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RESEARCH REPORTS

SOCIAL ROLES IN A CORRECTIONAL COMMUNITY*

PETER G. GARABEDIAN†

The traditional conception of our maximum custody prisons assumes the existence of two normative systems that are in point for point opposition to each other. The first system represents standards of behavior that are defined and sanctioned by conventional society and by prison administrations as representatives of that society. Legitimate norms are embodied in the formal rules and regulations of the institution and represent standards of appropriate behavior which the inmate is to use in his relationships with prison officials and with other prisoners. Ideally, no inmate is exempt from employing these formal standards. In theory, the prison's administration demands that all inmates conform to these norms. Conformity to legitimate norms is rewarded in a variety of ways such as reductions in custody status and sentence, while deviations are not tolerated and result in institutional infraction reports along with the withdrawal of privileges. The maximum security prison maintains a large custodial staff to enforce uniformity of behavior among inmates.

The second normative system is part of the inmate subculture and is also assumed to prescribe appropriate behavior for the inmate. Behavior prescribed by this system, however, is assumed to be contrary and opposed to behavior prescribed by the formal authority system. These illegitimate behavior prescriptions are embodied in the prisoners' code which emphasizes loyalty to the inmate community.¹ Unlike the norms of the prison's adminis-

tration, however, illegitimate prescriptions do not demand uniformity of behavior. Rather, they encourage symbiotic or reciprocal relations among inmates by recognizing certain interdependencies in a variety of permissible roles that are organized around a number of focal issues or concerns.²

The present study directs its attention to an investigation of four major role alternatives that are available to inmates as they enter maximum custody prisons. Specifically, the purpose of this paper is to construct an empirical typology of inmate role types that have been identified by a number of investigators and to examine variations among the types with respect to (a) criminal careers, (b) institutional behavior, and (c) normative orientations.

SOCIAL ROLES IN PRISON

Inmate roles are differentiated and integrated around such focal issues as "doing time" in prison, loyalty attachments, food, sex, health, etc. The inmate learns the importance of these issues early in his institutional career while being exposed to processes of mortification.³ His mode of adaptation, both actions and verbalizations, with respect to focal issues is observed and assessed informally by other inmates, and through a process of mutual agreement they assign the inmate to a given role. Consider for example the issue of "doing time" in prison. There are two major alternatives available to prisoners with respect to this issue. The first involves inmates who are constantly aware of their sentences and, in the language of the prisoners, they do "tough time." Inmates occupying the second alternative absorb themselves into the affairs of the prison community and are characterized as doing "easy time."⁴

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¹ Earlier accounts of the prisoners' code are described in CLEMMER, *THE PRISON COMMUNITY* esp. 152 (1958); OHLIN, *SOCIOLOGY AND THE FIELD OF CORRECTIONS* 28-29 (1956). A more recent discussion may be found

in Sykes & Messinger, *The Inmate Social System*, in *THEORETICAL STUDIES IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PRISON* 5 (Cloward, Grosser, McCleery, Ohlin, Sykes & Messinger eds. 1960).

² Schrag, *A Preliminary Criminal Typology*, 4 *PACIFIC SOC. REV.* 11 (1961).

³ Goffman, *Characteristics of Total Institutions*, in *WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, SYMPOSIUM ON PREVENTIVE AND SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY* 43 (1957).

⁴ Schrag, *Social Role, Social Position, and Prison Social Structure*, 1959 *PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION* 178.

Another focal concern in prison is sex. The prison is a uni-sexual community, and as such is devoid of many of the affectional relations commonly derived from heterosexual contacts. The newly arrived "fish" soon learns the importance of this issue and invokes a given mechanism of adaptation to cope with the problem. Although behavior with respect to this issue varies widely among prisoners, there are a variety of alternatives that are generally recognized by staff and inmates. Some inmates occupy a role alternative consisting of behavior characteristic of the female role in the free community. According to the inmate argot, these role incumbents are *fairies* or *queens*, since they employ female gestures and mannerisms to seduce other inmates. Techniques of seduction employed by this role type, however, are generally of a non-violent kind. On the other hand, inmates recognize another role alternative with respect to the issue of sex. Recognized as a *wolf* or *jocker*, this role type also seeks to seduce other inmates, but techniques of seduction are likely to be of a violent type, using force or the threat of force to exploit weaker inmates. *Wolves* are likely to be active homosexuals, while *fairies* are of the passive type. A third major behavior alternative recognized is the *punk*. The term *punk* generally refers to the inmate who allows himself to be seduced by either of the above two types, and thus may be active or passive. Finally, many inmates refrain completely from homosexual behavior, or engage in this practice only periodically. These inmates for the most part are called *normals*.⁵

