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## Doing Time: Correcting Hearts at Tamworth Prison

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Prison sociology has traditionally followed some variety of structural analysis. This theoretical perspective is concerned with the societal members' values, attitudes, roles, activities and relationships that are assumed to be the result of, or at the very least influenced by, the organization and structure of the society in which the member lives (Cuff & Payne, 1984, p. 24).<sup>1</sup> There are two broad types of this perspective that have been utilized in prison research; both focus on the structural components of prison and the members of that system. The first type, structural functionalism, focuses on how these components affect order in prison. The second type, "conflict structuralism" (Cuff & Payne, 1984), focuses on how the structural components of prison and the larger society create conflict in prison.

Two examples of each theoretical perspective are presented here in a short review of the prison literature. This is followed by vignettes of prison life based on inmate accounts of the "correcting of hearts," their frequently used term for

“prisonization.” The article concludes with a number of questions the authors have found useful in stimulating lively discussion of the theoretical analysis of prisons.

### Literature Review

Clemmer’s *The Prison Community* (1940) is an early form of structural functional analysis. Based on interviews with staff and inmates, Clemmer’s exploratory study is an ethnography of prison culture. This pioneering work set forth the argument that administrative policy (i.e., authoritative control over inmates, or the lack of control over inmates) influenced inmate culture. This culture included behavior, rules, and attitudes (Clemmer, 1940, p. 294-295). Inmates could be unruly and prey on each other and staff if control was lacking.

This behavior would disrupt prison order and inmate adjustment to prison life. The prison administration would attempt to reestablish order by increasing control efforts, and inmates would counter these efforts through a process of “prisonization” (Clemmer, 1940). “Prisonization” was the socialization process through which the new inmates were inducted by other inmates into the inmate culture. The content of the socialization for new inmates included the learning of negative attitudes towards work, government, family, honesty and inmate groups other than their own. Inmate behavior would become resistant, obstructive and subterfugal. Clemmer saw this “prisonization” and the resultant inmate culture as unfortunate and unintended consequences of the administrative controls. Clemmer believed the negativism and hostility perpetuated by the inmate culture was destructive to the inmates’ reform and was “a stronger force for evil than the programs are for good” (Clemmer, 1940, p. xiii).

Sykes’ *The Society of Captives* (1958) was a qualitative, exploratory and ex post facto study that also applied a structural functional analysis. Attempting to determine the cause of a series of prison riots, Sykes studied institutional records and interviewed correctional officers, civilian work supervisors and inmates. Sykes found the cause of the prison disequilibrium to be rooted in the prison structure and values that followed from a policy of control. He argued that management’s major task was to control the inmates, but the prison system of power was flawed with structural weaknesses which left administrators serious difficulties in imposing their control regime on the inmates. These structural weaknesses involved the inmates’ lack of a sense of duty to obey correctional officers, and the correctional officers’ lack of legitimate rewards and punishments, with which they could encourage inmate submission.

Power based on authority, Sykes claimed, has two essential elements: the legitimacy of control efforts and a sense of duty to obey by those who are controlled (Sykes, 1958, p. 46-47). Sykes found the latter to be present down to the correctional officer level at the New Jersey State prison, which operated under a traditional organizational hierarchy. The sense of duty to obey disappeared, however, when the control efforts were applied to inmates. The correctional officers had to make deals (i.e., giving correctional officer duties to trusted inmates in exchange for their help in preventing trouble) and compromises (i.e., overlooking rule violations) with inmates to achieve compliance and order. Sykes argued that correctional officer corruption (i.e., reciprocity) could not be eliminated by replacing the correctional officers. New correctional officers were aggressively pressured by the inmates (i.e., threats of riots, blackmailing staff) until they, too, compromised the rules and regulations.

The problem was a weakness of the prison system. “The effort of the custodians to ‘tighten’ up the prison undermines the cohesive forces at work in the inmate population and it is these forces which play a critical part in keeping the society of the prison on an even keel” (Sykes, 1958, p. 124). The cohesive forces are the less violent and more stable inmates who are given illicit privileges in exchange for their help in encouraging inmate cohesiveness in prison equilibrium. If the prison officials strip these inmates of their power (tighten up), the more violent and less stable inmates rise to power.

In addition to providing the structural functional analysis described above, Sykes argued that the result of imprisonment on inmate values, attitudes and behaviors is a product of the patterns of interaction the inmate experiences on a daily basis (1958, p. 134). For example, inmates feel helpless and frustrated when staff refused to explain bureaucratic decisions. Sykes described the hardships of imprisonment (i.e., rejection, degradation, deprivation, alienation and lack of safety) felt by the inmates, and he acknowledged that, “Somehow the imprisoned criminal must find a device for rejecting his rejectors, if he is to endure psychologically” (1958, p. 67). Sykes also depicted the correctional officers’ work environment as dangerous and tense. He reported that the correctional officers were heavily outnumbered in a potentially violent setting and were often frustrated by the administrative pressure to maintain order while they lacked unconditional compliance from the inmates.

The second theoretical strand of prison sociology, “conflict structuralism,” saw tight controls on inmates as unjust and called for the sharing of power with them. Wright’s *The Politics of Punishment* (1973) is the first of two works representing this second branch of structural analysis that will be reviewed here. Wright who spent several years working and interviewing in prison, is more critical of prison operations than the structural functionalists. He thought rehabilitation was manipulative in the way that it attempted “to coerce the prisoner to conform to establish authority” (Wright, 1973, p. 325) and then use this conformity as the basic criterion for parole. Wright believed inmates were almost totally helpless to protect themselves against the dehumanization of “liberal” totalitarian rule he found in most prisons.

