The Effectiveness of Training for Correction Officers in the Performance of their Job

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Dedication

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Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................. 4

History of Correctional Training in New York ........................................... 4

Training Today .......................................................................................... 12

Getting into the Academy ....................................................................... 13

Training Courses at the Academy .......................................................... 14

The Academy's Preparation for On-the-Job Training ............................. 16

The Job of a Correction Officer ................................................................. 18

Harm and Injuries ..................................................................................... 18

Duties .......................................................................................................... 20

What Training Does for a Correction Officer ......................................... 21

Academy vs. On-the-Job Training ............................................................. 21

Everyday Duties ....................................................................................... 23

Proposal for the Future of Corrections Training ..................................... 24

Discussion ................................................................................................. 25

References ................................................................................................. 27
Introduction

This paper evaluates the effectiveness of training for correctional officers to prepare them for everyday duties. Correctional officers must be trained properly so they know how to control inmates. If correctional officers are not trained properly, riots could occur, prisoners may escape, and correctional officers and inmates could be injured all of which make the environment of a prison very stressful. The history of correctional officer training in New York will be analyzed, considered, and discussed to see how training has evolved for correctional officers.

History of Correctional Training in New York

Prisons in New York had been around for over one hundred years before the first guard school opened. Auburn Penitentiary opened in 1818 and a department of corrections was created in New York on January 1, 1927 (Olsen 2005, 68). Before 1927, all prisons were not organized under one department. Guards had the discretion to train new guards if they wanted to or they could decide not to. Often prison guards would enter the prison on their first day, be handed a baton and then be left alone to watch the prisoners (Olsen 2005, 68). In 1927, the Department of Corrections gave a commissioner authority over four prisons, a few adult reformatories, and a couple of mental institutions when the department was created (Olsen 2005, 69). The department resulted in an institution that could attempt to organize and control all the prisons, but there still was not a state wide training school for correction officers.

It was not until July of 1929 when inmate riots at Clinton and Auburn gained public attention and gave a political opportunity to change the way that prisons were run (Spillane 2014, 37). The 1920s was a time when laws were made to "get tough" with offenders (Spillane 2014, 37). According to Spillane (2014), there were two reasons why there was so much tension in prisons. With the end of contract labor from New York State in the 1890s, prisoners had to leave
labor jobs and did not have much to do to pass the time. Also there was extreme overcrowding. In 1926, New York State passed a law written by Senator Caleb Baumes that allowed for longer prison sentences and a fourth strike law. This fourth strike law gave anyone who committed more than three felonies a sentence of life in prison. This law increased the number of people in prison (39) and eventually became known as the Baumes Law.

The summer riots received a hesitant response from Governor Franklin Roosevelt (Spillane 2014, 37). Roosevelt was planning on running for president in the 1932 election so many of his decisions at this time were affected by this. He made small efforts to talk about reform but the Auburn Riot in December of 1929 changed this (Spillane 2014, 45). The results of this riot was the death of many inmates and a principal keeper (Olsen 2005, 69). After the riot, there was also a case that created public attention. Ruth St. Clair was a women who faced the fourth strike clause under the Baumes Law after she had been convicted a fourth time for shoplifting (Spillane 2014, 42). The judge gave her life, saying that he had to under the Baumes Law. The judge said that he would be the first person to write a petition to the governor to lower sentences. A reason that this case had received so much sympathy was most likely because the case involved a young, white female defendant (Spillane 2014, 42). Both the riot and the St. Clair case created public attention that the Baumes Law should be repealed and prisons needed to be reformed (Spillane 2014, 42-43). And, although Governor Franklin Roosevelt once said he blamed the Baumes Law for the riot, still at the same time he supported harsher sentences and its deterrent effect (Spillane 2014, 43-44). Roosevelt's decisions at the time were effected by his goal to run for the Democratic nomination for the presidential election in 1936, so he kept a firm stance to be tough-on-crime. Eventually after an small uprising at Auburn in December of 1930,
Roosevelt created a commission to investigate the riots in July of 1929 (Spillane 2014, 45-46; Olsen 2005, 69).

