	.457

a. Coefficients for race, residence, migration, and school status are bi-serial. The bi-serial is a product-moment correlation coefficient. Slashes (/) indicate significant regression coefficients whose direction is the same as corresponding correlation coefficients, unless otherwise indicated in the text.

b. High score given to Negro.

c. High score given to non-Philadelphia resident.

d. High score given to those not born in county from which committed.

e. Highest score given to those living with both natural parents before commitment.

f. Highest score given to those with favorable relationships.

g. Highest score given to most recently born among siblings.

h. High score given to those enrolled in a non-disciplinary school before commitment.



These relationships seem to index the operation of three rather ambiguous processes. The first is that of an early history of high involvement or affiliation with age-peers, as suggested by Integration into Prison Primary Groups' direct association with number of brothers and inverse association with age at first arrest (assuming that most juvenile arrests are for offenses committed in groups). Relatively good adjustment in school, as measured by suspension and IQ data, may constitute another process which antedates primary group affiliation in Glen Mills. It is unclear, however, why IQ and achievement relate to the integration measure in opposite directions. We might speculate that sociability among peers impedes the achievement that good intelligence makes possible. This suggestion is informed by Miller's (1958) observation that intelligence (which finds expression in ability to outsmart others, gaining money by wits, shrewdness, and so on) is valued among lower-class delinquents. On the other hand, "Lower class culture can be characterized as 'non-intellectual' . . . in terms of . . . areas of knowledge imparted by formal educational institutions." Lastly, the positive relationship between age and affiliation may be part of a general process (suggested by Toby, 1957) which stimulates more profound and extensive peer ties as adolescence progresses.

In summary, the correlates of Integration into Prison Primary Groups point vaguely in the direction of the following conclusion: that integration into inmate groups within Glen Mills is preceded less by behavior which indicates a substantial involvement in delinquent activities, as some writers have suggested, than by behavior and attributes which index experience in affiliation with others and a predisposition to become socially attached to them. While this kind of attachment may produce desirable attitudes and behavior on the outside, in Glen Mills it entails the adoption of anti-social perspectives (see Table 2). The "criminalizing" function of integration into inmate groups seems therefore to be independent of its morally neutral sources.

Staff orientation is associated with none of the background variables correlated with the Integration into Prison Primary Groups measurement. Unfavorable orientation is disproportionately characteristic of Negroes, Philadelphia residents, and those born in the county from which they were committed. Poor family relationships and relatively frequent arrests for violent offenses are also associated with unfavorable orientation toward the staff. We believe that the overwhelming predominance of white, small-town houseparents, supervisors, and teachers at Glen Mills may have much to do with the correlations observed. In addition, a history of poor relationships with parents and proclivity for violence may represent a combination of attributes which is difficult for the houseparents and staff to cope with in a congenial way. In brief, the correlations we obtained may indicate an incompatibility between inmate and staff based upon life style, indexed by residence, race, and perhaps personality, particularly as regards aggressiveness. We need only remind ourselves that this incompatibility is more important than an inmates' ties to his peers in the development of his perspectives. It is the way staff rather than other inmates respond to what he brings in from the outside that appears to be most determinative of the inmate's value orientations and behavior within the institution.

Family Contact, which predicts nothing itself, turns out to be the most predictable of the three modes of interaction. Frequency of contact with family is greater among boys residing outside of Philadelphia than inside this city; it is inversely correlated with number of brothers, number of siblings, age rank, truancies, suspensions, and prior commitments. Communication with the outside world, then, seems to be restricted among boys born early into large families from which they have been alienated by reason of prior institutional commitments. The pattern of correlations suggests that, in particular, large, disorganized, Negro ghetto families are those which maintain the least contact with their

imprisoned members. Also, boys who have been frequent truants and often suspended communicate less with their families, recalling the finding of Reckless et al. (1956) that those whom their teachers designated as "good boys" enjoyed more satisfying relationships with their families than did those otherwise defined. This relationship may reflect the reciprocal influence of school performance and family relationships—a principle that may also apply to our data. At any rate, from the standpoint of inmate perspectives, these and prior correlations involving Family Contact are characterizable not in terms of their function but rather by its default (see Table 2).