This prison administration's focus on rehabilitation was an individualistic solution that avoided and disguised the real causes of criminality. Wright claimed that it was the structural flaws in the capitalist system (i.e., unemployment and the lack of opportunities outside the prison), not individual failings, that were the problem. Wright believed that crime could be reduced, and prisons reformed, by moving the American capitalist society towards socialism. Within this context, prisons could be decentralized and not controlled by a “self-perpetuating, unrestrained bureaucracy” (Wright, 1973, p. 342). The administration of punishment could be placed under public surveillance. The prison under this system would “serve the interests of the people rather than of the elite” (Wright, 1973, p. 337). Wright (1973, p. 327) suggests that prison management has typically held to the position that prison order can only be obtained with traditional control strategies (i.e., correctional officer power over inmates), and that the effect of these strategies has been oppressive and inhumane prison conditions.

Irwin’s *Prisons in Turmoil* (1980) also represents this “conflict” branch of sociological theorizing. Irwin, an ex-felon and past leader in the Prison Reform movement of the 1970s, shows how American penal policy has followed changes in the economic and political conditions in the United States. His thinking ran against the usual functionalist sociology, which explained prison policy and activity largely in terms of internal events. Irwin believed that sociologists (i.e., Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958) who studied prison social climates were blinded by their focus on prison structure, and therefore failed to recognize the fact that when inmates enter prison, they bring their outside values with them. He also believed that if prisons are to be safe and free from malicious authoritarianism, staff and inmates should have more formal input into policy and grievance decisions.

## “CORRECTING HEARTS”

Inmates engage in seemingly shallow and unconnected activity that comprises the mosaic of prison life. Much of this activity involves the “prisonization” (Clemmer, 1940) process whereby inmates teach other inmates how things are done. Inmates (cons) periodically refer to this process as “correcting hearts.” The following vignettes of life on the inside are based on the cons’ own stories.

Except for the cons’ activity and the occasional rumors, like the guard dogs having no teeth, or the rabid raccoon in the heating system tunnels, or the warden killing two people when he was a CO (correctional officer), the days and nights at Tamworth Prison come and go with the predictability of a New Hampshire black fly season. Time tolls with the siren at 7, “breathing body” count at 7:15, breakfast at 8, work or school or nothing at 9, “breathing body” count at 11, chow at noon, yard or work or school or nothing at 2, “breathing body” count at 4, chow at 5, yard or recreation room at 6, “breathing body” count at 9, lock up at 10 and lights out at 11. Between the sirens of the Tamworth clock, the cons are busy.

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One day outside the chow hall, Duff, a white kid, has a beef with the one-eyed Black Cobra known as Naja. Duff takes a lead pipe about 16 inches long. Lord knows where he found it. He walks right up and pipes Naja over the head. A bunch of cons gather around, but no COs appear.

“Where are the COs?” a con asks.

“They’re at their desks with their feet up reading porn,” responds another con.

“That’s what they do best,” asserts another con.

Duff hits Naja over the head with a pipe. Gives him a good shot, too. Naja steps back and rubs his head and gives a little “ouch.” This is not a good sign. One of Naja’s friends steps forward and punches Duff in the face and makes him drop the pipe. That’s it. He’s done for now. Duff has Walter with him, who is supposed to watch his back, but Walter walks away. Duff twists on the ground getting kicked and punched. Finally, he claws the path out of there. As Duff and Walter get away, they run into a gang of approaching Black Cobras.

“Hey, he just hit brother Naja with the pipe,” the Cobra who kicked Duff yells at the gang of Cobras.

The gang walks up to Walter and suckers him.

“No, not that one. The other one,” the Cobra says, pointing at Duff.

The gathered cons laugh. “Boy, he got what he deserved,” says a con.

Walter went with Duff and was supposed to help him. If there are any problems, he's supposed to pull Duff out of there and keep things cool. He shows no heart, so he gets whacked. He should have watched Duff's back.

The beef was over cigarettes, Tamworth currency. Naja owed Duff and was giving him one of those, “Okay, see you later” jibes. He was hunking Duff off, telling him, “I'm not going to pay ya.” It was over a gambling debt or a loan. The Cobra owed Duff something and didn't pay. Duff makes the point. Naja, alone, has a reputation as a sneak, but he and his buddies generally run in large packs. That's how they scare you.

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Walter is a loser, a heroin addict, one of those dumb guys from Hampton Beach. He's about 5'7" inches, 170 pounds- a decent weight- but he isn't smart. He also has a problem with Tony. Tony is a good size kid. He's probably about 5'10", but he goes about 200 pounds- a good thick kid. Walter mouths off to Tony one night when he's drunk on some home brew. Tony tells him, “Hey, just get away from me. I don't want to bother with you.”

Tony can fight. He has real fast hands. Walter just keeps bothering him. All of a sudden Tony pushes him back. The kid lunges with a punch. Tony ducks and throws an uppercut that catches Walter, lifts him off his feet and blows him into the lockers. That's it. He's out, out for the night. They pick him up, put him in his bed, pulled the blankets over him and leave him there. The next day he wakes up like nothing ever happened.

Everyone knows that bald Walter is a moron because he's always strutting around like he's a tough guy. He has few friends. Basically, he's a loner. If you're alone how tough can you be if five guys come after you?

Tough guys talk like they can beat everybody up. If there's a problem they go, "Hey, I'll kick his butt." They think that by running their mouth - by having a big bark- that they don't have to worry about fighting anybody. They figured that if you talk tough no one is going to call you on it. But that's not how it goes. The quiet guys have no problems because there's always a question. The other cons think, "Hey, wait a minute, he's too quiet. I don't want to bother with him." You don't know what they're capable of doing.

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Charlie is not one of the quiet guys, but he thinks he's tough. He's very strong-minded and certain of himself. He's not a moron, but he's not as smart as he thinks he is. His softball team plays one of the Hispanic teams. The veterans at Tamworth have a team and Charlie plays on it. Charlie likes to run his mouth when he plays. Talks a little trash. Gets himself pumped up.