Prisoners have a variety of role alternatives available to them, and on the basis of their behaviors and verbalizations with respect to a given issue or issues they are assigned a given role by their peers. Identification of the role incumbent is accomplished chiefly through the language system of the prisoners.

The set of role alternatives that concerns us in this paper is organized around the issues of "doing time" in prison, loyalty attachments, relations with inmates, and contacts with staff members. From the language of prisoners, it is possible to relate five major role types to these focal concerns. Each of these alternatives involves characteristically different modes of adjustment to the four issues, and consequently distinctive patterns of behavior may be observed for each of the role incumbents.

The first role in the set is defined in terms of doing "tough time" while incarcerated in the institution. Affective attachments are oriented toward legitimate norms and standards, and thus loyalties are anchored in conventional groups in the free community and with the prison's administration. Relations with staff members, therefore, are generally good involving a high degree of contact, but contacts with other inmates are generally limited to those with similar affective attachments. Thus there is a lack of intensive involvement in informal inmate activities, and as a result the occupant of this role remains naive about much of the prison culture. Inmates at the prison studied refer to this alternative as *Square John* behavior.

In contrast to the *Square John* role, a second major behavior alternative is defined in terms of doing "easy time" while in the institution. Affective attachments are oriented toward illegitimate norms, and thus loyalties are anchored with criminal persons and groups. This alternative involves strict conformity to the principles of the prisoner's code. Relations with other inmates are generally good, involving a high degree of contact with them, while contacts with staff members are minimized and avoided if possible. Deep involvement in prison rackets and other informal inmate activities also characterize this role. Although a variety of labels are used to identify the incumbent of this role, the most frequent label used in the prison studied is *Right Guy*.

The third alternative in the set is also characterized by doing "easy time" in the institution. But unlike either of the first two alternatives, this role involves affective neutrality with respect to conventional or illegitimate behavior prescriptions. Contacts with staff and inmates are extensive, but members of both these groups are manipulated for the promotion of personal goals. Manipulation involves a high degree of role-taking skill, with normative perspectives rapidly shifting to accommodate the exigencies of the situation. Frequent contacts with staff members and involvement in informal inmate activities result in a storehouse of knowledge regarding prisoner and official affairs. A familiar label used to identify this behavior alternative is *Con Politician*.

The fourth role in the set involves doing "tough time" in the institution primarily because of prolonged difficulties of adjustment to the authoritarian climate characteristic of prison life. Similar to the role of the *Con Politician* this alternative involves rejection of the two major normative

⁵ Schrag, *Social Types in a Prison Community* 48-49 (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Washington, 1944).

systems, and the manipulation of staff and inmates. But unlike the *Politician* role, manipulation in this case takes the form of direct physical aggression or the threat of force, and as a result, the incumbent of this role isolates himself from both staff and inmate contacts. The alternative therefore involves self-oriented behavior, expressive violence, and deficient role-taking skills. Notwithstanding isolation, inmates adopting this mode of adjustment become deeply involved in prison rackets, make frequent attempts at escape, and rise to positions of temporary leadership during times of general strikes and prison riots. Inmates at the prison studied employed the label of *Oulaw* to identify this role alternative.

Summarizing, we find that the *Square John* and *Right Guy* alternatives are collectivity-oriented. Behavior is directed in terms of the promotion of group values and goals. But the direction of their attachments differ, in that the *Square John* is committed to legitimate norms, while the *Right Guy* is committed to illegitimate standards. *Con Politicians* and *Oulaws*, on the other hand, are affectively neutral with respect to the two normative systems, and behavior is self-oriented. In the latter two cases behavior is directed toward the gratification of personal goals. But in the case of the *Politician*, other persons are skillfully manipulated, while in the case of the *Oulaw*, persons are manipulated by force.

