Prisoners' Adjustment, Correctional Officers, and Context: The Foreground and Background of Punishment in Late Modernity

Mike Vuolo   Candace Kruttschnitt

Past research indicates that front-line criminal justice workers are the critical players in determining whether innovations in penal policy are realized. Recent attempts to understand the diversity in the application of the penal harm movement have, however, sidestepped the primary audience of these policies, the population of convicted offenders. This article uses data from two prisons to examine the effects of correctional officers on women prisoners' adjustment to prison life. Using regression models and interview data, we find that correctional officer behavior has a profound impact on women's ability to adjust to prison, and this effect is largely independent of the prisoners' characteristics and the institutions in which they are housed. On a theoretical level, the findings speak to recent calls to examine the background and foreground of penal culture. On a practical level, they highlight the need to understand the environments from which women are emerging, not just the communities into which they are released.

> The way that these people treat us, it's as though emotionally and physically they feel we will never get out of prison, so they can do whatever they want to us. They forget that . . . the way they treat them will be reflect[ed] back on them, because these people, some of them will get out . . . but they don't think about that. And it sounds like a threat, but it's not really a threat. That's just an old saying that goes around prison, because the way that some of these people treat the inmates, you would swear that they think we were rabid dogs or something like that.
>
> (California inmate)

Prisons changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century in this country. Inmate populations expanded; new prisons, including high-security, "super-max" facilities and private prisons were built at an alarming rate; and those who were charged with working in these institutions generally have inadequate

training (Britton 2003; Irwin 2005). Public concern shifted to isolating and managing the "dangerous classes" rather than reforming or helping them to change their ways. While all of this has been well documented and heralded as hallmarks of the "penal harm movement" or the "new penology" (Feeley & Simon 1992), an equally compelling thesis points to an uneven and incomplete transformation in penal policy, one that varies across social contexts and one that reflects criminal justice actors' differential abilities to absorb new ideologies about punishment (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2003:59; Lynch 1998; O'Malley 1992, 1996; Garland 1985, 1990, 1997, 1999). According to Garland, "[t]his ongoing attempt to reorient criminal control institutions and revise their relations to a changing social environment [is] very much a matter of patchwork repairs and interim solutions rather than well thought-out reconstruction" (2001:103).

Some scholars have tried to explain this "patchwork" effect, or the noted variation in the assimilation of the penal harm movement. Simon and Feeley (1995), acknowledging the limitations of their own conceptualization of the "new penology," argue that there is a disjuncture between populist views about crime and criminality and actual penal policies. More recently, Cheliotis (2006) suggests three rationales. First, at the point of implementation of criminal justice policy, the new penology downplays the role of human agency. Second, the new penology ignores the positive potential of managerialism; and third, it misses the continuity between past and contemporary penal features. Notably, Lynch's (2001) research on parole officers in California provides empirical support for two of these hypotheses. Policy initiatives redefined some of the roles of parole officers, including characterizing their job as being more about instrumental needs of the system rather than providing help to their clients. Lynch (1998) demonstrates that while parole officers were aware of these initiatives, they were reluctant to put them into practice. Instead of implementing the "waste manager" role and abandoning notions of transforming parolees' lives, agents continued to take an individualistic and intuitive approach to their clients. Lynch (2001) also vividly shows that the conflict between different discourses, one that continues to tout the importance of rehabilitation and the other that focuses on "coercive control," has important implications for how agents construct the needs and problems of their clients.

Kruttschnitt and Gartner's (2005) study of two women's prisons in California also suggests that penal cultures can be highly resistant to change. While they found evidence of transition in both prison regimes, the older facility retained elements of the rehabilitative era. Further, one of the most visible signs of the uneven application of the postmodern penal era was women's attitudes

toward correctional officers (COs) and their carceral experience. The prisoners generally concurred that rules were applied consistently regardless of the institution in which they were housed; yet their subjective assessment of COs and their own feeling about their institutional lives appeared to vary between prisons.

Given that COs are one of the primary actors in the penal system and the individuals who are directly responsible for implementing new penal policies, they are a critical link in understanding how variations in the penal harm movement are occurring and what they mean for "the most immediate audience for the practical rhetoric of punishment"—the population of convicted offenders (Garland 1990:260). This frame resonates with the various ways in which culture is currently being deployed in the sociology of punishment as the discipline seeks to clarify the relationship between the analytic aspect of penal reforms and the routine encounters of prisoners' lives that give meaning to these reforms (Garland 2006). We draw attention to this distinction between the background of punishment in late modernity and the foreground, or behavioral aspects. Our background consists of two women's prisons, which symbolize very different penal eras, and our foreground is the behavioral consequences of COs on women prisoners' subjective views of their carceral experience.

The Importance of COs

As Garland (1990) argues, any external force, whether law, policy, or culture, which seeks to change penal practices must first transform the local penal culture. "The primary 'bearers' of this penal culture, and the agents who do most to transform cultural conceptions into penal actions, are, of course, the 'operatives' of the penal system—the personnel who staff the courts, the prisons, the probation offices, and the state departments" (Garland 1990:210).

Arguably, COs are the most visible and important connection prisoners have to the outside world. Prisoners' views of how COs implement their job have consequences both for themselves and for the effective running of the institution. As such, this is a site ripe for the investigation of whether the penal harm movement is in fact emerging, yet most of the research on COs is quite outdated (Crouch & Marquart 1980; Duffee 1980; Poole & Regoli 1981; Lombardo 1981; Kauffman 1988) or takes a decidedly occupational focus. Here we are referring to the research that either describes how officers think and feel about their job and whom they work with (Thomas 1972; Jacobs 1978; Lombardo 1981; Kauffman 1988; Herberts 1998; Liebling & Price 1999, 2001; Stojkovic 2003; Crawley 2002), or focuses on the effects of working in an

institution, the occupational culture it instills, and the stress, conflict, anxiety, alienation, and job turnover it induces (e.g., Poole & Regoli 1981; Sharma & Sharma 1989; Walters 1991; Wright 1993; Camp 1994; Triplett et al. 1996; Lancefield et al. 1997).[1] What, however, can be said about the role of COs in implementing the new penal policy and shaping prisoners' perceptions of institutional life?

Sparks and colleagues' (1996) study of how order was maintained in two high-security prisons in England, in the context of the prison service's introduction of "managerialism" and standardization, suggests one answer to this question that resonates with Lynch's (1998) research. They argue that prisons, at least in part, are capable of rebuffing policy initiatives precisely because of the resilience of staff identities and cultures (Sparks et al. 1996:135). While the officers they studied expressed many similarities in core beliefs about what being a "good" or helpful prison officer meant, how this was implemented and how it translated into interactions with prisoners varied between carceral contexts. Operating within the same penal political climate, officers in one prison maintained relatively close relations with prisoners, whereas in the other, they kept their distance. These different styles of control influenced prisoners' relations with staff and their perspectives of prison life.