"You can't hit. You suck. You shit," Charlie yells at an Hispanic second baseman who just made an error. Charlie's team is up at bat. The second baseman doesn't like Charlie's lip and yells at Charlie, "Hey, shut your mouth."

Charlie keeps going. The second baseman says, "I'll see you after the game."

Neither of them says anything else. Come the end of the game, Charlie forgets all about it. Charlie isn't smart enough to realize somebody just challenged him and that he should have somebody to watch his back. There's a saying in Tamworth, "You don't write a check with your mouth that your fist can't cash."

Charlie says he's going to do something, but Charlie is mad because the veterans lost the game. He storms off the field and walks away. The Hispanic guys go after him. His teammates are behind him. Three of them come to his aid. A couple of Hispanic guys run right up to him and start jumping on him, throwing punches and kicks. A few more guys start to get in on it. There ends up being nine Hispanic guys against Charlie and his three friends. Charlie does OK. He gets a fat lip out of it.

The COs report over the radio that there is a fight. Charlie's older brother, Alex, is in the gym. He doesn't know it's Charlie, but he hears on the radio that there's a freeze. This is what the COs call for when there's a fight. They freeze up all the

buildings - no movement - that way they can restrict the inmates from heading outside. They don't want a big brawl, so they get on the walkie-talkies and call for a freeze up. Alex hears it and a CO says, "Hey, if you want to go, go now. Get out of the gym so you don't get locked in. I've got to go lock the gate."

Alex runs outside. He doesn't want to be locked in the hot gym if the freeze-up lasts a couple of hours. Alex looks over at the commotion, but still has no clue it's Charlie. Later on, he finds out. But the guys who come to Charlie's defense get a couple of shots off. Charlie pops two Hispanic kids really good, but the COs grab Alex 20 minutes later because Charlie is Alex's family, and they know that Alex is a lot more powerful in Tamworth than Charlie. They know Alex has powerful friends.

The COs go up to Alex and say, "Listen, your little brother just got jumped by some guys down at the softball field. Do you know anything about it?"

Alex says, "Listen, I'm getting out of here next month to go to minimum. I'm not going to screw up. If Charlie runs his mouth in here, too bad for Charlie."

A con who's been listening says, "Hey, that ain't cool man. Your brother got beat up. What are you going to do?"

Alex says, "What am I supposed to do? He got beat up because he ran his mouth. He was laughing at the second baseman because he'd made an error. If he'd called him a 'Spic' the game would have been over, bats would have went flying and everything."

You have to really curve what you say for that kind of stuff. Charlie is smart enough not to say anything like that, and he doesn't think that way. He never thinks "Spic" or "Nigger." He has friends who are Hispanic and friends who are black. It isn't his way. But to come across to one of them- yelling, swearing and stuff like that - they don't take too kindly to it. This is funny.

Everyone laughs about it now, even Charlie who's locked in the hole until they ship him out of Tamworth. He's not telling on anybody, which is what you're supposed to do. It's funny because it's so dumb.



When Alex sees his brother he says, “Charlie, the Hispanic guy just told you he'd see you after the game. You don't just walk away without somebody with ya. I mean that's common sense and you have to have some common sense.”

Tamworth common sense is different from real world common sense. Had Charlie stayed on the field they probably would have barked back and forth right there. It may not have ended. It depends on the other guy, like when Alex had to correct Charlie's heart after a basketball game.

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There are two muscle heads, Bobby and Wendell. They're both about 6' 1" and 245 pounds. They're big boys. Just punks though. Punks with no heart. You could smack them in the face, and they'd go, “Oh, what'd do that for?” Instead of punching, they'd want to know what you did it for. That's kind of how they are. In the basketball game they get a little rough with Charlie, throwing elbows and stuff. Charlie gets banged around and doesn't like it. He isn't a good basketball player, but he's 6' and 190 pounds. He's not that small. Hispanic kids are small, but they bang Charlie around.

After the game Hispanics are standing around over at F building, where Charlie lives. They're running their mouths at Charlie about the game. Charlie goes right up to Bobby and Wendell. Charlie has a real bad temper, and he doesn't know what he's saying when he's pissed. He challenges them.

“Ya got a problem with me? I'll shank you.”

Bobby and Wendell look at him like, “Ya, OK.” These two guys have plenty of tattoos, but no heart. They go up to Alex a half hour later.

“Hey, Alex, you gotta talk to your brother. We were just screwing around with him. You know, making fun of how he was playing hoop and stuff. He says that we were getting rough with him and he threatened to stab us.”

“Ah, shit,” says Alex. “Let me go take care of this.”

He finds Charlie and asks, “What's going on?”

“Ah, you know,” says Charlie, “they were running their mouths to me.”

Alex went off to see a friend and he got Charlie a knife. He gives it to Charlie and says, "Here."

"What's that for?" asks Charlie.

"You gotta go stab him. He threatened him."

"I don't want to stab him."

"Well, you told him you were going to stab him. You can't do that. If you say you're gonna do something, you gotta do it."

"No, I've already got a second degree, I'm not gonna stab anybody."

"Well, Charlie, I mean you can't go around threatening people and then just leave it hanging. They think that you're going to stab them. If they have any heart at all, or any fear, they're going to come stab you before you stab them."

Alec returns the knife to his buddy and comes back and listens to Bobby and Wendell.

"Hey, we don't want no problems with the kid," they tell Alex. "You know we were just messing around."

"Well," Alex says, "leave the kid alone and don't bother him no more. Charlie's been in for one and a half, but he's a country kid. He just wants to think that he can tell you whatever he wants and there's not going to be any repercussions."