Table 3 shows that the joint effect of all pre-institutional factors is greater on Family Contact than on the Staff Orientation and Integration into Prison Primary Groups measures: Whereas multiple correlations of .345 and .362 were obtained, respectively, for the latter, a coefficient of .457 is found for the former. This difference is in the direction expected by common sense even though it is not statistically significant. It is only natural that an inmate's status in the outside world should influence his interaction with that world more than it influences interaction or perspective formation within the institution. The past therefore exerts itself most forcefully on that dimension which leads back to itself.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The first question raised is whether inmates' relationships with staff and family exert "direct effects" on inmates perspectives or whether these relationships are merely instrumental to inmate solidarity, through which they exert an "indirect effect" upon perspectives. The latter hypothesis, derivable from both the solidary opposition and cooperation theories, was rejected. Although no family effects appeared,

we discovered that when inmate-staff relations are permitted to compete with inmate-inmate relations as a determinant of inmate perspectives, the former's effect on Criminal Value-Orientation and Conformity to the Inmate Code is almost four times as great as the latter's, and its impact on Peer Identification is equally great. The extent of individual involvement in prison primary groups therefore loses its unproblematic centrality in our conception of the prison influence structure.

Our data show, of course, that staff and peer orientation influence inmate perspectives in opposite ways; favorable relations with the staff tend to promote pro-social or conventional perspectives, and close ties with other inmates produce the opposite effect. These results extend to criminal value-orientation and inmate-peer identification what Wheeler (1961: 705) said about conformity to staff expectations. "Neither in our data nor in the language system of the prison," he wrote, "is there evidence of a category characterized both by conformity to the staff *and* by strong social bonds with other inmates." However, there is evidence in our data of compatibility between strong social bonds with other inmates *and* with staff members. One of the functions of this structural compatibility is to suppress the negative effects of Integration into Prison Primary Groups on the value-orientation and conformity measures to statistical insignificance and thereby alter the inmate-staff influence ratio more in favor of the staff. This finding conforms to those of other investigations which point to inmate-staff conflicts as a prerequisite of negative peer influence. However, inmate-staff compatibility does not markedly reduce inmate influence on Peer Identification which, we presume, rests upon the objective status of "prisoner," whose facticity is least sensitive to the influence of Glen Mills' authorities.

These results may be assumed to be structurally grounded. As a reeducation/development institution, Glen Mills combines characteristics of both custodial and treatment-oriented

organizations. The findings, perhaps, grow out of this dualistic structure. Compatibility between Integration into Prison Primary Groups and favorable Staff Orientation is a feature of the treatment-oriented setting; however, their diametrically opposite effects on perspectives, with Integration into Prison Primary Groups leading to anti-social rather than pro-social perspectives, is a relationship common to custodial institutions. Contradictory organizational tendencies thus find expression in paradoxical patterns of orientation and behavior; two modes of interaction directly related to one another in this particular kind of setting produce opposite effects.

Yet, what happens to an inmate in prison is not to be explained by its organization alone, but also in terms of what he himself brings into that organization. Our data show that by virtue of their different life experiences inmates are variably disposed toward integration into primary groups and favorable orientation toward staff members. Perspectives may therefore be said to develop out of interaction between the tendencies an inmate brings in from the outside and how those tendencies are responded to by peers and authorities. Our data, of course, point to the latter reaction as being by far the most crucial.

Another important point about our findings is that they failed to deny the existence of some functional relationship between integration into primary groups and orientation toward staff. The direct correlation between these two variables suggests that favorable relations with staff might be instrumental to positive peer relations (or vice versa) in a way that admits of the inference of "solidary cooperation." Our data did show, however, that the kinds of social backgrounds inmates bring into the institution exert somewhat more influence. Compared with the correlation between measurements of inmate attitudes toward peers and staff (.232), the joint effect of pre-institutional factors on these same two dimensions are .362 and .345, respectively.

Taken together, the present findings are inconsistent with two main features of the solidary opposition and cooperation theories. First, by demonstrating varying predisposition toward integration into primary groups and toward positive staff orientation, they call into question the tendency to explain social interaction within the prison solely in terms of the organization of the prison itself. Second, by showing relatively inferior effects for the Integration into Prison Primary Groups variable on two of three perspectives, our results cause us to question the theoretical centrality of the inmate primary group in accounts of inmate attitudes and behavior.