There is an increasing amount of informal observational evidence that these behavior alternatives exist in many of our maximum security prisons.⁶ Although different labels may be used by inmates in various institutions throughout the United States, their behavioral referents nevertheless remain fairly stable. The prison argot, then, reflects the organization of the inmate social system. It defines the interrelationships between the various inmate roles. Inmates who have cognitive knowledge of cultural elements in prison such as argot, beliefs, and slogans, are also likely to be familiar with the role sets that comprise the social system. The prisoner society, then, is conceptualized in terms of spontaneously emerging

networks of social relationships structured around important institutional problems.

METHODOLOGY

The data to be reported were collected from a maximum security prison in a Western state. At the time of the study there were approximately 1,700 convicted adult felons housed in the institution. From this population, a random sample of 345 inmates was selected to be included in the study. Inmates in the sample were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire was also administered to a sample of 141 members of the custodial staff.

The method of identifying incumbents of the four roles described above consisted of obtaining responses of the inmates in the sample to a set of 12 items included in the questionnaire. The items, which dealt with attitudes toward self, others, and philosophy of life, are listed below:

1. You've got to have confidence in yourself if you're going to be successful.
2. I generally feel guilty whenever I do wrong.
3. "Might is right" and "every man for himself" are the main rules of living, regardless of what people say.
4. The biggest criminals are protected by society and rarely get to prison.
5. There's a little larceny in everybody, if you're really honest about it.
6. The only criminals I really know are the ones here in the institution.
7. You have to take care of yourself because nobody else is going to take care of you.
8. Inmates can trust me to be honest and loyal in my dealings with them.
9. Who you know is more important than what you know, and brains are more important than brawn.
10. Most people try to be law abiding and true.
11. It makes me sore to have people tell me what to do.
12. Police, judges, prosecutors, and politicians are just as crooked as most of the people they send to prison.

Each of the above types is assumed to reflect a component of the attitudinal organization of a given role type. The works of Schrag and others have indicated that the various role types express attitudes and opinions which are consistent with the content of the statements listed above. Items 4, 8, and 12, for example, would be expected to be

⁶ In addition to Schrag's works cited above, see the following works by Sykes: *Men, Merchants, and Toughs*, 4 SOCIAL PROBLEMS 130 (1956); THE SOCIETY OF CAPTIVES 85-108 (1955); and Sykes & Messinger, *The Inmate Social System*, in Cloward, et al., *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 5. See also KORN & McCORKLE, CRIMINOLOGY AND PENOLOGY, ch. 22 (1959); and Kinch, *Self Conceptions of Types of Delinquents*, 32 SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY 228 (1962).

endorsed by Right Guys, since they have been described as holding a jaundiced view of the legitimate world, and as having strong bonds of loyalty to other inmates. Outlaws would be expected to endorse items 3, 7, and 11, since they have been described as anarchists who do not have strong feelings of loyalty toward other persons or groups, and who frequently use physical force as a means for the attainment of personal goals. Square Johns would be expected to endorse items 2, 6, and 10. They have been described as pro-social inmates who identify not only with the prison's administration, but also with legitimate persons and groups in the free community. Generally, they have had little or no contact with criminals outside of their institutional experience, and are unable effectively to neutralize feelings of guilt that arise as a result of their crimes. The manipulators in the prison community, or Con Politicians, would be expected to endorse items 1, 5, and 9. Politicians live by their wits, and believe that most persons can be "bought off" if the price is right. In short, for each of the role types there are three items designed to tap attitudes characteristic of a given type.

Inmates responded to the items by checking one of four response categories for each statement: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Weights of plus two, plus one, minus one, and minus two were assigned, respectively, to each of the above response categories. The weights for the four sets of three items were then algebraically summed for each inmate. Thus, a given inmate was represented by a set of four scores, with each score having a possible range of plus six to minus six and indicating his status on the five role types mentioned above.