Sam Lewishon, a former classmate of Roosevelt, headed the commission to investigate the prison administration and soon became known as the Lewishon Commission (Spillane 2014, 45). Their report outlined the future of corrections that had the goal of corrections to fix inmates through education and vocational training (Olsen 2005, 69), repealed the Baumes Law, called for individualized treatment, and the construction of new smaller prisons to relieve overcrowding (Spillane 2014, 46). The commission also created the Elmira experiment that was led by Walter Wallack and created a rehabilitative program that called for vocational and classroom assignments (Spillane 2014, 46). By statute, the Lewishon Commission ended in March of 1933 but a new commission was started by the end of the year, the Commission for the Study of the Educational Problems of Penal Institution for Youth (Spillane 2014, 47). This commission was placed under chairmanship of N.L. Engelhardt Teacher College and became known as the Engelhardt Commission. The Elmira experiment was the basis of this commission, but the commission also looked at every aspect of the prison administration (Spillane 2014, 47).

Wallkill Prison was the first of three reformatory institutions that would be built and opened up in 1933 to 1935 under the Engelhardt Commission. Wallkill looked like Oxford University and had more movement and freedom for prisoners (Spillane 2014, 48). There was an effort to make all prisons look like Wallkill. In 1935, the new director of education in the Department of Corrections was appointed, Walter Wallack. Wallack along with his two assistant directors visited each state institution and meet with the warden and teachers, inspected schools, and reviewed educational material (Spillane 2014, 50). The Division of Education was "frozen out" of the old maximum security prisons, Attica, Auburn, Clinton, Great Meadow, and Sing
Sing, and the division had no influence there (Spillane 2014, 50). These prisons saw inmates teaching inmates and compared to other prisons, there were not as many inmates enrolled in educational and vocational programs (Spillane 2014, 50-51). Albany based reformers did not have any control over these institutions and they struggled for influence so that they could reform the maximum security prisons.

The Division of Education saw the need for a training school since officers now had to play a significant role in rehabilitating offenders because they were the closest to prisoners. The Division of Education came up with a proposal for the Central Guard School (Olsen 2005, 69; Spillane 2014, 51). This proposal was thought to have gone nowhere but since the state changed the work week for prison guards from ten hour days, six days a week to eight hour days, there was a need for 536 new correctional officers by the following year (Olsen 2005, 69). The reason for this change in law was because prison guards were pressing for an eight-hour work day since many were working twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week (Spillane 2014, 52). This was seen as the perfect time to create centralized training for the officers.

The first guard school opened in November 1936 at Wallkill, a new prison that was completed in 1933 and had the rehabilitation model for prisoners through educational and vocational programs (Olsen 2005, 69). The first class was 80 recruits. Recruits could be no older than 34 to attend and had to pay own expenses. The curriculum was eight weeks and 320 hours (Olsen 2005, 69). The importance of this first school was that it was the first time that the state prisons united to teach the new recruits their experience in the prisons. The curriculum's goal was to "promote professionalized service" by knowing the operations of the criminal justice system, human behavior, and learning communication kills (Olsen 2005, 69). The training curriculum was designed around the rehabilitative program at Wallkill and the trainers wanted
the guards to be more mindful of prisoners' humanity (Spillane 2014, 52). Reformers thought this would be the perfect time to shape the future of corrections (Spillane 2014, 52) and although this was a start to correctional officer training, the prison closed in 1939 temporarily due to budget cuts in the late Depression (Olsen 2005, 69). Temporary funds opened the school again but because many able-bodied men left for World War II, the Central Guard School closed for good in April of 1942 (Olsen 2005, 69; Spillane 2014, 53).

By 1940, two-thirds of guards had been through the Central Guard School, including the in service training of guards who already worked in prisons (Spillane 2014, 52). According to Spillane (2014), there was no attempt by the Division of Education to determine if the guard school worked (53) and prison guards often had different on-the-job training after they graduated the school in the older maximum security prisons. The school did serve as a classification center where guards were measured based on psychological test, physical training, IQ scores, age, and achievements though (Spillane 2014, 53). Although the Division of Education wanted the school to reopen, a school like this would not open until 30 years later in 1972.