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Alex has another friend, Vern. Vern is no country kid like Charlie, and he doesn't worry about repercussions. He plays jokes on the COs. He calls a CO named Butch into a cell. Vern's cell mate, Larry, sneaks behind Butch and shuts the gate. Butch is trapped and can't get out. Butch can't just call it in on the radio. The other COs will think he's a junk. Vern and Larry make Butch give him the cell key and leave him stewing for 30 minutes until somebody comes looking for him. Butch falls for this all the time. He's dumb and lazy. Every Sunday he buys Vern and Larry the Sunday "Star." It's their reading material for the week. Butch takes the paper and

lays on Larry's bunk and reads and sleeps all afternoon. As long as the block is quiet, Butch's supervisor doesn't care.

In the summertime Butch comes in, puts on some headphones and listens to the Red Sox games on Larry's radio. Sometimes if Butch has the headphones on Larry goes in and says, "Hey, they're looking for you." But Butch is asleep on Larry's bunk and doesn't hear. Larry taps on Butch's boot to wake him up. "Hey, it's almost three. You gotta go home now."

Larry bets a lot with the COs on basketball games. He never loses, but if he did, he'd pay them off with packs of cigarettes. There is one young Hispanic CO. When Larry gives him cigarettes, he trades him off to Larry's friend, Dino, who's a Dominican kid. Dino makes up these great Hispanic meals. They are better than at a restaurant. He gets the ingredients from the kitchen of the COs. The COs asked, "Hey, if I bring in some steak tips would you make me up a meal?" A few times Larry wins bets with the COs and they bring him steak tips and lobster tails.

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Tamworth is a great place for eating. This is especially true for the guys on the crews who sweep the streets and pick up the trash on the highway. Rachel, the CO on Larry's crew, is nice. She's married to an ex-con. Rachel really understands things. She stops at the grocery store and picks up shrimp, La Choy fried rice, chickens, shaving cream, razors and stuff. She laughs when she and the cons talk about a guy in the dorms who is called the booty bandit. He goes around at night and wakes guys up. As soon as they wake up, he cracks them in the jaw, knocks them out, rolls them over and screws them. Everyone else minds their own business. The bandit doesn't do just anybody. It's a pick and choose thing.

The dorms are much more violent than any other area. Rachel started here and then got moved to the crew. So much goes on in the dorms that you see, but you don't see. What's going on around you is actually entertainment. Even if it's right next to you. Duff, still hurting from being beaten up by the Black Cobras, sits at a table and a Black Cobra at a table next to his jumps across the table and stabs him in the eye with a fork. The COs come and drag away Duff and his attacker. Two other guys in the table look at each other. "Huh?" One guy grab Duff's plate. "I guess he's not going to be eating now." The cons and the remaining COs laugh.

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There is one CO, Francis Gill. He walks around like a tough guy. In real life he's a woman beater. Not many of the COs like him so the cons know his business. One of the female COs is Gills' former girlfriend. She talks. Gill comes around and kicks ass. He comes and shakes down the rooms. He pat searches cons when they walk through the yard. A con carries a bag of groceries from the canteen and Gill wants to know what's in it. He makes himself hated. One day the cons find out from the other CO that Gil hasn't been at work for a couple of days. He went to his ex-wife's house, argued with her and shot up her kitchen with a handgun. He gets arrested for it. When they put him in jail, he doesn't tell them what his occupation is - not even in court. He doesn't want anyone to know he's a CO. He's doing six to nine years. Mocha thinks this is hilarious.

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Mocha is a pigtailed black guy who wears lipstick. He's a straight-out homosexual and prostitute, but he's got one of the most solid hearts in Tamworth. He doesn't pull his punches and he doesn't lie. He helps his friends when they are in trouble. He wears mostly women's stuff, even bras and panties. The COs bring him pink shoes, lipstick and makeup.

Mocha has a friend named Rose. Rose is short for Roosevelt. Rose is a mulatto with breasts. He can't fight. The others, Mocha, Morris and Sandy, can fight. If they have a problem with a con, they fight, no problem. One of the Irish wannabe tough guys from the Concord area says something to Rose one day. Calls him a fag. Totally disrespects him. The wannabe gets up to hit Rose with a chain, but Mocha comes to his aid and beats the kid senseless. From now on, it's "Who's the tough guy now? You just got beat by a man's man."

To mess with Mocha, Morris, Rose, Sandy and the others because they're gay is stupid. If cons have a problem with them, OK. Take care of it. But what they do is their thing. It's not like they're coming up to hit on the straights or anything like that. Cons think it's funny to see Mocha and Rose walking around holding hands. They walk around with fishnet pants and tank-top T- shirts. This is popular in the dorms because there are more customers. Everyone can see what's going on. It's harder in the cell buildings because the cons are locked in at night. But it is sometimes done because the COs don't like to make rounds. Mocha and Rose like to risk it in the recreation room, but it's not always available.

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Alex practices martial arts in the recreation room. Three cons workout three nights a week and they never get bothered. Some of the other cons get upset because Alex moves the pool table up against the wall and it can't be used. Alex also practices martial arts by himself in a cell, but he's not allowed to teach anyone. He does help his brother, Charlie, so he can back up his running mouth. Charlie is dumb, but he's learning karate.

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Then there's Jamal, another Black Cobra. Jamal did four guys in a pool hall. He's got five pool balls tattooed on his chest. Four of the balls have the name of a victim tattooed inside. Jamal says the fifth ball will soon have the name of the judge or the prosecutor. Jamal hangs with Mocha's prostitute friend, Sandy, and is into gambling. Cons think he's funny when he watches football. He bites his knuckles until they bleed, and his teeth fall out when he shakes his head. Someone arranged to hit Jamal a few years back. A gun got smuggled in, but someone ratted. They found the gun, but not the hit man. Some guys were suspected and got shipped out. Jamal checked himself into the protective custody block for over a year when he found out about the attempt. He thinks Loretto was the hit man and he stays away from him.