Ideally, the occupant of a given role should endorse (strongly agree or agree) the three items designed to tap his attitudes, and should not endorse the remaining nine items. That is, an inmate who has been assigned a given role in the prisoner society should exhibit a high positive score with respect to the items characterizing the role type and should exhibit low positive or negative scores on items characterizing the other role types. The highest positive score shown by an inmate on any one set of items determined his classification.⁷ On this basis, an

⁷ Inmates whose highest score on any of the four sets of items was three or less were not considered in the classification. The problem of tied scores on two or more sets of items was handled by classifying the inmate in favor of the score which was furthest from the

empirical typology was constructed classifying 227, or 66 per cent, of the inmate sample as incumbents of one of the four roles. The 227 inmates comprise the sample on which the data to be presented in this paper are based.

ROLE TYPES AND CRIMINAL CAREERS

The importance of prior criminal experience and contact with illegitimate norms has been stressed by numerous investigators in the field of criminology. Clemmer, for example, found that inmates who became most prisonized during their institutional commitment were those who had a relatively well-developed and mature set of criminal value orientations upon their admission to prison.⁸ This finding suggests the importance of prior criminal experience and its relationship to prisonization. Moreover, parole prediction studies have found that recidivists are less successful on parole than first offenders, and that those individuals who began their criminal careers early in life are poorer risks on parole than those individuals who began their careers later in life.⁹ In addition, Schrag has found that prior penal commitments and crimes of violence are significantly associated with leadership among prison inmates.¹⁰

In this section three aspects of criminal career are selected for investigation. First, the extent of juvenile delinquency in the offender's background; second, the degree of participation in adult crime in the background of the individual; and third, the offense for which the inmate is currently committed. Delinquency is defined in terms of being arrested for the first time before the age of 18 plus prior experience in a juvenile training school. Adult crime is defined in terms of having three or more prior arrests and prior experience in an adult correctional institution.

Square Johns

Compared with the other role types, Square Johns show the least amount of juvenile delinquency and participation in adult crime in their backgrounds. It is also seen that these incumbents are committed, more frequently than the other role

absolute mean of its distribution. The distribution of scores for the four role types showed absolute means of five for the politician items; four for the right guy items; three for the square John items; and two for the outlaw items.

⁸ Cited in OHLIN, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 37-38.

⁹ Cited in TAFT, *CRIMINOLOGY* 662 (1956).

¹⁰ Schrag, *Leadership Among Prison Inmates*, 19 AM. SOC. REV. 37 (1954).

TABLE 1
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG ROLE
TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent Delinquent	N*
Square John.....	17	36
Politician.....	21	77
Right Guy.....	24	73
Outlaw.....	35	38

* In this and most of the following tables, N refers to the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, 21 per cent of the 77 politicians are classified as having been delinquents.

TABLE 2
INVOLVEMENT IN ADULT CRIME AMONG
ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent Involved in Adult Crime	N
Square John.....	16	37
Right Guy.....	30	72
Politician.....	41	78
Outlaw.....	51	37

types, for the crime of homicide and to a lesser extent for forgery and non-violent sex offenses. These findings support the notion that Square Johns have not had an extensive delinquent and criminal career, but may become involved in a serious personal offense, probably due to a set of extenuating circumstances. Moreover, Square Johns may become involved in writing "rubber checks" usually against their own bank accounts, and often while drinking. Investigators have called this type the "naive check forger" in that highly developed and specialized techniques of professional forgery are not used. Naive check writers conceive of themselves not as criminals, but as individuals laboring under a burden of personal problems for which checkwriting seemed to be an appropriate solution.¹¹

The net result of the Square John's lack of systematic involvement in delinquent and criminal traditions is an individual who, when committed to prison, invokes characteristic mechanisms of adjustment to focal issues. The prison is a foreign

¹¹ Gibbons & Garrity, *Some Suggestions for the Development of Etiological and Treatment Theory in Criminology*, 38 SOCIAL FORCES 51 (1959).

place for this role-type where he is forced to "mingle with criminals." Because of his non-criminal self-definition, the Square John openly identifies with the prison's administration, and remains isolated from many of the informal inmate activities.