The next 30 years saw small attempts to reestablish training for correctional officers. During the 1950s, individual prisons would attempt to create their own training for new officers. This training was mostly on-the-job training where new officers would follow senior officers to attempt to learn the ways of the prison (Olsen 2005). In 1953, the position of director of correctional training was created but there was still no centralized program to train correctional officers (Olsen 2005). In 1965 the formal central school was reestablished and this time there was a three week and 120 hour program (Olsen 2005). Compared to the first guard school that was eight weeks and 320 hours, this training was not as long. The need for a reform came a few years later with the Auburn riot in 1970 and the Attica riot in 1971.
Before the Auburn and Attica riots, the New York prison system was changing. In July of 1970, New York state renamed prison facilities 'correctional facilities', changed the name of the position warden to superintendent, and prison guards to correction officers (Tartora 2012, 347). This renaming was happening nationwide and represented a movement from guards just watching prisoners to correction officers trying to 'correct' or rehabilitate inmates. The problem with this was that just changing the name does not mean that change would actually occur. And, in prisons in New York like Attica there was no change in attitudes of correction officers or the ways the prison were run (Tartora 2012, 347).

The first riot was the Auburn riot that occurred in November of 1970. The second riot and probably the most notorious was Attica in September of 1971 (Cohen 1979). The riot lasted four days and ended on September 13, 1971 with 43 dead, 10 of those were Department of Correction employees (New York State Special Commission on Attica). The Attica riot can be seen as the turning point in the professionalization of correctional officers and the change in training. The Attica riot was the result of poor prison conditions, inmate solidarity, lack of reform in prisons, and there was a lack of training to prevent a riot (Tartora 2012, 339-340).

According to the New York State Special Commission on Attica (1972), correction officers were not trained on how to communicate with inmates (xv). The commission also felt that officers needed to be trained on how to deal with inmates from urban areas and control racism in the prison (xviii). According to one officer, Attica had been a good place to do time, but the prison was increasingly seeing many inmates coming from New York City and the officers had poor communication with them (Hanson 1971, 11).

There was no riot plan in place so there was a lack of communication between officers when they realized a riot was starting (Tartora 2012, 349). One-third of officers at Attica at the
time of the riot were not trained formally for their jobs on how to communicate with inmates, riot plans, cultural awareness and how to use force correctly (Tartora 2012, 346). Correction officers were not trained on how to prevent a riot and how to prepare and limit the effects of one. According to the New York State Special Commission on Attica (1972), it is not the correction officers' fault that they were not trained to help inmates and they, along with inmates, are victim of poor prison systems (27-28). The commission stated that correction officers must be trained "to understand and deal with the new breed of inmates" (113). This 'new breed' was referring to the increased amount of African American and Hispanic inmates from the city instead of the inmates that were white and from rural areas. According to Lombardo (1981), the riots brought awareness to the need for the creation of a state-centralized management of prisons.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an "academy movement" to reform the training for correctional officers and funding was also given from the federal government (Cohen 1979). The grant proposal for the federal funding stated that the goal of the corrections would be to rehabilitate offenders so that they could reintegrate into society. To do this they would need trained professional staff to meet the goals of corrections. The New York State Special Commission on Attica (1972) showed that more would have to be done than just stating the goal of corrections as rehabilitation. Changes to how the prisons were run would have to be made and correction officers would have to be trained of these new goals.

The federal grant application outlined the Department of Correction's goals for the future of corrections. According to Cohen (1979), the proposal stated that professional staff would be trained to rehabilitate offenders (181). The department was awarded $6 million between October 1971 and March 1974 to create this program (Cohen 1979, 181). Determining curriculum for the training program was difficult because different commissioners had different goals for the
training. Commissioner Oswald wanted the training to look like a 'corrections college' and emphasized academic courses along with some custodial courses. Commissioner Peter Preiser, focused more on security and custodial skills in the training (Cohen 1979, 181).

The training program started out as a thirteen week program (Olsen 2005, 70). Although this was far longer than the Central Guard School at Walkill in the late 1930s, some of the subjects had ambitious goals to teach in the time frame (Cohen 1979, 182). A three hour course titled "An Overview of the Criminal Justice System" is unlikely to teach someone all about the criminal justice system and how corrections fits into it. Half of the curriculum consisted of custodial and security skills, for example frisking, writing reports, and the transportation of inmates (Cohen 1979, 182). The other half consisted of informational courses like "Department Personnel Policies" and "Community Relations" that tried to improve relations between correction officers and inmates (Cohen 1979, 183). The curriculum of the academy today is similar to the curriculum of the academy when it first opened in the 1970s.

