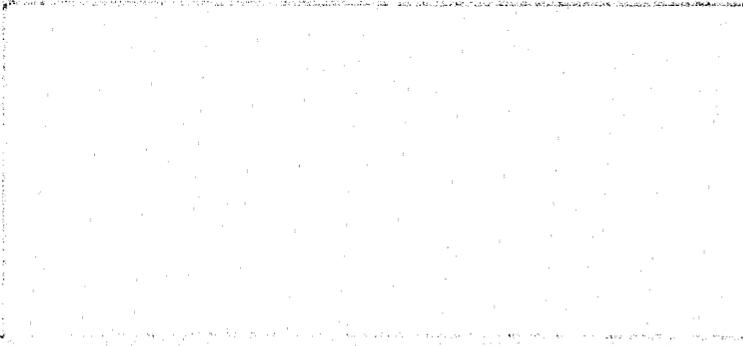
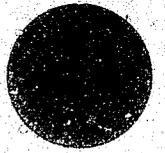




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**JOB ENRICHMENT AND THE DIRECT SUPERVISION CORRECTIONAL OFFICER:  
THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT<sup>1</sup>**

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Herzberg, et al. (1959) argued that people find satisfaction in their work when it is interesting and challenging, when it provides genuine responsibility, and when it presents opportunities for achievement, personal growth, and individual advancement. The design of the job performed by correctional officers has been criticized by several scholars as incapable of providing these sources of satisfaction (Brief, et al., 1976; Toch and Grant, 1982).

The work performed by correctional officers in many traditional jail facilities is best described as fragmented, routinized, menial and, impoverished. An examination of officer activities, tasks and assignments in traditional detention facilities illustrates this point. The following tasks have been emphasized for a New York correctional officer: "checks inmate passes and records inmates' movements in and out of areas"; "watches for unusual incidents and reports any to his supervisor either verbally or in writing"; "makes periodic rounds of assigned areas checking for faulty bars, gates, etc. and checks areas for daily fire report"; "supervises bathing"; "announces sick call" (Toch and Grant, 1982:85-86). These obligations appear to be bureaucratic chores that require little or no judgment, initiative or skill on the part of correctional officers. Consequently, the nature and design of the job can frustrate fulfillment of officers' personal needs for recognition, challenge, responsibility, and achievement. The paucity of expectations helps produce workers who are dissatisfied, apathetic, unmotivated, alienated from their jobs, and uncommitted to the goals of the organization.

In his study of New York State correctional officers, Lombardo (1981) queried officers about job-related factors which were sources of dissatisfaction. Thirty-six percent of the officers mentioned boredom, and 34% pointed to the routine nature of the job. Whether correctional officers desired a more enriched job was an issue addressed by Brief, et al. (1976) in their study of officers in one midwestern state. The authors found that "correctional personnel respond more positively to a job that offers them skill variety, autonomy, task identity, and

feedback than they do a job that is perceived as dull and monotonous" (228).

The architecture and inmate management style advocated by the new generation, podular/direct supervision philosophy introduce significant change into the work life of correctional officers. In particular, the new philosophy redefines the job tasks and responsibilities of the officers. Previous analysis of the role of the direct supervision correctional officer indicate that the job has the potential to be enriched (Zupan, Menke and Lovrich, 1986). Hackman, et al. (1981) argued that people are motivated by and find satisfaction in jobs which are perceived as being meaningful, and which provide employees with responsibility for the outcome of their efforts and regular feedback about the success or failure of their performance. In accordance with the theory of job enrichment, work is redesigned to provide optimal opportunities for workers to experience these conditions. Hays and Reeves (1984:273) defined job enrichment as a type of job design which:

involves a deliberate attempt to increase the amount of responsibility and challenge in work. The job must be expanded vertically as well as horizontally. Thus responsibility and controls that formerly were reserved for management are given to the employees. This inevitably leads to greater work autonomy. Workers are granted control over such job components as resource allocation and utilization, performance measures, and problem solving. Consequently, the workers' feelings of personal responsibility and accountability are heightened. In an enriched job, the employee is given an opportunity to demonstrate what he or she can do and to apply his or her creative talents freely.

Hackman, et al. (1981), in developing a conceptual basis for measuring job enrichment, argued that the design of a job influences three critical work-related psychological states: experienced meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. In turn, the presence or absence of these psychological states influences personal and work outcomes such as motivation, satisfaction, productivity, turnover, and absenteeism. Hackman and his fellow researchers proposed that enriched jobs possess characteristics that induce the three critical psychological states. These characteristics include: skill variety (the extent to which a job requires a number of different skills and talents); task identity (the extent to which a job requires completion of a whole, identifiable piece of work); task significance (the impact of a job on the lives and

work of others); autonomy (the extent of freedom, independence, and discretion in setting work standards); and feedback (the extent to which work activities provide direct and clear information about effective performance). It is hypothesized that optimal levels of each of these five characteristics in a job produce the critical psychological states, and they in turn promote positive personal and work outcomes.