Right Guys

Compared with Square Johns, inmates occupying the antisocial role in the prisoner society have had early contact with delinquent traditions and continued participation in adult crime. Tables 1 and 2 show that Right Guys are considerably more likely than Square Johns to have been delinquent with subsequent participation in adult crime. The Right Guy type most frequently comes from an economically underprivileged family residing in the disorganized sections of large cities making possible early contact and association with delinquent traditions and peers.¹² Table 3 shows that compared with the other role types, Right Guys are committed more frequently for the traditional property offenses, such as robbery, burglary, and auto theft, in addition to assault. The data suggest that the Right Guy may be a nonprofessional property offender who attempts to make a career out of crime, albeit an unsuccessful one.¹³

Con Politicians

Contrasted with Right Guys, Con Politicians show slightly less evidence of juvenile delinquency in their background, but more evidence of involvement in adult crime. In addition, they are more likely than Right Guys and Outlaws to be committed for forgery and grand larceny by check. That these crimes are easily detected and frequently lead to arrest and prosecution may be a partial explanation of the Politicians' position in Table 2. Lemert's study of the systematic forger tends to corroborate the latter point, in that he found his sample of forgers were very likely to be detected, and further were highly recidivistic.¹⁴

A significant feature differentiating Politicians from Right Guys and Outlaws may be seen by considering the role of the victim in the commission of offenses. Right Guys and Outlaws are likely to commit offenses involving little or no manipulation of the victim. When the victim is manipulated, as in the case of robbery, it tends to be direct, un-

¹² *Id.* at 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Lemert, *The Systematic Check Forger*, 6 SOCIAL PROBLEMS 141 (1958).

TABLE 3
OFFENSES AMONG ROLE TYPES

Role Types	Assault Robbery		Burglary Auto Theft		Forgery		Homicide		Non-Violent Sex		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Square John.....	9	3	29	10	31	11	20	7	11	4	100	35
Politician.....	15	10	41	27	30	20	8	5	6	4	100	66
Right Guy.....	30	21	41	28	13	9	9	6	7	5	100	69
Outlaw.....	24	8	50	17	14	5	6	2	6	2	100	34

sophisticated, and involves the threat of force. Con Politicians, however, tend to commit offenses involving a high degree of role-playing skill, where the victim is manipulated by words.

Outlaws

From the data shown in Tables 1 and 2, Outlaws appear to have had the most prolonged career in delinquency and crime. Notwithstanding the fact that Outlaws, like Right Guys, also tend to be committed for the traditional property crimes, they are nevertheless much more likely to be detected for these offenses. This may provide some indication of the relative degree of skill used by each type in the commission of these crimes. Outlaws are likely to commit crimes on impulse with little or no thought given to planning prior to their commission.

ROLE TYPES AND INSTITUTIONAL BEHAVIOR

Investigators have observed the institutional behavior of inmates to vary widely. Clemmer, for example, found that some inmates were involved in primary relationships with other inmates, while others were relatively isolated from any close friendship ties.¹⁵ Again, some inmates were more prone to break institutional rules than others.¹⁶ Because he lacked a systematic conceptual framework of the inmate role system within which to interpret his findings, Clemmer was forced to conclude that the prisoner community was an atomistic society which lacked consensus and solidarity.¹⁷

We feel that much of the seemingly divergent inmate behavior can be accounted for in terms of the theoretical framework presented above such that the conduct, contact, and communication of

inmates are importantly related to the role occupied within the inmate social system. Thus although inmate behavior may vary widely, we should generally expect uniform behavior among incumbents occupying the same role within the informal social structure. Social role, then, regulates behavior within the institution.

Participation in Formal Institutional Programs

If this general proposition is valid, then we should expect participation in formal staff-sponsored programs to be distributed differentially among the role types in two important respects. First, the rate or extensiveness of formal participation should be related to role type. Some inmates will take an active interest in the programs offered by the prison's administration and take advantage of as many of these activities as possible. Other inmates, however, will not be motivated to participate. Second, role type should be related to participation in the *types* of programs offered by the staff. For example, some of the activities included in the total program of many prisons are aimed directly at changing or modifying attitudes and values. These activities are *therapeutic* in their orientation. Other programs are aimed at improving the moral character of the inmate and are *religious* in their orientation. Still others do not have any specific underlying rationale, but exist primarily to expend the inmate's excess energy, or help the inmate pass his time. These activities are *neutral* in their orientation. Thus, the two aspects of formal participation are defined in terms of extensiveness and type of program involvement.