In the analysis that follows, we bring this research up to the present and expand it to include women prisoners' relations to COs. Although women have been the fastest growing sector of the mass imprisonment movement in this country, they remain an understudied segment of the prison population (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2003). This is unfortunate because women's prisons provide a particularly important site for investigating the changing prison environment. In the heyday of prison sociology, female offenders were viewed as maladjusted, misguided, and in need of treatment (Giallombardo 1966) but not dangerous or fully responsible, agentic actors. Despite media attempts to sensationalize violent female offending, such as "gangsta girls" and crack moms (Gomez 1997; Miller 2001; Morrissey 2003), staff and prison administrators continue to see their charges as criminally immature and more often victims—of abuse and bad relationships—than culpable offenders (see Gartner & Kruttschnitt 2004). Women's prospects for rehabilitation have also always been seen as greater than men's prospects. Even with the demise of rehabilitation, and the movement for gender equity in corrections, claims about women's distinctive life circumstances and special needs have provided considerable continuity in the treatment accorded female prisoners

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[1] More recently, a limited number of autobiographical accounts of prison work by COs have also been published (Dickenson 1999; Conover 2000; Papworth 2000).

(see, e.g., Rafter 1990; Bosworth 2000). These trends, coupled with the frequently noted qualities assigned to female prisoners by COs —they are emotional, manipulative, and impulsive, and they pose relatively little danger (Carlen 1983, 1985, 1998; Pollock 1986; Rasche 2001; Britton 2003)—suggest that a study of women's prisons can provide important insights into the questions of how daily routines and standard arrangements reflect or deflect the recent innovations in penal policy (Garland 2006).

In what follows, we first offer a set of hypotheses explaining why we might expect variation in women's responses to their prison environments contingent on, and net of, their assessment of COs' behavior. Next we present our data, beginning with an explanation for why we believe that California is a particularly poignant example of the emergence of the new penology, followed by a description of the two prisons we studied. We then set out our methods, analyses, and findings. Finally, we discuss the implications of our results for penal theory and practice.

Hypotheses

The theoretical perspective that views the modern culture of punishment as a background causal force that shapes penal routines and specific behavioral practices would predict little variation in COs' behavior and, thus, inmate experiences (Feeley & Simon 1992; Garland 2006). If prisons in California have adopted a managerial character that emphasizes the uniform treatment of offenders within different risk categories, as opposed to the individualization of offenders (Feeley & Simon 1992), we would expect:

> *Hypothesis 1: COs should have no effect on women's perceptions of prison life, regardless of the institution in which they are housed.*

We offer two additional hypotheses that acknowledge Garland's (2006:438–9) recent efforts to integrate culture and conduct, or the practices of interpretation. As other scholars have shown (Lynch 1998; Sparks et al. 1996), attention to the foreground issues of cultural shifts in penality reveal the importance of specific institutional actors in determining whether and how policies are implemented. If policies are filtered through COs who have their own "corporate ethos" (Sparks et al. 1996:134) and, as some argue, considerable power to shape policy (Pens 1998), we would expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2: COs have a significant impact on prisoners' perceptions of prison life, and this will vary across prisons.*

Another way of approaching the behavioral aspects of the current "culture of control" is to acknowledge the "embodied habits of

social actors who have been 'acculturated' to the norms of life in a specific setting" (Garland 2006:433). Contemporary prison guards, like police officers, have a well-developed culture that embodies not only their attitudes and perceptions of "criminals" (Irwin 2005:63–6) but also the gendered nature of corrections. If COs operating in the era of hyper-control have an identified subculture and set of expectations and responses to working with female prisoners (Carlen 1998; Britton 2003), we would expect:

> *Hypothesis 3: Women's perceptions of their carceral lives will be impacted in a similar fashion by COs regardless of where they are imprisoned.*

Data

The Case of California

California's penal policy changed dramatically in the late 1970s as the rehabilitative era came to a close with the passage of the Uniform Determinate Sentencing Act (1976). The declining crime rates over the subsequent decade did little to dampen voters' enthusiasm for law-and-order issues as Californians set into motion a series of bonding bills that fueled the largest prison building initiative in history. Despite the construction of nine new prisons between 1984 and 1989, public concern about crime continued unabated, resulting in the passage of hundreds of bills that created new crimes and lengthened sentences on existing crimes. Faced with detaining and managing thousands of convicted offenders, the state approved a $450 million prison bond to construct 11 additional prisons—including two for women offenders—that opened between 1991 and 1997, further fortifying what Simon (2000) calls the "era of hyper-incarceration" (2000:288).

The California Correctional Peace Officer's Association (CCPOA) grew in size, wealth, and power alongside these developments. In 1980, it had only about 5,600 members, but over the course of the next two decades, the CCPOA joined with the Youth Authority and parole officers. In addition to meeting the needs of the surge in prison building, these combined forces produced a six-fold increase in union membership by 2002, and what is commonly referred to as the "most powerful and influential lobbying group in the state" (Pens 1998:135–6). Their contribution of $101,000 to get Proposition 184, the "Three Strikes" initiative (1994), on the ballot suggests that this reference to their relative political power is more than just rhetoric (Pens 1998; Biewen 2002). Interestingly, then, the California case suggests that COs may not be just the carriers of penal policy but, in part, the architects of it.

The California Institution for Women and Valley State Prison for Women

The two prisons in our study mirror the distinctive shifts that occurred in California's penal policy over the course of the twentieth century. The California Institution for Women (CIW) is the oldest prison for women in the state, opening its doors to female offenders in 1952, during the height of the rehabilitative era. Today, despite the addition of a fence and guard towers, it still retains the campus-style architecture and atmosphere of this era in corrections. The prison was designed to hold 900 women, but when we conducted our research it housed almost 1,800; all women were double-bunked in cells designed to hold only one prisoner. Reflecting both the growth in the inmate population and the CO union, custody and support staff services grew from 200 in the 1960s to 600 in the mid-1990s. While this meant that COs were more varied in their prior work experience and training than they had been in the past, a number of the correctional staff had spent their entire careers at CIW. By contrast, Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW), our second research site, was opened in 1995, and it reflects the iconography of the new penal era with a modular design and extensive perimeter security. Despite being a recent addition to the California Department of Correction's prison portfolio, VSPW also suffered from extreme overcrowding. At the time we conducted our research, it was the largest prison for women in the world; the prison held close to 3,500 women, and cells that were supposed to house four women contained eight. While VSPW had a slightly higher ratio of prisoners to staff than CIW (roughly 4:1 vs. 3:1), the COs at VSPW tended to be younger and more recent graduates of the state's training academy compared to COs at CIW.

These structural differences also reflect differences in the culture of the two institutions, but as noted elsewhere, these differences were a matter of degree rather than kind (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2005). Prisoners' perceptions of staff and other inmates, while generally distrustful, were patterned by the distinctions in these two carceral experiences. At VSPW, the prison that best captures the elements of the new penology, women were particularly disaffected and isolated despite conditions of extreme overcrowding (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2005). At CIW, an institution that retains elements of the maternal-rehabilitative regime of the past, women's reactions to the prison were more likely to reflect their individual experiences.