Loretto is connected. Loretto is a short, skinny Italian guy doing a short bid for mail fraud. He also did hits, but never got caught. Doing hits, he'd dress up like a little old lady in a flower dress. He's a little guy who looks like he should be bagging groceries at a Mom and Pop store. He just got bagged in an insurance fraud. To hear him talk, he's wealthy, too. He had the Purple Onion Diner burnt down for the money. He hired some dumb kid to torch the place. The arson squad investigated, and it comes back to the kid. While the kid is on bail, he throws Lance Loretto's name around. Now Loretto calls the kid. "Don't do nothing stupid. The family ain't going to be too happy." But the family gets implicated. They arrest the kid and they come in and arrest Loretto. He's convicted and they slap on another five years. All this because the kid couldn't keep his mouth shut. Loretto should have hired the kid a lawyer, bailed him out and kept him quiet.

They send the kid to Goffstown prison for his own protection. According to Loretto, who gets it from the COs, Tamworth isn't anything like Goffstown. Goffstown is like a Country Club. They hit the button at 7:15 in the morning. The

cell doors open and the cons can go about anywhere they want until an 11:30 evening count. Everything is laid back. Cons can lie on their backs all day. Twice a year they can have pizza from the outside. Twice a year they can have Dunkin' Donuts or Chinese. Every group a con signs up for, like the veterans or the lifers, the con can get the food. The more groups the con belongs to you, the better he can eat. Loretto is pissed. "This is their right? Their privilege?"

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Norton gets pissed, too, and he's thinking about filing a suit. Norton is a big heavysset guy with a pug nose. He comes in at 6' and 250 pounds. Good cut on him and a good belly. He's doing 40 to 60. While he was out on escape, he raped and killed someone. Every time something goes wrong at Tamworth, he files a lawsuit. His sister brings him a shirt one day. As it comes from where she dropped it off to where he gets it, a little stain appears. Norton isn't even certain that the stain wasn't already there. He sues anyway. He takes the Department of Corrections to court. He makes them spend all their money on lawyers and stuff just so he can get \$30 for a new shirt. He wins most of these lawsuits. Once he sued because his sister was visiting and used his "debit" card to get a soda. The machine charged the card but delivered no soda. They offered to give him \$0.60.

Norton talks like he's F. Lee Bailey. The Department of Corrections doesn't want people suing them, so they fight on principle, too. They should settle. Norton is the only guy at Tamworth who, through a grandfather clause, is allowed to have a home stereo system in a cell. He has a big box of cassettes and huge speakers. The prison tried to take it. They came and took it. He filed suit and they bring it right back to his cell when the suit is over. He's a whiner and the cons don't care for him. He'd help a con if they had a problem, but the con would have to listen to all his problems. Loretto sometimes listens to Norton, but Loretto doesn't trust him.

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Loretto shares a cell with Marco. Marco is a big guy with heart and is Alex's friend. He's about 6' and 270 pounds. He loves to gamble. He's like a Hispanic don and leads all the Hispanic and Dominican guys. He's their softball coach. If there are problems, he speaks on their behalf. He's a real good organizer and he keeps his guys pretty much in line. He has a few strays, but for the most part everyone listens to what he has to say, but he can't get away from the gambling. One summer he tries baseball. He loses an average of 10 cartons of cigarettes a day for about six

weeks. He loses all his cigarettes, so he calls his outside friends and has them send checks. He always makes good on his debts. He's the kind of guy who says, "I'll pay you 10 cartons next week or I'll call my people now and they'll send \$200." The guys usually say, "Alright, \$200." What are you going to do with 10 cartons? You can only have three at a time anyway. He sends them all this money.

Before Marco shared a cell with Loretta, Marco and Alex were cellmates. Every night they'd check the baseball scores, and Marco would swear in Spanish. "Mierda! No puedo creer que perdi una vez mas. Hell, I lost again. What's wrong with Toronto?" Alex laughs. Alex feels sorry for him, but he has to laugh.

"What the hell you laughing at?" Marco asks.

"You haven't won in weeks. Why do you keep going?" asks Alex.

"Cause, I'm going to find a winner sooner or later."

"Yea, when all your money is gone. Just stop. Leave baseball alone. Football is coming. You can bet on that."

Marco was great at football. He wins all his losses back during football season. When he's not loan sharking, he's in his cell cooking. He and Alex have great meals. Marco is in there with his tongue hanging out of his mouth, biting it between his teeth, cooking up the food. He loves to cook. He's excellent. Marco and Alex have a little agreement. Alex keeps the cell clean and Marco does all the cooking. They rarely go to the chow hall. They never have to leave. For breakfast they have omelets with ham and cheese or pepperoni. All the stuff comes from the kitchen or from the canteen. For lunch they have cold cuts. For dinner they have all kinds of Hispanic meals with rice, chicken, pulpa and calamari. They never have to go anywhere.

Marco and Alex also do good business. They both loan shark cigarettes. Alex has all the white guys coming to him and some of the black guys. Marco has the rest of the blacks and Hispanics. If a Hispanic guy goes to Alex for cigarettes, he checks with Marco.

"Why does this guy need cigarettes?" Alex asks.

"Well, he owes me."

“Well, I'm not giving him any then. If he owes you, then obviously he can't pay me either.”

Marco does the same thing when white guys go to him. Marco is smart. He has guys doing his business for him down in the dorms. He has three or four guys down there who he gives three or four cartons to each. He tells them what to do.

“Hey, give me five or six packs a week and take three or four packs for yourself.”

Marco makes all his money because he had these guys doing it for him. The cons watch him operate and think it's hilarious. He marches up with this big old coat on. He opens his coat, and the cartons drop out of everywhere. Marco gets out of Tamworth soon and then he goes to federal prison for two years. Alex will miss his friend. Cons have a lot of acquaintances on the inside, but not many friends. A friend is someone who is there for them if they have a problem.