The data presented in Table 4 show the percentage of the four role types who actively participate in at least one staff-sponsored program. These data show fairly clearly that Square Johns are the most active, followed by Politicians, Right Guys and Outlaws in that order. Since the Square John

¹⁵ CLEMMER, *op. cit.* supra note 1, ch. 5.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 122.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 322.

TABLE 4
EXTENSIVENESS OF PARTICIPATION IN
STAFF-SPONSORED PROGRAMS AMONG
ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent in at Least One Program	N
Square John.....	84	37
Politician.....	71	79
Right Guy.....	63	73
Outlaw.....	62	38

alternative represents "pro-social" behavior, it is reasonable to assume that this incumbent will be relatively isolated from many of the informal inmate activities and thus will direct more of his energies toward formal staff-sponsored activities which are open to all inmates regardless of informal social status.

Table 5 presents evidence regarding type of program involvement. Although the numbers are small, the trends are nevertheless evident and supportive of the general hypothesis. Square Johns are much more likely than other role types to participate in programs geared specifically at therapy, while Politicians, Right Guys, and Outlaws in that order are more likely to participate in neutral programs. These data suggest that those inmates who are least likely to be affectively attached to illegitimate norms are most likely to become involved in instrumental therapy programs. Thus it may be that many of the therapy programs that exist in correctional institutions have the function of supporting and *reinforcing* conventional affective orientations rather than being vehicles of change.¹⁸

Institutional Adjustment

An index commonly used by prison classification committees and parole boards to evaluate an inmate's adjustment in prison is the number of rule or conduct infractions incurred by the inmate. Inmates were asked to note the number of times they had been referred to the adjustment commit-

¹⁸ Prison therapy programs may also be vehicles of change, especially when they are devised and regulated within the inmate community. In this case, inmates who otherwise would not avail themselves of staff-sponsored therapy programs will play an active role in inmate-sponsored therapy sessions. For evidence on this matter, see Garabedian, *Legitimate and Illegitimate Alternatives in the Prison Community*, 32 SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY 172 (1962).

tee for rule infractions and violations. Table 6 shows that rule infraction is systematically related to role type. Square Johns appear to present the least problem to prison officials, while Outlaws comprise the most serious behavior problem cases. There is a good deal of evidence in the literature to suggest that the outlaw-type is avoided by other inmates because of his disruptive behavior in the institution.¹⁹ Perhaps the Outlaw should be regarded as a "double failure" in both legitimate and illegitimate activities, and this may help to account for his untrammelled violence.²⁰

Reported Social Contacts

Studies by Clemmer, Wheeler, and others have shown the importance of informal social contacts and involvement to the attitudes and values of inmates. Clemmer, for example, noted a relationship between primary group membership and degree of prisonization.²¹ Wheeler has reported relationships between various measures of informal involvement and conformity to staff role expectations.²² In our investigations, we had the opportunity to examine the relationship between role type and social contact. Although we do not have at the present time direct measures on the actual number and types of contacts an inmate has, we do have evidence on the *reported* frequency and types of contacts inmates claim they have. The sample of inmates was asked to report whether they had more or less contacts with staff members and inmates as compared with the average inmate. The data are reported in Table 7.

The findings appear to be consistent with the evidence presented in the previous tables and suggest that the amount and kind of contacts an inmate reports are in fact associated with the role he occupies in the informal social system. It can be seen, for example, that compared with the other types Right Guys tend to report having more than average contact with inmates but less than average

¹⁹ The outlaw-type, as discussed in this paper, appears to be similar to the *ball buster* as discussed by Gresham Sykes. See his *SOCIETY OF CAPTIVES* 99-102 (1955).

²⁰ See Cloward, *Illegitimate Means, Anomie, and Deviant Behavior*, 24 AM. SOC. REV. 164 (1959). See also CLOWARD & OHLIN, *DELINQUENCY AND OPPORTUNITY* 178-87 (1960).

²¹ CLEMMER, *op. cit. supra* note 1, ch. 12.

²² Wheeler, *Social Organization and Inmate Values*, 1959 PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION 189-98; Wheeler, *Socialization in Correctional Communities*, 26 AM. SOC. REV. 697 (1961).