However, even with these institutional differences, it is important to remember the larger underlying similarities of the life of these two institutions working within the California Department of Corrections (CDC) at the end of the twentieth century. Core

features of women's daily lives—wearing uniforms, eating prison food, programming,[2] being subject to multiple counts throughout the day, and having telephone calls and mail monitored—were governed by Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations.

Data Collection

Interviews with 73 women prisoners (35 at CIW and 38 at VSPW) formed the basis for the development of a survey that was completed by 1,821 prisoners in two women's prisons between 1995 and 1998. Interviewed prisoners were selected at random from lists of the entire prison populations that were dichotomized on length of time served.[3]

Administering the prison surveys required a method that was tailored somewhat to the individual needs of each prison. As documented elsewhere (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2005: Chapter 3), this produced very different response rates. At CIW, where we were allowed to individually distribute and collect the surveys, and where the women were locked in to complete the surveys, we had a relatively high response rate (72 percent). At VSPW, by contrast, the correctional staff oversaw the administration of the surveys after we had left the institution for the day; here we had a notably lower response rate (37 percent).[4] Nevertheless, the women completing the surveys were generally representative of their respective prison populations (see Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2005:56). The survey respondents in both prisons slightly overrepresent women convicted of person offenses and underrepresent women convicted of drug law violations. In addition, these data slightly underrepresent African Americans and overrepresent women of "other" racial categories,[5] relative to their actual representation in the prison populations from which they were drawn. The overrepresentation of women in the "other" racial category is due to women self-identifying multiple racial origins on the survey as opposed to adopting the racial category the CDC assigns them.

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[2] Programming refers to prisoners' daily activities. Prisoners could earn credit for "good time" if they stayed actively engaged in the prisons' educational classes, work assignments, and other related offerings.

[3] We wanted to ensure that we talked with women who were both "old-timers" (those women who had served five or more years on their current sentence) and recently admitted to prison (those who were admitted on their current sentence within the last six months).

[4] See Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005:54–5) for an explication of the possible reasons for these different response rates.

[5] The survey data category *other* includes Native Americans, Asians, and women who only indicated that they are of mixed racial origin.

Methods

Our outcome variable was a scale that measures how difficult it is for inmates to adjust to various aspects of their prison life: rules, other inmates, lack of privacy, absence of home and family, lack of outside social life, food, medical care, lack of programs,[6] and overcrowding. While we cannot determine these prisoners' actual levels of adjustment to prison life, their perceptions about any difficulties they have in these particular domains have been, and remain, important indicators of adjustment (Adams 1992:284–5; Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2003).[7] Further, as noted previously, adjustment to the carceral experience is an important but understudied aspect of the new penology, and we suspect that COs may be a critical component of this process (Rhodes 2004).

Each question asked how difficult it was to adjust to a particular aspect of prison life, with the possible responses being "not at all difficult," "a little difficult," "difficult," "very difficult," and "extremely difficult," with the responses being valued from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "not at all difficult" and 5 represents "extremely difficult." Thus higher values on the scale represent increased difficulty adjusting to prison life. Respondents were only included in the scale if they responded to all nine items. The scale had a range of 9 to 45 and a mean value of 31.54. Overall, this adjustment scale demonstrated moderate reliability ($\alpha = 0.77$; DeVellis 2003).[8] The descriptive statistics for this response variable and all variables in our analysis are shown in Table 1.

The analysis includes two types of variables consistent with the empirical literature on female inmate adjustment: background characteristics and criminal justice experiences. In the case of the former, studies show that that women who are young, are non-

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[6] Examples include vocational, substance use, anger management, and parenting programs.

[7] Our focus is not on the concept of prisonization or misconduct, which has an unknown relationship with adjustment (Adams 1992), although we do control for the effect of these variables in our analyses. In assessing inmates' adjustment, ideally we would also want to know their mental state prior to entering prison. While we did not have access to this information, we attempted to address this issue by controlling for their self-reported pre-institutional mental health in our models.

[8] A reviewer questioned whether perceived self-adjustment to prison is a valid measure of overall perceptions of prison life. Our measure of adjustment taps virtually all the critical aspects of prison life (the rules, other inmates, food, medical care, programs, privacy, etc). Taken together, these items reflect what is both physically and emotionally critical in living in an institutional setting. Further, to the extent that they constitute a valid indicator of adjustment, we would expect that they would have some relationship to another measure in our survey that reflects how bad doing time has been relative to what the prisoners expected. These measures were correlated in the expected direction, such that those who had difficulty adjusting also found prison worse than they expected ($r = 0.380$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Tests for Differences and Associations between Prisons

Variable	Mean for VSPW (St. Dev.)	Mean for CIW (St. Dev.)	Overall Mean (St. Dev.)
Background characteristics			
Age	34.34	29.61	35.02*
	(6.49)	(7.31)	(7.80)
Ethnicity: white	0.42	0.45	0.44
Ethnicity: black	0.26	0.28	0.27
Ethnicity: Latino	0.16	0.14	0.15
Ethnicity: other	0.16	0.13	0.15
Child under 18	0.72	0.68	0.70
Education	5.01	5.02	5.01
	(1.04)	(1.03)	(1.03)
Had job	0.37	0.36	0.36
Received welfare	0.74	0.71	0.73
Homeless at arrest	0.07	0.07	0.07
Drug abuse	0.80	0.78	0.79
Prior mental health prescription	0.22	0.21	0.22
Criminal justice experience			
Friend been to prison	0.78	0.73	0.75
Years on priors (Log)	1.02	0.95	0.99
	(0.88)	(0.79)	(0.84)
Number of prisons (Log)	0.65	0.65	0.65
	(0.70)	(0.66)	(0.68)
Months on current sentence (Log)	2.67	2.89	2.78*
	(0.87)	(1.26)	(1.07)
Life sentence	0.17	0.12	0.15*
v115s (Log)	0.40	0.42	0.41
	(0.70)	(0.72)	(0.71)
Custody level: 1	0.46	0.56	0.51[#]
Custody level: 2	0.23	0.16	0.19[#]
Custody level: 3	0.16	0.08	0.12[#]
Custody level: 4	0.11	0.08	0.10[#]
Custody level: Don't know	0.04	0.12	0.08[#]
Offense: violent	0.35	0.32	0.31
Offense: drug	0.29	0.34	0.36
Offense: other	0.37	0.34	0.33
Used drug in prison	0.22	0.18	0.20
No control over day-to-day life	0.62	0.45	0.54*
Have close friends in prison	0.89	0.89	0.89
Homosexual activity	0.38	0.40	0.39
Prison			
CIW	—	—	0.47
VSPW	—	—	0.53
CO experiences			
CO helped	0.40	0.59	0.49*
COs treat work as just a job	0.85	0.78	0.82*
COs go by the rulebook	0.43	0.52	0.47*
New COs write up everything	0.92	0.91	0.91
Dependent variable			
Adjusting difficulty scale	33.24	29.61	31.54*
	(6.49)	(7.31)	(7.12)

*$p < 0.05$ for t-test (continuous and dichotomous variables) between prisons.
\#$p < 0.05$ for χ^2-test of independence (categorical variables) between prisons.

white, come from an urban background, are single with no children, have prior institutional experience, and have been convicted of a violent crime or a drug crime tend to score higher on traditional indicators of male adaptation, such as prisonization, opposition to staff, and misbehavior (Jensen & Jones 1976; Alpert et al.