#### NOTES

1. To the best of our knowledge, the first use of the term "solidary opposition" to characterize Sykes' and Messinger's formulation was by David Street and his associates (1968: 223).

2. For a complete description of these scales, including their statistical properties, see Schwartz (1970: 299-317). We need now only make a comment about reliability. Because the magnitude of correlation between two measurements is limited by their reliability, and because perfect reliability is never attained for measures such as ours, we must assume that the observed correlation between two variables underestimates their true correlation. However, we raise questions about the *pattern* rather than the magnitude or strength of relationships among certain variables. It is therefore sufficient to say that there are no significant differences in reliability between any of our scaled variables. This means that differences between correlations, and patterns formed by such differences, cannot be attributed to differential measurement error.

3. It may be asserted that in a cross-sectional design such as ours there is no justification for designating modes of interaction as independent variables and inmate perspectives as dependently variable. To reverse this temporal ordering—or to deny that any temporal ordering exists—may seem reasonable.

There is indeed a tendency for persons to associate with those whose attitudes, opinions, and values are similar to their own. It is also true, however, that persons who interact extensively and intensively in their social surroundings tend to internalize the attitudes, opinions, and values that prevail in them. Because this second perspective is the one from which we are working, we must show that the subjects of our investigation are, for the most part, cast together without the operation of a self-selection process.

In Glen Mills, boys are assigned to living, working, and school units (and their supervisors) on the basis of available space and not according to the desires of the boys themselves. They are also assigned by other people (cottage parents, job supervisors, and teachers) to a geographical status within the unit itself. Inmates are therefore fit into the ecology of the institution; they do not fit themselves into it.

Also, as Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1963: 154) have demonstrated, interpersonal contact is more dependent on physical proximity than on initial interpersonal attraction; therefore, contact is for the most part passive or "outside the control of the people to whom it happens." To the extent that such a principle is applicable in our setting, differential association may be assumed to generate the friendships in which attitudes and behavior may be anchored.

Thus, in view of the restrictions on free access (to other persons) that do prevail in Glen Mills, it seems to us that inmate perspectives are far more likely to be attributable to interaction than vice versa. These restrictions seem also to counsel against a functional model where no variable is designated as independent or dependent. The causal model that we have chosen, then, appears to be the most plausible of the three considered.

4. As Stratton (1963: 27-42) correctly pointed out, the inmate's location on dimensions such as these indexes the conventionality or deviance of his chief reference group—that is, it indicates the kind of world he lives in. Thus, we subsume them under the rubric of "inmate perspectives." This term is employed in a somewhat broader way by Street and his associates (1968: 195-220).

5. The partial correlation and regression coefficients reported in this study were computed by the BMD Stepwise Multiple Regression program (Dixon, 1968: 233-257). Dichotomous variables were controlled by expressing their relation to others as biserial correlations. (The biserial is a product-moment correlation.)

6. Glen Mills' regulations permit an unlimited amount of written correspondence as well as monthly visits by the family and furloughs. The questionnaire data show that about 78% of the inmates receive at least one letter a week; 89% write home at least once a week. Only 15% of the respondents report that they have not yet been visited. Glen Mills therefore deviates from Goffman's (1961: 1-124) model of the total institution wherein the inmate is forbidden extensive social intercourse with the outside world.

7. Because of the stepwise entry of variables into the equation according to their correlation with the criterion (partialled on variables already in the equation), it was not possible to obtain uniform regression coefficients. For Peer Identification, the Integration into Prison Primary Groups variable was entered before Staff Orientation; for the other two dependent variables, Staff Orientation was entered first. The use here of partial correlations rather than regression coefficients affects neither the pattern of relationships obtained (they are simply stated in a different measure) nor the conclusions drawn from their analysis.

8. This may not be taken to mean that patterns of correlations would not differ among *institutions* so classified (see Grusky, 1959; Berk, 1966; Street, Vinter, and Perrow, 1968: 222-254).

9. See Irwin and Cressey (1964); for a treatment of this argument as it directly bears on inmate perspectives, see Schwartz (1971).

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