TABLE 5
TYPE OF PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT AMONG ROLE TYPES*

Role Type	Therapeutic		Religious		Neutral		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Square John.....	55	6	27	3	18	2	100	11
Politician.....	29	8	7	2	64	18	100	28
Right Guy.....	23	4	23	4	54	9	100	17
Outlaw.....	33	4	17	2	50	6	100	12

* The small size N in this table reflects the mode of analysis. Thus of the Square Johns, six participated in *only* therapeutic programs, three in *only* religious activities, etc.

contact with staff members. On the other hand, Outlaws report themselves as being isolated from both groups. Square Johns and Politicians report more than average contact with both groups, although Square Johns report somewhat more contacts with inmates than was expected.²³ It is also interesting to note that very few inmates report more than average contact with staff but less than average contact with inmates. Apparently, involvement with prison officials generally implies involvement with inmates as well.

Communication

Investigators have also noted the existence of a "grapevine" in our prisons, which refers to the rapidity with which a bit of information circulates through the inmate population.²⁴ However, the pervasiveness and effectiveness of the grapevine as a means of informing inmates of events and conditions within the institution has not been submitted to empirical test. It is very likely that all inmates in a given prison do not possess an equal amount of information, nor are the kinds of information possessed likely to be distributed in an equitable or random fashion. Moreover, possession of information and knowledge enables inmates to understand and interpret events in the institution. A lack of information may lead many inmates to employ the "rat" concept as a basis for interpreting events or changes that take place in an institu-

²³ There is some indication that Square John types are not as isolated from informal inmate activities as is commonly thought to be the case. For evidence on this point, see Garabedian, *Social Roles and Processes of Socialization in the Prison Community*, 11 *SOCIAL PROBLEMS* 139 (1963). See also Garabedian, *supra* note 18, at 178-84.

²⁴ CLEMMER, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 97. See also McCleery, *Communication Patterns as Bases of Systems of Authority*, in Cloward, *et al., op. cit. supra* note 1, at 49.

TABLE 6
SERIOUS CONDUCT INFRINGEMENTS AMONG
ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent With Three or More Infractions	N
Square John.....	00	37
Politician.....	14	79
Right Guy.....	16	73
Outlaw.....	22	27

tion.²⁵ Since the data suggest that social contacts are associated with role types, we should also expect that some degree of communication would take place during these contacts and thus varying degrees of cognitive knowledge should be possessed by the incumbents.

Just prior to the time of our study, several inmates obtained official sanction to initiate a therapy group. In an effort to determine whether cognitive knowledge varied with role incumbency, the sample of inmates was asked whether they had heard of a therapy group recently organized in the institution. The results presented in Table 8 show that knowledge of the therapy group varies systematically with role type. Incumbents of the Square John role are most likely to have knowledge of this group, which result is not surprising in light of the findings presented in Tables 4 and 5. It is likely that the content of the information to be communicated plays a significant part in determining who possesses the knowledge. Since in this case the content of the communication bears directly on the problem of therapy and rehabilitation, we find that Square Johns are most likely to know about it.

²⁵ McCleery, *The Strange Journey*, 1953 *UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA EXTENSION BULLETIN*.

TABLE 7
REPORTED SOCIAL CONTACTS AMONG ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Hi Staff-Hi Inmate		Hi Staff-Lo Inmate		Lo Staff-Hi Inmate		Lo Staff-Lo Inmate		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Square John.....	38	14	3	1	13	5	46	17	100	37
Politician.....	27	21	3	2	24	18	46	37	100	78
Right Guy.....	16	12	8	6	35	25	41	30	100	73
Outlaw.....	13	5	3	1	29	11	55	21	100	38

ROLE TYPES AND AFFECTIVE ATTACHMENTS

The data presented in the previous sections suggest that there are fairly uniform and distinct variations in the criminal careers and in the institutional behavior of the various role types. This section directs its attention to the final problem of normative orientations.