Analysis of the direct supervision correctional officer's job indicates the presence of these enriching characteristics (Zupan, Menke, and Lovrich, 1986). The direct supervision officer role requires officers to observe, investigate, and resolve inmate problems, providing officers with the opportunity to use a variety of skills and abilities. It requires officers to resolve problems and manage difficult situations within the modules, thereby allowing them to complete a job from beginning to end. Officers in these facilities must assess the impact of their own management skills on module order, hence they experience direct feedback on their performance. Furthermore, they must make most decisions within the module single-handedly, thereby enhancing their sense of responsibility and autonomy. Finally, officers are required to both maintain order and exercise leadership within the modules largely by the use of their wits—a difficult task of evident importance to society.

However, the presence of these job characteristics do not alone ensure that employees will attain the critical work-related psychological states or that they will influence work outcomes such as motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and turnover (Hackman, et al., 1981). Management must recognize the potential for job enrichment and create strategies to capitalize on its potential. Adherence to traditional bureaucratic, hierarchical, command-obey styles of management may confound the link between the enriched job characteristics and the critical triad of: experienced meaningfulness of work; experienced responsibility; and knowledge of results. Instead, management must revise its approach to take into account at least three factors necessary for full implementation of job enrichment. These factors include developing a sense of job "ownership" among employees, vesting employees with responsibility for planning, coordinating and conducting work (vertical loading), and opening feedback channels between supervisors and line personnel.

The concept of job ownership is realized when employees are given full employee responsibility for an identifiable, meaningful and coherent body of work. Hence, job ownership implies a movement away from over-reliance on fragmented specialization and external control of employees. Job ownership,

however, has been avoided by correctional institutions in particular, and by criminal justice organizations in general. The reasons for this are many and include the following widely shared perceptions and schemes: management styles emphasize bureaucratization as the key to efficiency; quasi-military models of organization are based on a belief in the untrustworthy nature of human beings; less than adequate personnel standards and training are accepted as normative; and, a desire to protect the organization from a litigious society promotes secrecy and insularity.

The direct supervision operating principles dictate that there is "only room for one leader" in each module and that employees must maintain control over the entire module. Given the degree of control that officers wield within the module and the level of discretion they possess in task performance, territoriality and job ownership among employees are inevitable. Ownership is facilitated not only by the design of the job and the architecture of the workplace, but by managerial response to the employees. Through training, performance appraisal, and daily oversight, management can demonstrate its trust in the abilities of employees to exercise responsible discretion and thereby reinforce the employees' sense of ownership. In the words of one of our interview subjects, "Supervisors must recognize that this is my module. When things go well, I'll take the credit. When things go poorly, I'll take the responsibility."

Work in jails is generally characterized by the separation of planning and coordination functions from the actual performance of the job. While line personnel are responsible for performance, supervisors control the planning and coordination of the work. Vertical loading refers to the process of moving some measure of responsibility and control, specifically planning and coordinating functions, from management to line employees. In direct supervision facilities this process can be achieved by allowing correctional officers more discretion in deciding work methods, by using them to train less experienced officers, and, finally, by requiring them to assess the quality of their own work. In addition, correctional officers can be granted greater authority and responsibility for time management, troubleshooting and crisis management Hackman, et al., 1981:241).

Team building is another means by which vertical loading can be accomplished. The design of the direct supervision facility requires that module officers from three different shifts develop a consistent and coherent strategy among themselves for inmate management. This requires two commitments from management:

first, a demonstrable trust in the accumulated wisdom of officers; and second, a more mundane recognition that shift scheduling must be done to promote interaction between staff members. Through such strategies as overlapping shifts and meetings between module officers, administrators can facilitate the exchange of information vital to the consistent management of the module.

While management's response to matters such as changes in schedules is easily accomplished, changes in traditional management perceptions about the competence of employees are more difficult to achieve. The critical factor, however, remains the extent of management's trust in its employees' ability to wield discretion.

The final consideration for management of enriched jobs concerns the provision of a forum for open and continuous feedback to employees about job performance. There are several sources from which employees receive information about their performance; these sources include management and direct supervisors, co-workers, clients and the work itself. Traditionally, correctional officers receive feedback from clients on an irregular basis (since officers are not in direct and continuous contact with inmates in traditional facilities), from management on an occasional basis (as a regularly scheduled performance appraisal, or, oftentimes only in reaction to malperformance), and from co-workers (who tend to support subculture values rather than the formal values of the organization).

By the nature of the design of their jobs direct supervision correctional officers receive immediate feedback from inmates as to the success or failure of their management styles. This learning can be direct and immediate. It is important that the supervision of correctional officers move from command-obey and occasional performance appraisals to continuous coaching and counseling to take advantage of this feedback source. Through coaching and counseling, supervisors can assist officers in interpreting daily events and experiences in a manner consistent with the direct supervision philosophy.

Our previous analysis of the direct supervision correctional officer's job revealed several important issues which face New Generation jail officials. The analysis of the core dimensions of the correctional officer's role indicated that it requires skills (managerial and leadership) usually possessed by individual higher levels of management. This fact presents at least two dilemmas (or challenges, depending on one's point of

view).