1977; Jensen 1977; Faily & Roundtree 1979; Zingraff & Zingraff 1980; Kruttschnitt 1981; Mandaraka-Sheppard 1986; Bondeson 1989). In addition, many qualitative studies of, and government reports on, female inmates draw attention to the role that women's economic marginality and their substance abuse and mental health problems play in their adjustment to prison and life thereafter (Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2003).

Besides these background variables, scholars also draw attention to the effects of sentence length, time served, and time left to serve on women's adjustment to prison. The effects of these variables on carceral adjustment are, however, somewhat inconsistent (Tittle 1969; Jensen & Jones 1976; Alpert et al. 1977; Kruttschnitt 1981; Mawby 1982; Mandaraka-Sheppard 1986; Bondeson 1989; Craddock 1996). The perception that one has relatively little control over the prison environment has also been shown to be a recurrent obstacle to successful adjustment to prison (Ruback & Carr 1984; Ruback et al. 1986).

With a continuous outcome variable, we used linear regression models to predict inmate adjustment. We only included variables in our models that had a significant bivariate relationship with inmate adjustment according to preliminary linear regression models (not shown). The covariates that had significant bivariate relationships with adjustment were operationalized as follows.[9] Economic marginality was measured with a dummy variable for having a job at arrest, having received welfare, and having been homeless at the time of arrest, as well as a seven-item ordinal measure of education. Family background was measured with a dummy variable indicating whether a woman had a child younger than 18. Histories of substance abuse and mental health problems were measured using dummy variables for drug abuse and whether the respondent had received any prescriptions for mental health problems prior to incarceration. Finally, we included as controls age and race. Race was measured with four categories: white, black, Latino, and other.

In terms of criminal justice experience, we first included variables indicative of the women's prior carceral experiences. These measures included the number of prisons they had been housed in and the total number of years they had been incarcerated on prior commitments. Sentence length and time served are clearly important according to the literature, but given the proportion of women

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[9] Several variables did not have significant bivariate relationships with adjustment. These variables were marital status, alcohol abuse, U.S. nativity, having lived in a treatment facility, whether they have self-harmed prior to their sentence, whether any family members have been to prison, whether they were incarcerated as a minor, whether they have participated in any programs, whether they felt they were "in the mix," and whether they believe they have a "prison family." These predictors were also checked for interactions with prison and CO behavior.

serving life sentences in our sample (14 percent), quantifying this concept is difficult. In an attempt to get at both concepts, we included a measure for time served on current sentence and a dummy variable for a life sentence. We also included three dummy variables for offense of conviction—violent, drug, or other offense —with violent offenses serving as the baseline category. Several variables also measured a woman's involvement in prison culture: the number of disciplinary actions she had, whether she had used drugs in prison, whether she had any close friends in prison, whether she had been involved in any homosexual activity, and her perception of the amount of control she had over her daily life.[10] Because prison adjustment may be affected by having close friends incarcerated together, we also included such an indicator in our analyses. Finally, we used a five-category measure for custody level (levels 1 through 4 and a category for "don't know"). A dummy variable indicated the prison where the respondent was incarcerated, with VSPW as the baseline.

We included four indicators of COs' behavior. These measures assessed whether the COs take a strictly security-driven, managerial approach to their job, indicative of the new penology, or whether they maintain a more individualistic approach toward inmates. First, the survey asked respondents to indicate if COs and staff had ever been helpful in any of the following respects: "listened to my problems," "gave good advice," "increased my self-esteem," "treated me with respect," and "kept me out of trouble."' If the prisoner responded yes to any of the above questions, we assumed that the COs provided some tangible assistance to the prisoner. Thus the variable "CO helped" was created by giving respondents a score of 1 if they responded yes to any of these items and a score of 0 if they indicated they received no help on each of these items.[11] As shown in Table 1, almost 50 percent of the respondents indicated they received at least some support from COs. The second and third measures asked inmates if they agreed that COs treated their work as "just a job" (82 percent agreed) and if COs usually "go by the rulebook" (47 percent agreed). Finally, women were asked how annoying they felt it was that new and inexperienced COs wrote up every infraction. Ninety-one percent of inmates found this aspect of prison annoying.[12]

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[10] Number of years on priors, number of prisons and disciplinary actions, and months served on current sentence were all skewed. As a result, these variables were logged in the analyses.

[11] We also ran the models with this variable as a simple additive scale. While the results were similar, we chose the indicator variable due to the skewed nature of the scale.

[12] As with the "CO helped" variable, we chose to dichotomize these measures of COs because they were skewed and it is unclear if one-unit increases across response categories represent equal values.

With the exception of new COs writing up every infraction, the two prisons differed significantly on the measures of CO behavior in ways consistent with their histories and cultures, according to *t*-tests as shown in Table 1 ($p < 0.001$). At CIW, the oldest prison for women, roughly 61 percent of respondents indicated that COs helped them in some way, while only 39 percent of the prisoners at VSPW, the prison that grew up in the new penal era, acknowledged receiving help from COs. These prison-based discrepancies were somewhat less obvious in the case of whether prisoners thought that the COs treated their work as "just a job": at CIW, 77 percent of the inmates agreed with this statement, whereas at VSPW 86 percent agreed. Finally, in terms of perceived fairness of COs' actions, 54 percent of the women at CIW agreed that COs went by the rulebook, while only 45 percent felt this way at VSPW. According to analysis of variance models, these indicators of CO behavior had a significant effect on women prisoners' ability to adjust to carceral life ($p < 0.001$). Inmates who received no help from COs, who believed that COs viewed their work as just a job, who thought COs did not go by the rulebook, and who believed that new COs wrote up everything had significantly more difficulty adjusting to prison.[13]

In regression models, we also explored interaction effects between CO behavior and the offenders' characteristics and between offenders' characteristics and the prison. While the prior literature points to the importance of the prison context in shaping prison officers' attitudes toward their job (Sparks et al. 1996), we also anticipated that women offenders' life experiences are important determinants of their reactions and responses to COs (see Kruttschnitt et al. 2000). After these variables were entered into nested models, we retained 62 percent of the sample due to missing values. This subset of the sample was generally very similar to the entire sample on all our predictors and the response variable. Finally, we note that we supplemented our statistical findings with interview data when the information provided by the prisoners shed light on the empirical results.

Findings

The results of the linear regression models are shown in Table 2. Background characteristics, criminal justice experience, prison,

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[13] In addition to CO behavior influencing perceptions of carceral experiences, another interpretation of this relationship could be that COs provide preferential treatment to inmates who are already better adjusted. Other recent research supports the former interpretation. This research found that CO help had no effect on measures of mental health among the same sample of California inmates (Kruttschnitt & Vuolo 2007), indicating that COs do not specifically target better- (or worse-) adjusted inmates for help.