In order to examine this relationship, the 141 staff members, along with the sample of inmates, were asked to evaluate a series of five contrived situations referring to life in prison. An example of these contrived items follows:

"Two inmates who are planning to escape ask one of their close friends, Brown, to distract the guard's attention so that they will have a chance to get out of his sight. Brown refuses, stating that he doesn't want anything to do with the plot."²⁶

Both staff members and inmates were asked to state whether they approved or disapproved of inmate Brown's behavior. Staff responses to this and the other four items were overwhelmingly in agreement. That is, there was a high degree of consensus among staff with respect to the action taken in the five hypothetical situations. On the other hand, little consensus was observed to exist among inmate responses to the five items. Defining staff responses as an index of their normative orientation, it was possible to examine the characteristics of those inmates whose responses were in agreement with staff norms.

The data shown in Table 9 are clear. The per cent of conformists to staff norms decreases systematically with role type. Square Johns rank highest, followed by Politicians, Right Guys, and Outlaws respectively. The fact that Square Johns

²⁶ For a complete description of the method of constructing the index of conformity to staff norms, see Garabedian, Social Roles and Processes of Socialization in the Prison Community, *supra* note 23.

TABLE 8
KNOWLEDGE OF THERAPY GROUP AMONG
ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent With Knowledge of Therapy Group	N
Square John.....	68	37
Politician.....	52	79
Right Guy.....	44	73
Outlaw.....	37	38

TABLE 9
CONFORMITY TO STAFF NORMS AMONG
ROLE TYPES

Role Type	Per Cent Conforming to Staff Norms	N
Square John.....	46	37
Politician.....	37	79
Right Guy.....	23	73
Outlaw.....	16	38

evaluate problematic situations in terms of legitimate standards suggests that these types identify with noncriminal persons and groups. The opposite is true of Right Guys. Were it possible to construct an index of conformity to deviant or illegitimate norms, we should expect to find a larger per cent of Right Guys among the high conformists as compared with Square Johns.²⁷ Similarly, while Politicians rank second only to Square Johns on the conformity index, they should also rank high on conformity to illegitimate norms. Finally, Outlaws should rank low on both indices.

²⁷ For a logical presentation of the cognitive and affective orientations of the role types, see Schrag, *Some Foundations for a Theory of Correction*, in *THE PRISON: STUDIES IN INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION AND CHANGE* 309 (Cressey ed. 1961).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to account for the widely divergent behavior of inmates that is commonly observed in maximum security prisons. The accounting scheme used is based on the assumption that the inmate social system does not consist solely of illegitimate roles, nor does the system expect uniform behavior among all its members. Each inmate role represents a behavior alternative with respect to issues or concerns that are of central importance to the prisoner group. In attempting to bring about a sense of order in an otherwise anonymous and heterogeneous community, inmate behavior is classified into one or another of the alternatives. Thus, the various alternatives have the function of serving as a classification system as well as points of reference to which inmates may orient themselves.

Once an inmate occupies a given role, much of his behavior in the institution is predictable. By virtue of his location in the social structure, the inmate will have access to a variety of social and cultural resources that will make it possible for him to employ certain means for goal attainment. Square Johns, for example, have access to a variety of social resources making it possible for these types to employ legitimate alternatives for goal achievement. By the same token, however, they generally do not have access to resources making possible the use of illegitimate means. In short, the role is a mechanism regulating conduct, contact,

and communication within the inmate social system.

The present investigation has directed its attention to four major behavior alternatives in prison. Systematic linkages were found to exist between the criminal careers, institutional behavior, and normative orientations of inmates identified as Square Johns, Right Guys, Politicians, or Outlaws. The evidence suggests that the typology may be a fruitful and parsimonious method enabling researchers to approximate the complex network of social relationships actually maintained by inmates.

Although the problem of mixed-types was not dealt with in this study, their importance should not be overlooked or underestimated. In fact, it is not unlikely that closer approximations to the "social reality" of the prisoners' world can be made by constructing a typology of mixed-types. Behavioral actions and verbalizations are matters of degree, and further, inmates occupy more than one social role in prison. Some of the evidence presented suggests that this is the case. Further study is needed on the types of personality structure that are associated with the various behavior alternatives,²⁸ and of the conditions under which inmates may make a transition from one role to another.

²⁸ Sykes and Messinger discuss a number of problems which future research must answer before a firm empirical understanding of inmate roles can be derived. One of the problem areas mentioned by these authors is the relation of personality structure to the selection of a given role. See their *Inmate Social System*, in Cloward, *et al.*, *op. cit.* *supra* note 1, at 19.