First, most organizations promote people to positions of responsibility after extensive preparation (academic or organizational). Employees are typically promoted after they have been exposed to traditions and norms of long standing. Their understanding of the organization and its various work roles have been molded by both formal and informal experience. In contrast, the direct supervision facility recruits people with little or no experience in requisite leadership and management skills. Thus, forging consensus about the correctional officers' role becomes both crucial and problematic and requires a thorough reexamination of traditional personnel and human resource development programs.

Second, direct supervision inmate management, with its explicit link between philosophy, operations, and architectural design represents a major innovation in institutional corrections experience. There is a change in the architecture, a change in the mission of the organization, a change in the operating principles and a change in the nature of the correctional officers' job. The direct supervision style of inmate management mandates careful coordination of the physical surroundings, the orienting philosophy, and work performance. This coordination, in turn, requires reevaluation and change from traditional management orientation. More specifically, it demands a move away from an organizational culture based on bureaucratic necessities to one predicated upon mutual trust and support between management and correctional officers. In addition, it requires the reexamination of formal personnel practices.

For correctional officers in podular/direct supervision facilities to experience the benefits of job enrichment, managerial and supervisory orientations must be altered to facilitate the job redesign. There is some evidence to suggest that correctional officers in podular/direct supervision facilities perceive that the orientations of managers and supervisors have not dramatically changed in the transition from traditional to direct supervision. For example, in personnel-related surveys we administered to correctional officers in five podular/direct supervision facilities, a space was provided for officers to write open-ended comments; the comments overwhelmingly concerned complaints against supervisors and administrators. Some officers complained that they were denied authority in their modules, which made it difficult to

control inmate behavior:<sup>1</sup>

C.O.s do not have authority in their pods. Inmates always want to talk to a sergeant if they are not happy with the C.O.'s decision. There have been times when a sergeant will overrule a C.O.s decision and that is not right. To the inmates it doesn't look like the C.O. has much authority. C.O.s should rule the pods, not the sergeant. It's very frustrating when sergeants, lieutenants, and the major dictate how to run a pod when they have no idea what it entails. All management should work a pod first then change what's needed.

Other officers complained about the lack of communication between administration and the line officers:

The things that I have observed as one of the biggest problems is the lack of communication between administration, and I mean upper administration, and the C.O. on the decks. This is the most frustrating part of the job. Sometimes it seems that they are so out of touch with the officers doing the work. This is a job where your officers' lives are always on the line. Please do not forget this when writing S.O.P.s [standard operating procedures] concerning inmate activities, wants, and grievances.

Several other officers complained about the lack of input they had in administrative policies that directly affect them:

Employees are asked for their opinions on major changes, but management does their own way regardless, i.e., mandatory shift change. Almost nobody wanted it. But it is still enforced.

As stated by another employee:

There are constant rule changes without any regards to the working officer's direct knowledge of his/her post and continuous threats of disciplinary and or termination of officers in general whenever one, two, or maybe three officers act in bad judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> Officer comments are presented as transmitted to the researchers. Orthography and grammatical constructions have not been altered.

Another complaint of officers was the lack of trust demonstrated by supervisors and administrators and the degree of control they exerted over the officers:

Your sergeants and lieutenants should be there to back the officers...Stick to important matters that concern the safety of the facility and its officers. Show the officers that they can be trusted to carry on their duties and that they are trained professionals. If you have a bad apple-consul [counsel] them and if that doesn't work get rid of them. But the same should go for the administration and sergeants and lieutenants. If the administration is not willing to talk to its line officers and listen to what they have to say and apply it to their jobs then the administration isn't worth a flying fuck. The line officer will either make or break a facility. If you have good work relations between personnel, sergeants, lieutenants, and administration you will have a better run department. Treat your people as people. They will learn from you and you will also learn from them.

Finally, officers complained about administrative reliance on coercion rather than positive reinforcement to ensure correctional officer compliance:

When a policy or decision is made the people it concerns most have no choice. Except to quit, if they don't like it. Positive reinforcement is a must in any job and a lack of it makes for low moral[e] and hostilities. The lack of pay raises means employees tend to give less of themselves. The lack of positive rewards for term of employment means that staff turnover is greater.

And, according to another officer:

If and when your new jail opens, please make sure that your officers are treated the same as you would treat inmates. We do not believe in mass punishment for inmates, but our administration seems to believe in it for their officers. And make sure your administration are open minded enough to listen to the line staff, since they are the core of the system. And they deal with the inmates more often than not. And be willing to tell the line staff about "atta boys" just as much as you would the "the aw shits." Your morale will be a lot better and things will run a lot smoother.

In summary, managers and supervisors play a critical role in ensuring that correctional officers benefit from the enriched

work provided in podular/direct supervision facilities. Although these comments are not proof that the orientations of supervisors and administrators confound the link between job enrichment and positive work outcomes, they nevertheless suggest a direction for investigation. Future research is urgently needed to develop an appropriate managerial style to fit the needs and demands of the podular/direct supervision operations.

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