Table 2. Linear Regression of Inmate Adjustment Difficulty

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.
(Constant)	27.763***	(1.713)	23.263***	(2.026)	25.646***	(1.978)	24.269***	(2.047)	20.353***	(3.696)
Age	0.051	(0.030)	0.013	(0.031)	0.025	(0.030)	0.033	(0.030)	0.030	(0.029)
Ethnicity: black vs. white	0.934	(0.540)	1.017	(0.523)	0.959	(0.505)	0.950	(0.490)	1.043*	(0.487)
Ethnicity: Latino vs. white	2.335***	(0.668)	2.173***	(0.632)	2.037***	(0.611)	1.563**	(0.596)	1.427*	(0.592)
Ethnicity: other vs. white	1.694**	(0.657)	1.341*	(0.624)	1.129	(0.604)	1.094	(0.586)	1.163*	(0.581)
Child under 18	-1.090*	(0.543)	-0.658	(0.514)	-0.524	(0.497)	-0.526	(0.481)	-0.560	(0.477)
Education	0.530*	(0.224)	0.573**	(0.213)	0.491*	(0.206)	0.375	(0.201)	1.239	(0.649)
Had job	1.194*	(0.477)	1.109*	(0.449)	1.039*	(0.434)	0.829*	(0.422)	0.872*	(0.419)
Received welfare	-0.228	(0.546)	0.113	(0.519)	-0.074	(0.502)	0.216	(0.488)	0.249	(0.484)
Homeless at arrest	-1.445	(0.868)	-0.596	(0.818)	-0.599	(0.791)	-0.272	(0.768)	-0.229	(0.760)
Drug abuse	-1.394*	(0.570)	-0.526	(0.595)	-0.442	(0.575)	-0.674	(0.558)	-0.481	(0.554)
Prior mental health prescription	0.797	(0.525)	0.758	(0.494)	0.745	(0.478)	0.684	(0.464)	0.708	(0.461)
Friend been to prison			0.130	(0.530)	0.095	(0.513)	-0.027	(0.498)	-0.113	(0.496)
Years on priors (Log)			0.133	(0.344)	0.032	(0.333)	-0.048	(0.323)	-0.053	(0.320)
Number of prisons (Log)			0.130	(0.417)	0.324	(0.404)	0.389	(0.392)	0.345	(0.389)
Months on current sentence (Log)			1.240***	(0.265)	1.404***	(0.257)	1.319***	(0.251)	1.353***	(0.249)
Life sentence			0.305	(0.790)	-0.378	(0.768)	0.075	(0.749)	0.129	(0.743)
v115s (Log)			0.762*	(0.360)	0.864*	(0.349)	0.778*	(0.341)	0.817*	(0.339)
Custody level: 2 vs. 1			0.475	(0.545)	-0.404	(0.530)	-0.349	(0.516)	-1.471*	(0.684)
Custody level: 3 vs. 1			-0.151	(0.687)	-1.096	(0.673)	-1.037	(0.653)	-1.913*	(0.860)
Custody level: 4 vs. 1			-0.289	(0.794)	-1.102	(0.774)	-1.060	(0.750)	-2.975***	(0.930)
Custody level: DK vs. 1			-1.837*	(0.779)	-1.262	(0.756)	-0.665	(0.736)	0.064	(1.117)
Offense: drug vs. violent			-0.732	(0.768)	-1.355	(0.746)	-1.380	(0.726)	-1.397	(0.723)
Offense: other vs. violent			-1.108	(0.757)	-1.667*	(0.735)	-1.389	(0.716)	-1.359	(0.712)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Used drug in prison		0.794 (0.575)	0.520 (0.557)	0.394 (0.540)	0.444 (0.536)
No control over day-to-day life		3.665*** (0.409)	3.076*** (0.401)	2.460*** (0.398)	2.493*** (0.396)
Have close friends in prison		−1.147 (0.657)	−1.221 (0.635)	−1.044 (0.619)	−1.022 (0.613)
Homosexual activity		−0.169 (0.486)	−0.098 (0.470)	−0.193 (0.459)	−0.187 (0.455)
Prison: CIW vs. VSPW			−3.511*** (0.414)	−3.086*** (0.406)	−2.976*** (0.403)
CO helped				−1.858*** (0.417)	−5.827** (1.890)
COs treat work as just a job				1.570** (0.523)	1.494** (0.521)
COs go by the rulebook				−1.139** (0.391)	−2.176*** (0.533)
New COs write up everything				2.461*** (0.692)	9.451** (3.232)
CO helped * Education					0.785* (0.368)
CO write up * Education					−1.404* (0.628)
CO rulebook * Custody level 2					2.355* (1.008)
CO rulebook * Custody level 3					1.721 (1.219)
CO rulebook * Custody level 4					4.585*** (1.340)
CO rulebook * Custody level DK					−0.837 (1.452)
R^2	0.062	0.199	0.252	0.300	0.319

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

perceptions of CO behavior, and significant interactions are sequentially added, producing five models. The addition of each set of variables improves the fit of the models. Before discussing specific effects, we examine mediating effects across our nested models.[14] Adding criminal justice experience measures in Model 2 mediates the effect of past drug abuse and having a child under 18. In Model 3, we see that when the prison is included in the analyses, being white, as opposed to having a mixed racial heritage or being of Asian descent, and having a minimum custody level or being unsure of one's custody level have no effect on adjustment. Finally, we also find that our measures of CO behavior (added in Model 4) mediate the effects of conviction for a violent offense and conviction for a nonviolent or nondrug offense on adjustment. These findings suggest that many personal attributes and experiences thought to affect prison adjustment are, in reality, linked to the type of prison in which a woman is housed and her interactions with COs. The importance of these two covariates is further underscored by examining the amount of variance we can explain in prison adjustment across these different models. Inmates' demographic and background characteristics (Model 1) and their criminal justice experiences (Model 2) only explain, respectively, 6 and 20 percent of the variance in prison adjustment. Yet our final model, which includes indicators of where the inmates are incarcerated and their perceptions of CO behavior, explains almost one-third (32 percent) of the variance in adjustment.

The first significant background characteristic is ethnicity. According to Model 5, blacks, Latinos, and "other" ethnicities all have significantly less difficulty adjusting to prison than whites. While it might be tempting to ascribe this racial difference in adjustment to differences in prior experience with the criminal justice system, our analysis takes account of this potential distinction between white inmates and inmates of color by controlling for such experiences. A more likely explanation is white women's simple lack of knowledge about, and familiarity with, minority cultures and the discomfort they may feel in becoming the minority racial group in this context (see, e.g., Anderson 1990). One white prisoner described it to us this way:

> They are all black. I don't understand; white women are the minority here. Although in . . . society [it] seems like, you know, we're not the minority but in here we are. And we have little

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[14] Several of the variables in our models were highly correlated. Therefore, we ran the models removing highly collinear terms one at a time; the magnitude of the coefficients of the remaining terms were similar, and no new terms became significant. In addition, an analysis of residuals showed that this model satisfies assumptions of normality and constant variance.

consideration. We are not allowed to form organizations in here, but every ethnic in here has an organization for their ethnic [group] but whites. I understand what their method of thinking is, to a degree, but I feel my limitations there, as being white. So I feel that I have to be careful how I walk . . . . and that's where I feel my threat is . . . It's just where the state is at and I feel threatened by that.