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Marco has a few other true friends at Tamworth. One is his buddy, Jarvis. Jarvis has been in for 14 years and he's never getting out. He's a real good kid though, and if he gets out, he'll do well. He doesn't think like a criminal. He was reckless and wild when he was younger. He's in his 40s now and he's mellow. He doesn't want any more crime. Other guys look to make a fast buck, to screw people over. They don't take a lot of pride in their name, in their word, in the respect that they give or the respect that they expect to receive in return. They don't care who they are around or what they look like. Jarvis is different. He's a lot like Marco. He would do well if he ever gets out, but that will never happen. He's working on it though. He's trying to get in an appeal, but the courts are slow. It will take him forever, especially since he doesn't have money. Money moves things in the justice system. Money makes deals. Guys who are broke go nowhere at all.

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Frenchy is broke. He's one of Marco's friends. He doesn't tell anyone his real name. Says he's from Paris. Frenchy gets stabbed one day over a mop bucket. The Black Cobra, Naja, is mopping the floor. Some of the guys there are very good at keeping it clean. It's where they live. “Keep it clean, keep the cockroaches out,” is what the Cobras always say. Frenchy has a guy living next door to him. He has all kinds of



cockroaches. Frenchy has none. Naja is cleaning up his room. Frenchy goes down and starts giving him a hard time over it. Frenchy wants the bucket. There is no other bucket around, so he needs that one. Naja says he'll bring it down when he's done. When he finishes, he dumps the water out, rings out and hangs up the mop, and goes to put the bucket away. Frenchy runs screaming at him in broken English.

“Why you put that away, I need to use it. What's the hell's matter with you?”

Naja is an old timer who lost the sight of one eye in a knife fight. He's in this early 60s, and he's got 10 months left of a 30-year bid for murder.

“Who you talking to you?” he asks Frenchy.

Frenchy screams at him in French. Naja says, “Alright, I'll be right back.” He goes down to the second floor and gets Cobra Jamal and a make-shift knife. Naja grabs Frenchy by the top of a shirt, throws him up against the wall and starts punching holes in him, right in front of the COs. The COs jump out of their glass bubble. Jamal pulls a knife out, too, and yells at the COs.

“Don't even think about it. You wanna go home at three o'clock? I mean, you work from seven to three. It's not your job to get stabbed. Too bad for him. You're gonna get stabbed so this guy can live? It's not worth it. You're only making \$10 an hour.”

The COs step back. Frenchy tries to get away, but Cobra Naja has him in a good hold. Frenchy's got his arms up trying to protect himself, but Naja is punching little holes in him here in there. He gets some good little shots in. The COs close all the port doors. Other cons stand there watching all this. A bunch of other COs run up the stairs. There's nothing they can do. Jamal stands there, too. The COs could try to get the knives away from Naja and Jamal, but then what? What if they don't?

Frenchy finally breaks away from Naja. He runs past the COs and goes downstairs and onto the 2nd floor with Naja chasing him. Jamal still holds the COs away. Frenchy runs into a room on the 2nd floor. The people on the 2nd floor don't even know what's going on. He bursts into a room, shuts the door behind him and tries to hold the door shut by leaning against it, hoping Naja doesn't run after him. This guy, Vinni Corinelli, an older con in his mid 50s, sits there doing some

schoolwork. He looks up and there's a guy in his room with blood pumping out of him, pouring all over his face.

“What the hell is going on?”

All this over a mop bucket. Frenchy isn't hurt too bad. Most guys don't know where to stab, so their knives don't hit anything vital. Most cons just try to cut you because they think the sight of blood is going to make you faint. They go for appearance rather than damage. Jamal gets shipped to a different prison and Naja ends up in the detention block, where he does eight months. He's locked in all day long, 24 hours a day. When everybody around him is good and everyone behaves, Naja gets a shower. This is usually once every three or four days. When people are screwing around, it's once every two or three months. Naja gets out and talks.

“Sometimes if the COs wanna be jerks they'll leave you cuffed while you're in the shower. How do you wash yourself? They let you take a shower, but you're cuffed behind your back. So now you've gotta get on the floor and try to get your arms up underneath your butt and get your legs around. It's not that easy. It's tough.”

Nadja is released from Tamworth a few days after he gets out of detention block. Rumor has it that he just got picked up for driving without a license, illegally attaching plates, speeding and failure to stop for an officer.

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Cons at Tamworth really don't talk about their cases. Cases are personal, especially if cons are working on trying to get back out. Larry takes a minute at chow to correct a new con on this.

“What happens is you don't want to talk about your case 'cause if somebody knows some information they might try and testify against you if you get a new trial. So, they can get leniency on themselves. And then if you've been here for so long and you're so accustomed to not doing it then you don't bother. It's nobody's business what you're here for or any of the particulars about your case. You can't have anybody knowing that because it always comes back to haunt you. Vern corrected me on that when I first went in 'cause I was talking to Norton about legal work and stuff. Vern pulled me aside and said, ‘Hey, that guy's no good. Don't talk to him about your case. Keep your case to yourself. Keep it between you and your lawyer and paper. Ya see, everybody here wants to get out. There are plenty of guys in

here who you could tell you killed 10 people and robbed 20 banks and they'd never tell on you. But there are guys in here you could tell you popped the lock on a soda machine and scored \$12 in change and they'd tell on you. So, it doesn't make sense, but that's the way it is. There are a lot of weak links in the chain."

Alex's brother, Charlie, is one. He came to Tamworth after Charlie had served four years. Charlie is bad with drugs and alcohol. He came after Alex got clean and had established a good reputation.

Alex told him, "Hey, listen, I'll take care of you. Let me give you some cigarettes, some coffee, some munchies, some cookies and chips and stuff to set you up."