The start of the academy did face some trouble. It was difficult to find qualified faculty. Most classes were taught by uniformed officers and although the grant proposal stated that non-uniformed staff from the department and faculty from SUNY Albany were supposed to teach, lack of funds and difference of objectives prevented this (Cohen 1979, 183). Institutions refused to grant college credit because there were not qualified teachers, the courses lacked specific objectives, and the training was only thirteen weeks (Cohen 1979). A lack of funds also affected the program throughout the 1970s (Olsen 2005, 70). The academy in Albany started in 1972 and at this time there was rise in the inmate population. There was a lack of resources and the academy could not handle the number of guards that had to come through to compensate for the rise in the inmate population (Olsen 2005, 70). The program went from thirteen weeks to eight
weeks in 1976 and then as low as three weeks in 1979 (Olsen 2005, 70). Correction officers trained for only three weeks did not receive as long as training. Officers were rushed through training so they could start working faster. Today the program is eight weeks of training in the academy and 3 weeks of on-the-job training.

**Training Today**

According to Cohen, "much of the philosophical foundation of the training [of correction officers] has been eroded" (184). Training does not reflect what the grant proposal outlined. Correction officers did not rehabilitate the inmates and instead serve as security staff. Training at the academy in Albany was like boot camp (Conover 2000, 13) and operates in a para-military setting (Olsen 2005, 70). According to Bruce E. Olsen, who was the director of training for the New York State Department of Correctional Services, the recruit training program instills discipline in the recruits. Although the academy is seen more as operating as a boot camp and teaching security skills, officials and academy trainers see the academy as a place where recruits become professionals (Conover 2000, 15). The academy does not produce prison guards, but instead correction officers who rehabilitate. This shows that the department was still hopeful that training looks like the grant proposal wanted it to. Commissioner Brian Fischer made a speech for the graduating class from the training academy on September 12, 2008. Fischer states "A job is something you do to pay the bills. A career is something you invest your life in. A career is what being a correctional employee is all about." (2008). The Department of Corrections wants the officers to be professional and not just be security staff. This does not mean that correction officers will treat their jobs as a careers though or that the academy will train correction officers to be professionals in rehabilitation. The courses at the academy will be considered later in this paper to determine exactly what officers are prepared for in correctional training.
Getting into the Academy

Today to get into the academy, an applicant must take the correction officer civil service exam. Applicants must be 21 years old or older, have a high school diploma, be a U.S. citizen, and to take the job, a resident of New York. Applicants must pass the written exam with a grade of 70. There are four parts to the written test. The first part is "applying written information in a correctional services setting" that involves reading information and applying it to situations in a corrections setting (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination). The second part is "observing and recalling facts and information." The test taker will receive information depicting a prison scene. Applicants will have a short time to look at this information and then will recall specific details on the information (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination). The third part is "preparing written material" where applicants must take 3 sentences of information and choose the best of four restatements. The last part is "understanding and interpreting written information" where an applicant is given a brief reading selection and then answer questions about the reading (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination). The tasks of this test show that the skills that are evaluated are mostly pertaining to someone's ability to memorize prison situations like a fight in the yard and to write a report on it. Nowhere does the test evaluate skills to rehabilitate someone.

If applicants pass the test they are given a psychological and physical exam (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination). If the applicants pass those tests, then they receive a letter to report to the training academy. Often they are given two weeks or less notice (Conover 2000, 12) to prepare for the academy and leave their other jobs. Training at the academy last eight weeks where recruits must reside at the academy Sunday evening through Friday afternoon (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination).
Training Courses at the Academy

Today the academy consists of eight weeks and is the equivalent of 320 hours. Courses have been evaluated by the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) and recruits can earn up to 12 credits for the academy and an additional 3 credits for on-the-job training. The most recent revalidation was July 2015 (National College Credit Recommendation Service). The curriculum for the academy consists of chemical agents, communications, institutional procedures, investigation and evidence collection, legal principles and concepts, physical education and health and safety, physical training, practicum in corrections, and social-psychological issues (National College Credit Recommendation Service). The point of explaining the courses is to show what the department of corrections trains correction officers for their jobs.