The only other background characteristic that has a significant effect on adjustment is having employment at the time of arrest: those who had a job when they were arrested have more difficulty adjusting to prison life than inmates who were unemployed. While this effect could be tapping social class differences in adjustment (with those working having more income), it may also reflect the lack of work experience some women had prior to coming to prison and the clear benefits they feel they have gained from their prison jobs. Consider, for example, the following prisoner's description of how her prison job shaped her views of her prison life:

> Yeah, you know the good thing about it, it gives me structure. I'm working; OK, I get up at 5:30 every morning. I work from 7 to 3 every day, five days a week, plus I go to classes twice a week, and I have my schedule . . . You're on the streets before you came in here, you were just on the streets running amuck, OK. This gives you a little bit of substance and [a] little bit of stability. Well maybe if I can do it in here, I'm sure I can do it out there.

Women's prior and current criminal justice experiences represent the remaining main effects. Both the number of months served on the current sentence and the number of disciplinary actions received impact prison adjustment. As time served increases and as the number of rule infractions increase, women's adjustment to prison becomes more strained. Other carceral experiences also shape women's ability to adjust to prison life. Relative to those who feel that they have some control over their daily lives, those who believe they have no control have more difficulty adjusting to prison. Two inmates at CIW expressed it to us this way: the first described, with some pride, the control she feels and the influence it has on her interactions with COs and other prisoners.

> I believe that I have mastered my environment, for lack of a better term. Sometimes I'm amazed at how outrageous I get, because I will walk up to people and say the darndest things. On the other hand, I usually know when it's all right to do that. I taught myself that . . . . I am so used to people treating me like a real person, and I'm not, I guess I'm not used to being treated like an infant. I'm not used to being hassled, and all the time that I've been here, cops have always said to me, "You don't act like you're an inmate." Inmates have always said, "You don't act like an inmate." To this day, people will say to me, they'll ask me "Are

you an inmate?" . . . And somehow or another, I don't have the consciousness that I'm an inmate. I know I am. I'm proud of it. Which is strange, you know, but I am, because I survived it.

By contrast, the second prisoner expressed considerable frustration at not being able to do even the simplest daily tasks without acceding to someone else's authority.

OK, my rights as an individual; I don't have that here because I'm decided upon. What time I have to get up in the morning; what time I have to program; what time I eat; what time I have to shower; what time I have to be locked back in my room, you know. It's a constant thing every day, you know, and . . . it's hard adjusting to that. It took me a long time to get used to that, you know, somebody telling me, you know, you got to go lock in at this time, and you can't wear this. I've never been in [a place] where so many individuals had control over me. You know, I've always been in control of my own self; you know I made my own decisions. Now I have to make decisions according to these people who's over me [*sic*] as far as authority figures, you know, and you have to watch what you say and how you say it, you know, because the least little thing out of context; they'll write you up about it.

Finally, the prison itself also has a significant effect on adjustment. All else remaining constant, inmates at CIW have an easier time adjusting to prison life than inmates at the more custodial VSPW. This effect is not surprising in light of our interviews. As two women at CIW described:

This place reminds me of a college campus at times, when I can drift far enough . . . . When my mind will let me drift far enough away, I can sit out there in the grass as if I'm sitting out at the park. The minute the guard blows the horn it's all over.
It's such a relief to be able to walk around, and you almost feel like, you almost feel like you have freedom again in this place because of the campus atmosphere and . . . they put all the long-termers in close custody. You have freedom during the day, you can work and whatever, but at four o'clock every day, you're locked back in your unit. You still can go around the unit, but . . . if you compare it to RC [reception center] and jail, there's a lot of freedom in this place.

Since our other predictors of adjustment could be conditioned by the prison context and there is evidence of bivariate relationships as shown by the *t*-test and χ^2-test results in Table 1, we ran interactions with prison. Models were run with just the main and interaction effects for each variable. Those that were significant were subsequently added to the full model one at a time. No interaction with prison maintained its significance when added to the full model. Therefore, the effect of demographic and background

characteristics and criminal justice experiences on adjustment is not conditioned by where the inmate is imprisoned.

The prisoners' perceptions of CO behavior represent the final set of variables. These variables are all statistically significant and indicate that CO behavior has a strong effect on women prisoners' adjustment. From Model 4, we see that those who receive no help from COs, who believe that COs treat their work as if it is just a job, who feel that COs do not go by the rulebook, and those who believe that new COs write up everything have the most difficult time adjusting. One inmate described how important it is for COs to go by the book, as it sets the tone for her living unit.

> If your housing officers are fair, by the book, and you know this here, that unit is more relaxed than an officer that comes in and throws his power around, the control . . . . You can tell the big difference [in] those inmates of that unit.

Other inmates reacted to how some COs do not help and do not care about the prisoners as individuals, but rather view their role as just a job for them:

> They don't holler at us. Like a lot of the staff that's in other units, I've noticed they talk to the women's [*sic*] with no respect. They demand all respect, and they yell a lot and . . . [it's] always no's and they don't care. Like if you have a docket for instance, hey I have a docket at nine o'clock. Oh well, you just wait until I get there you know?
> You do have some officers that because they have a badge they're . . . they have the attitude . . . they don't treat [you] as human, you know? You're just another inmate. You're a piece of dirt. Then you have those that have been involved in the CDC system for years that work with men, that worked with women that give you respect if . . . if it's given to them. They don't um . . . they don't push the power of authority on you.

We also explored the possibility that CO behavior would interact with women's backgrounds and prior experiences. We found that three interactions with CO behavior are significant when added to the full model, and they remain significant when all interactions are in one model (Model 5). We found interactions between going by the rulebook and custody level, COs' help and an inmate's education level, and COs writing everything up and education level. Since these interaction effects can be difficult to interpret based only on the coefficients in Table 2, we include figures of the three interactions and discuss them in this context. These figures show the predicted value for these interaction effects holding the other predictors constant at their respective means.