He quickly got Charlie a job. Jobs are hard to get because there are only 225 jobs and 1000 inmates. Alex also got him enrolled in school and into the veteran's program. Alex is the vice president. With these three things, Charlie gets seven and a half days a month good time, two and a half days for each. But, right off the bat Charlie finishes up his cigarettes and his coffee. He passes them out to his new friends and wants more from Alex.

Alex says, "No, I'm not going to support you. I'll help you out. What the hell, I've got to take care of myself. Look, loan shark a little bit to get some cigarettes. I'll lend you a couple of customers and you can make enough so you can keep yourself smoking. If can make yourself a couple of cartoons a week and not have to pay for it then you'll be OK."

Alex grew accustomed to living nicely and is going to maintain that style. He sends money home, too. He likes being able to help out with the kids. It isn't much, but he can do it. His wife used the money to buy the kids two Siberian puppies for Christmas.

Charlie gets pissed at Alex's lack of continued support and finds his own way to make some money. He hooks up with this other guy, named Bartlett.

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Bartlett's a good kid. He's a player from the Peterborough area. He's somebody who does his own thing. He's a hustler. Bartlett talks Charlie into bringing some drugs in. And rather than make a dry run, Charlie does it cold. Alex tells him later,

“Ya should have gone out there with your girl and have her bring maybe a small balloon of pot. Try and bring that in and see how it goes.”

But Charlie does it cold. The first time out there Charlie’s girl carries 100 hits of crack and 50 bags of heroin. That’s a lot of money. That’s a lot of stuff in the joint. This girls got this on her. This girl is stupid. She’s stupid for doing it in the first place. The dumbest move was Charlie’s because if you’re setting something like that up, the girl has to know.

Alex corrects Charlie, “Look, get a ‘Debit’ card and put some money on it. Tell her to buy some soda, some food. Sit down. Get comfortable. Tell her you’ll be out in a couple of minutes. And when you get out there, she passes the balloon. You take some soda and swallow it down and you go back to the block. You pass it and you get it out. You did it all wrong. She didn’t bring no soda in. No food in. Nothing. You’re out there trying to stuff the bag into your mouth, trying to swallow it with no soda. The COs got you gagging on videotape. You’re out there with your girl, trying to make sure everything is OK. You get a soda, but it’s already too late. Your girl gets grabbed on her way out. You get grabbed.”

Although Alex and Charlie are brothers, they haven’t lived together since they were little kids. They both moved away. Their time in Tamworth is the longest they lived together since they were kids. Bartlett wants to know from Alex if Charlie can be trusted.

Alex says, “All I know is, my brothers got a good heart, ‘cause when I got arrested, he heard it and drove up from Nashua and went to the police station and confessed to the murder to try to save me from going to jail. As far as I know he’s got a good heart.”

Charlie gives up Bartlett that night. He told on Bartlett. Told on the guy who delivered the stuff to the girl and gave her a ride up there. Alex doesn’t know this. Now when cons do something like that, the normal procedure for Bartlett would be for Bartlett to stab Charlie, but Bartlett can’t get to Charlie because he’s locked up. Bartlett needs to correct Charlie with the message, but because Alex is close with this guy, Bobby, who’s with the family from Nashua, Barlette knows he can’t do this. So, he talks to Bobby and then he talks to Alex.

“Hey, I have no clue what’s going on, but if you say he didn’t know what he was doing, then I believe you.”

Bartlett has heart. He hires a lawyer for Charlie. He even sends him money for his canteen. Bartlett's taking care of him. Charlie finally recants with the confession. He takes the fall and ends up with a five to seven after he finishes what he's on now, which is a nine to 12. When you get time with the joint, it's day for day. No statutory good time. So, Charlie has to do a mandatory extra five for something stupid.

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Any con has a million chances to mess around with drugs. A little packet of heroin, about the size of a teaspoon, is \$6 on the street. In Tamworth it gets split in half. Each half is \$25. It's profitable and tempting, but it's not worth it. Alex and Marco are better off loan sharking cigarettes and cash. They have somebody sending them \$400 or \$500 to pay off \$300 loans and debts. Interest rates are high. As long as Alex and Marco stay with cigarettes and cash no one bothers them. The COs want to nab the drug dealers. They leave loan sharks alone because they know there's going to be gambling and drugs. As long as Alex and Marco are loan sharking cigarettes to the cons, the cons can pay their bills. If they pay their bills, then no one gets hurt. The COs know what they're doing, but they don't care. For the cons it's just a matter of being smart. Charlie goofs and Alex disowns him for a couple of years until the whole thing clears up.

“In my heart I still love you, but I know that I had to do what I had to do. 'Cause it was my reputation, too. You have to make a name for yourself. You have to have a strong heart in here,” Alex tells Charlie.

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Steve Saporeschti, a forger and a gypsy, has the reputation, a name and a life bid. He's a pretty good fighter, strong and tough. He knows everyone. He says he's connected. He talks like he's a mastermind criminal. He kills a guy over 100 pills when he's junking out. He's like the mayor of Tamworth. The guys with heart at other prisons send their friends who are being transferred to Tamworth to see Steve. That's how they take care of their friends. Steve sends one of these kids, a young gypsy named Demetros, to Alex. Alex takes care of the kid. Gives him some cigarettes, soap, shampoo, whatever he needs. Alex doesn't expect it back. He just does a favor. He knows if the favor can be returned, it will be.

Demetros' mother is a fortune teller. She comes up to visit the kid. A real nice woman. Alex asks if she'll do a reading for Charlie. Charlie isn't allowed in the visiting room, so she says get him to sign his name on a piece of paper and she'll use that. She did a reading for Charlie that very day. Just about everything comes true. She predicts that Charlie will have a real tough judge when he goes to court on the drug charge. He has the toughest. She puts down that he will have a fat Jewish lawyer, and that's who the court appoints for Charlie. She says how much time Charlie will actually do. She says five years and it was five years.