Figure 1 shows the interactions between custody level and whether the inmate agrees that COs go by the rulebook. There is
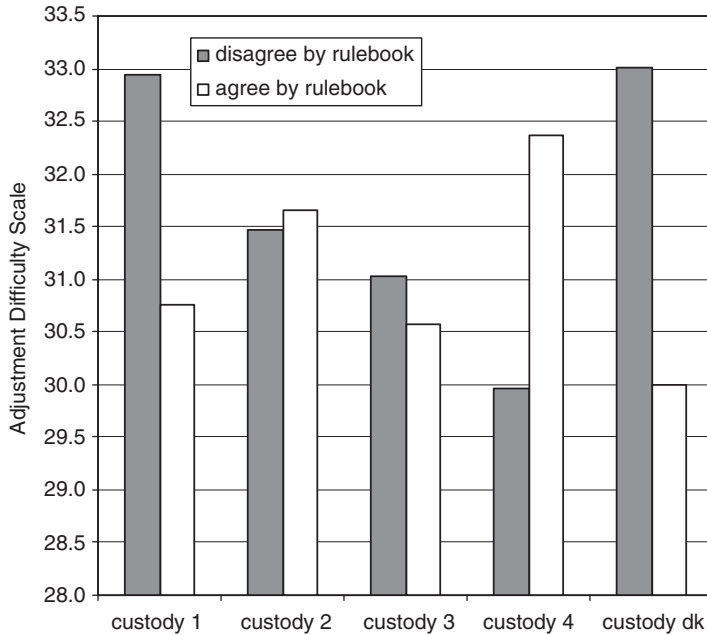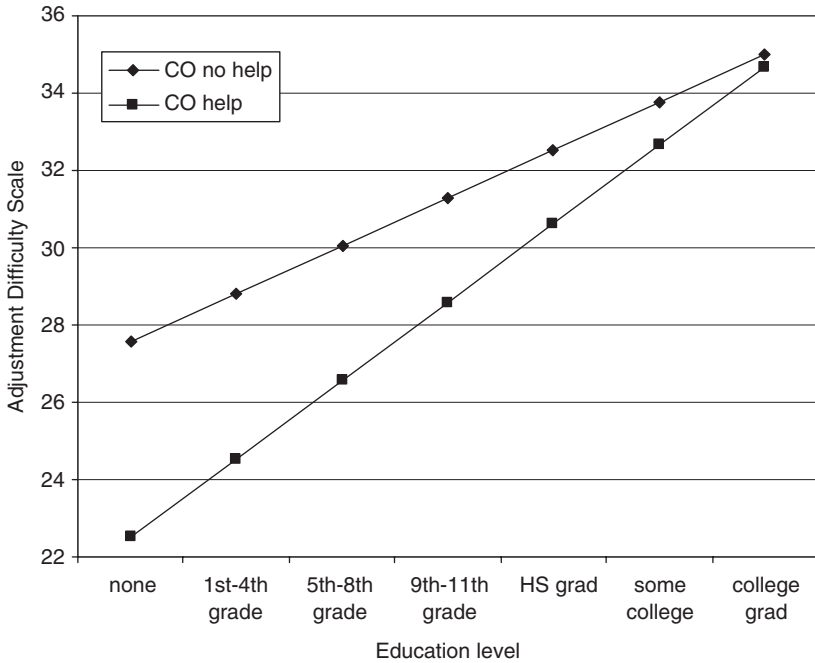
Figure 1. Interaction between COs Go by the Rulebook and Custody Level.

relatively little effect of whether COs go by the rulebook in the middle two custody levels. For women in minimum custody (and for those who do not know their custody level[15]), consistency in the application of rules appears to make life easier, and inconsistency makes "programming," or an inmate's daily routine, unpredictable. As one minimum-security prisoner explained it to us:

> I think they're too lax sometimes as far as letting things go. They'll enforce go[ing] to eat, gotta have your ID or go back to your unit and get it. That lasted a whole week; well actually technically everybody is supposed to have your ID on you at all time[s] anyway. But a lot of people sometimes don't have them on and they make you go back and get it. They just don't follow through; they only follow through for a little bit of the time, and then the programs fall apart and break down and it just continues to break down.

By contrast, at the highest custody level (level 4), we see the opposite effect: those agreeing that COs go by the rulebook have a

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[15] Women who do not know their assigned custody level likely occupy the least-restrictive custody level (level 1), because women in more secure custody levels have restrictions on how much time they get outside their cells and the amount of contact they can have with outsiders. These aspects of confinement are quite apparent to those who are subjected to them.

Figure 2. Interaction between Education and CO Help.

more difficult time adjusting. So while at the lowest level of custody, consistency according to the rulebook among COs is highly valued in terms of adjustment, at the highest custody level, this unwavering strictness may add insult to injury in the form of increased strictness in an already punitive environment.

The interactions with education are shown in Figures 2 and 3. In Figure 2, we can see that adjustment difficulty increases as an inmate's level of education rises, regardless of whether the inmate perceives COs as being helpful. However, this relationship is particularly attenuated for those who view COs as being unhelpful. In Figure 3, we see education as having somewhat of a similar impact on adjustment, but this relationship only appears for women who do not find COs writing women up for every infraction they see annoying. By contrast, for the inmates who find this behavior annoying, adjustment is poor, regardless of education level. What these interactions seem to suggest, then, is that while an inmate's education is an important part of the picture in determining her ability to adjust to prison life, the degree to which COs are helpful and attend to "rules and regulations" has an important effect on determining how an educational advantage or disadvantage will play out. Perhaps this is because more-educated women have a very different understanding of staff-inmate relations than
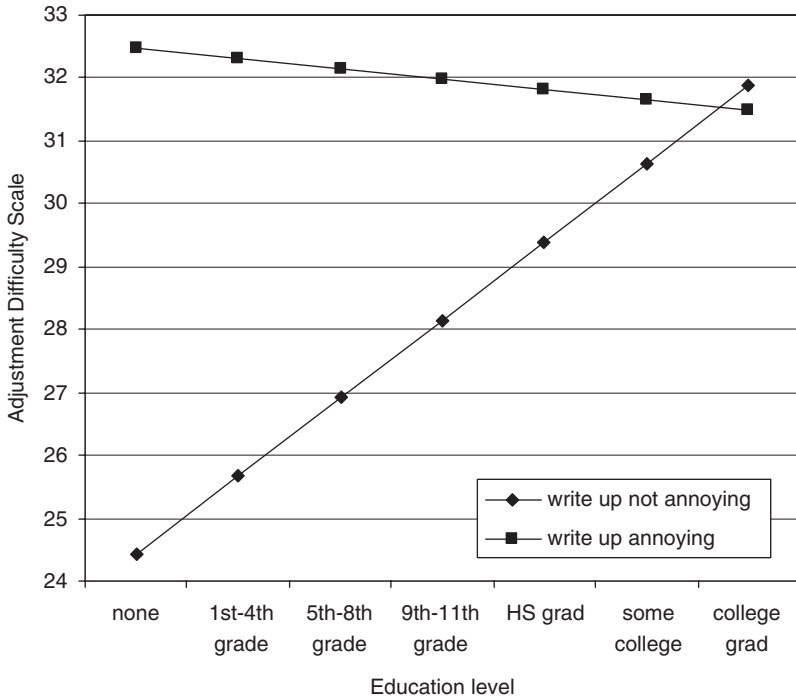
Figure 3. Interaction between Education and COs Write Up Everything.

less-educated prisoners. Consider, for example, the extremely perceptive depiction this college-educated prisoner provided concerning what it is like trying to adjust to the demands of prison life and the place of COs in institutional life.