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Friday nights on the radio station they have disco classics. Duff and Jarvis have single cells, so they go down to Duff's cell, smoke a couple of joints, get high, listen to the classics and reminisce. They open the door and the window and air it all out. While it's airing out, they go down to Jarvis's cell and watch a hockey game on TV. They sit there and shoot the shit. They grew up in the same neighborhood of Manchester. They know some of the same people and did some of the same things in the same neighborhoods. It's fun for them because nobody can get in there. It's a little bond they have. They sit there until 5 of 10. They start at about 7, and three hours later it's time for lock up. That's how they go out for the evening, their escape from it all. They turn it up loud and cons come by looking in.

“What the hell are you guys doing?” the cons asked.

“Friday night out,” says Duff.

They talk about this roller skating rink right next to Derryfield Park called the “Skateoffs.” This was in the early 1980s. Duff and Jarvis didn't know each other then, but they both used to go there.

“How come I never bumped into you back then?” asked Duff.

“Ah, gee, if we were out together now, I know what we be doing,” says Jarvis.

Some of the COs know they smoke pot. Some don't care. They're in the bubble all the time, reading their porn. Duff gets caught one time. It was Friday night out. He and Jarvis smoke a couple. Jarvis leaves and walks down the hall. The CO comes the other way. Duff stands there watching Jarvis go down the hall. He lights up a cigar to flush out the smell. The CO comes walking by.

“A little late for that,” says the CO.

The CO is mad, but he goes back to the bubble. He doesn't shake down the room. Duff goes down and tries to talk to the CO, but the CO is furious.

“That is disrespecting me. I don't appreciate that,” says the CO.

Duff says, “Look, Josh, I could get in my cell, smoke a couple of joints and only have to worry about you or Jason coming down and busting me or I could go out in the yard, walk around, smoke a couple of joints and worry about 300 or 400 guys telling on me, trying to get a move to minimum. What are my odds? You know. I've got better odds doing it up here. I apologize. Hey, it happened, I won't do it again.”

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The next day Duff and Jarvis go to the gym to play basketball. They do this every Saturday with ten other white guys. On this Saturday Duff and Jarvis drink a bunch of water before they go down. They figure they're going to get called for urine sometime, but they don't know it's going to be this morning. They play for about three hours straight. The COs call a bunch of them over, and Duff and Jarvis give urine. The gypsy kid, Demetros, sits apologetically in the corner.

“I'm sorry, you guys. This is my fault.”

Duff and the others look at each other.

Demetros says, “Hum, I got caught with homebrew last night and that's why they're calling people over.”

“Don't worry about it, kid. We gave the urines and came up clean. No problem,” says Duff. He and his buddies laugh.

Duffin and Jarvis never get turned in.

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Plenty of cons and COs do, however, get turned in as their time passes and the Tamworth Odyssey goes on. The mix of characters changes as cons get released, COs get fired or quit or retire and new kids take their places. Some people leave their mark more indelibly than others. A few, like cons Norton, Wendell and Walter and officer Gill die here, either of natural or unnatural causes. They never get heart. Quite a few of the survivors have heart.

A few have heart when they come in. Maybe they've been in before or learned it on the street. Many cons get heart while they're in, but some never get it, although attempts are made to correct them. A good number of the others live in pain and are strangers to themselves and others. Their characters never get developed. Some get lost along the way and some build a cold wall of protective and estranged silence. A few cons are released and stay out. Alex is back with his wife, three kids and two Siberian Huskies. Demetros, the gypsy, shares an apartment with his mother. Occasionally, someone moves backwards in the system. Alex's brother, Charlie, is transferred to a prison with no plumbing in the cells. A few Black Cobras are dispersed throughout the federal system. Usually, those who remain find things to laugh about as the entertainment and correcting hearts goes on between the sirens of the Tamworth Clock.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions should be answered and debated based on the stories and vignettes provided above. (1) Which of the four theoretical perspectives best explains the "correcting of hearts?" (2) Would more, or less, staff control over inmates keep prison violence to a minimum? (3) What evidence is provided that disequilibrium exists? (4) Do you agree that inmate values follow from administrative control? (5) What rewards and punishments do staff have that they use to encourage inmate submission? (6) Do you agree that inmates lack a sense of duty to obey the correctional officers? If so, why? (7) Would living in Tamworth be a hardship for you? How so? (8) Which Tamworth inmates have "heart?" (9) Should prison administrators allow inmates any say and authority in the running of the prison and/or the establishment of policy and rules affecting inmates? (10) What evidence do you have to suspect that inmates are serving time because of some "individual failing?" What about because of some failing in the capitalist system? (11) Were an outside observer to visit Tamworth, would he/she be shocked at what is discovered? How so? (12) Do you find the conditions at Tamworth to be oppressive and inhumane? Why? (13) To what extent have the Tamworth inmates brought their values into Tamworth, as opposed to learning the



values there? (14) Are the inmates' stories an accurate portrayal in prison life? How could they be double checked? (15) What inmate values are respected by Tamworth inmates? (16) What structural components affect order at Tamworth? What is orderly? (17) What structural components create conflict at Tamworth? Where is the conflict? Who benefits from this conflict? (18) How authentic are the inmates' presentations of self? (19) Do you see examples of impression management? (20) How important do you think it is for inmates to have a close friend on the inside? Why?

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<sup>1</sup> Cuff and Payne (1984, p. 24) argue that there are two broad theoretical perspectives founded on the assumption that human behavior is greatly influenced by the organizational structure of the society in which people live. One of the perspectives, structural functionalism, is also known as the consensus perspective and focuses on order. The other structural approach is called the conflict perspective. Generally, theorists from this perspective are critics of social systems. They view social life in terms of the conflict and coercion that result from social organization that “creates different involvement and interests for people” (110). “Conflict structuralism” is the term used here to describe this perspective.