> You have to understand that . . . it takes a lot of patience and a lot of time, and a lot of diligence to choose your issues very carefully because you can't take on the "I didn't get a cookie" and "my clothes don't fit" and "this isn't right" and "that isn't right" and "how can they live," well none of it's right, but it is. It's a bunch of humans who don't know any more than you know about what they're doing. And they're trying to just keep their own stuff straight. They're in this just like we are. This staff will do far more prison time than I will . . . . They're victims also . . . . They fight and complain, and argue, and go at each other just like the inmates do.

Perhaps most notable is the lack of an interaction between any of the variables representing CO behavior and prison. Thus net of our other variables, there is no difference between prisons in the way CO behavior affects adjustment. This finding lends support to our third hypothesis, that women's adjustment to prison is

impacted in a similar fashion by COs regardless of where they are imprisoned.

Discussion

We began by noting that while the hallmarks of a "new penology" or postmodern penal movement have been carefully conceptualized and, at least, partially documented, they have also been questioned, most notably by those who have examined sites of implementation. Here the findings suggest that while some elements of the penal harm movement are flourishing, as evidenced by increases in managerialism, bureaucratization, and risk management (Adler & Longhurst 1994; Irwin & Austin 1994; Sparks et al. 1996; Simon 1993), others are perhaps best described as floundering. Those who have examined how the microprocesses that characterize these systemwide changes are being implemented find an uneven application of these new principles and practices (Haney 1996; Lynch 1998; Sparks et al. 1996). These studies resonate with the theories of Garland (1997, 1990) and others (O'Malley 1992, 1999; Cheliotis 2006) who argue that we need to examine the diversity and incoherence of current penal regimes and the ways that crime prevention policies and penal histories incorporate programs from different eras in an uneven and negotiated fashion.

This study contributes to this line of research as it examines how the most immediate recipients of penal policy—convicted offenders—are faring in light of a prison environment that now prioritizes truth-in-sentencing, security and classification, and responsibilization (O'Malley 1992, 1996) over rehabilitation. Specifically, focusing on the role of COs as conduits for the new policies, we tested three hypotheses. The first, in line with a strict constructionist interpretation of the new penology, suggests that COs will have little or no effect on women's prison experiences as the CDC strives to ensure uniformity in the rules and regulations guiding all of its institutions. The second and third hypotheses are driven both by prior research on "front-line" workers that draws attention to the incomplete transformation in penal policy and by Garland's (2006) recent attention to the way different levels of culture operate in the sociology of punishment. Here we reasoned that, on the one hand, COs could have a large effect on prisoners' experiences and that this effect would vary depending on the institutional context. On the other hand, because women's imprisonment has a specificity of its own, due to long-standing cultural attitudes toward women offenders and their punishment, COs should impact women's adjustment but the effects should be consistent across institutions.

While our findings provide the strongest support for the last hypothesis, they do not entirely dismiss the second hypothesis. Even though we found no evidence of an interaction between CO behavior and the institution in which they work, it is entirely possible, and even probable, that COs implement policies differently depending on where they work. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the primary audience of these policies—the prisoners—central aspects of their interactions with COs (whether they are seen as helpful, rule-bound, or "just doing a job") negatively impact their adjustment regardless of their carceral surrounding. As such, we think these findings support Garland's (2006) recent call for examining multiple levels of culture in that they highlight the import of both the backdrop of a specific penal era and the foreground, or lived experiences, of those eras. The political and legislative shifts that moved women's imprisonment in California from the rehabilitative era of CIW to the mass imprisonment era of VSPW are incomplete. Inmates still feel it is an advantage to be housed at CIW, relative to VSPW. But as we have seen, as important as these abstract distinctions are for women's carceral lives, equally important is the fact that the new "culture of control," or the "practices of interpretation" that it brings to bear upon prisoners, is being played out in very similar ways (Garland 2006:439). In addition, how the culture of control is brought to bear upon women offenders is more important to their ability to adjust to prison life than the prison institution itself.

Another interesting feature of our findings, and one that also speaks directly to the invocation of a postmodern penality, is the relatively modest influence that women's background characteristics have on their ability to adjust to their prison environment. This may well be a product of what the inmates call "take-aways," or the CDC's efforts to standardize the prison experience across all its 32 institutions. As the carceral experience becomes more extreme, individual experiences that marked a prisoner's identity in the free world (e.g., her level of education, whether she was married or had children) may well fade in comparison to the prisoner's immediate circumstances (Sykes 1958). So as we have seen, a prisoner's ability to adjust to her prison environment is not derived from where she came from but rather from such pressing concerns as the length of time the prisoner is serving, her custody level, and how much control she feels she has over her day-to-day life.

Can these findings be generalized beyond California or to men's prison experiences? Our findings, and conclusions, may not reflect what is happening in other states. While California is often considered to be a bellwether state in penal policy, there is no doubt that the scope of its legislative reforms and the massive increases in its prison population over the last two decades of the

twentieth century place it in a class by itself. From this perspective, we might think of California as the most rigorous test of the extent to which the new penology, or the postmodern penal movement, is affecting prisoners. It is possible, therefore, that in other parts of the country, where the changes in prison life have been less rapid and radical, we would see less continuity across institutions in both the extent and nature of COs' influence on prisoner adjustment. It is also likely that our focus on women offenders' experiences bias the direction of our results. As we noted at the outset, COs have long held rather rigid and stereotypical assumptions about female offenders. While these may be lessening over time as more women become COs and as men are exposed to more female offenders, they may also still influence the rhetoric and responses women incur from COs relative to their male counterparts (Britton 2003). Nevertheless, given our finding of institutional differences (see also Kruttschnitt & Gartner 2005) and the increasing security-driven focus in male institutions, we might expect male prisons to be more indicative of the penal harm movement.

Finally, our findings also have important policy implications. Clearly, COs have a sizeable impact on prisoners' ability to adjust to prison life. As many women prisoners revealed, there are some very good COs that manage to conduct themselves professionally and gain the respect and cooperation of the inmates. There are also those who fail miserably on both counts. While we will not be able to determine how these women who move out of CIW and VSPW fare in the future, we do know that most of them will in fact leave their carceral lives behind at some point and reenter society. Prisoner reentry is the focus of much current academic and policy concern, yet the focus of this concern seems to be disproportionately on the communities prisoners will be released into and not the prison communities from which they are emerging (Travis & Visher 2005). As the inmate we quote at the outset of this article noted, this may be quite shortsighted. Prison staff have the ability to improve the lives of their charges or to further damage them. To the extent that they engage in the latter rather than the former, they diminish not only these prisoners' lives, but also the lives of their families and the communities to which they will return.

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Mike Vuolo *is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota. In 2007, he received an M.S. in statistics from the University of Minnesota. His most recent publications appear in* Punishment and Society *and* Work and Occupations.

Candace Kruttschnitt *is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. Her recent books are* Marking Time in the Golden State: Women's Imprisonment in California *(with Rosemary Gartner, Cambridge University Press, 2005) and* Gender and Crime: Patterns of Victimization and Offending *(with Karen Heimer, New York University Press, 2006).*