For Chemical Agents (tear gas), recruits are taught the uses, history and effects of the agents (NCCRS). Recruits are exposed to chemical agents without a gas mask during their training at the academy. According to an instructor at the academy, if officers were working in a prison and chemical agents were released, they would know what it is like and wouldn’t panic by being exposed to the agents during their training. (Conover 2000, 34).

Communications involves learning to take field notes, report writing, referral forms, and interpersonal communications (NCCRS). According to Conover (2000), Interpersonal Communications is a course where one is taught to communicate with inmates. According to an instructor the best way to do this is to listen to what the inmate has to say and then rephrase the inmate's point (34). This makes the inmates feel as if they are being heard and cools them off so they are not as irritated.
Institutional Procedures involves counting inmates, standards for inmate behavior, tool and key control, transportation of inmates and visiting room procedures. This course earns a recruit two semester hours in correctional administration in criminal justice (NCCRS). In Investigative and Evidence Collection, recruits are taught eye witness and rules of evidence, collecting evidence, testifying in court, frisking and cell frisking (NCCRS).

In Legal Principles and Concepts, recruits are taught use of force and when it is legal to use force and how much (NCCRS; Conover 2000, 32). In Legal they learn of different degrees of offenses and the legal precedents of Miranda Warning along with the powers of a peace officer (NCCRS; Conover 2000, 32). Correction officers are allowed to carry a concealed weapon and have the power to arrest with their status as a peace officer (Conover 2000, 33).

In Physical Education and Health and Safety, recruits learn techniques of baton use, first aid, and CPR (NCCRS). Physical Training objective is to keep recruits fit so they can handle the demands of the profession (NCCRS). The two courses combined earn a recruit three semester hours in Physical Education.

Social-Psychology Issues involves cultural awareness, learning about religious organizations and unauthorized inmate groups (gangs), AIDS seminar, ethics, the difference between graft and bribery, recognizing abnormal behavior and lastly, learning about hostage situation and surviving a capture experience (NCCRS).

The curriculum at the academy focuses on security and custodial skills for the most part. The course, Social-Psychology Issues, is the only class that touches on subjects like culture and psychology that pertain to rehabilitation. So although the department believes the academy to prepare correction officers to rehabilitate inmates, it does not. The last course is Practicum in
Corrections where under the direct observation of a correction officer, a recruit performs all duties of a correction officer.

**The Academy's Preparation for On-the-Job Training**

After recruits finished the academy, they start on-the-job training for three weeks at a correctional facility. According to Van Maahen (1973), who studied policing and police academies, the academy is a "didactic sort of instrumentally-oriented ritual passage" (13). The academy is a place where all recruits come together to become exposed to the occupation of corrections. The recruits learn about the formal and informal operations of the department and often realize there is inconsistency in how rules are applied (Van Maahen 1973, 15). The corrections academy is a 'ritual passage' where a recruit learns about correction operations in a para-military setting. If the academy really is just a place to become exposed to the operations of the Department of Corrections, then it seems as if it does not prepare correction officers for the culture of the prisons. If correction officers realize that rules are not applied as they learn them in the academy, then this would create confusion for correction officers because they would not know if the academy was right or the officers in charge at the facilities.

Practicum of Corrections (on-the-job training) is 120 hours and a correction officer can earn 3 credits during this time. After officers graduate from the academy, they receive one of the many correctional facilities in New York to go do their on-the-job training. If correction officers are lucky, they receive a facility close to home, but often they do not (Conover 2000, 57). Correction officers must find a place to stay near the facility and end up far from their families. This causes them to transfer to facilities closer to home until they get to the facility closest to their home. Correction officers must adjust to a new environment and learn in a prison different than the one that they will end up staying at after they transfer. Since each prison has a different
culture and environment, a correction officer might have to learn a whole new culture when the officer transfers closer to home.

At the time that Ted Conover wrote his book in 2000, there was a shortage of officers in the downstate facilities and he was sent to Sing Sing, a maximum correctional facility in Ossining, NY (Conover 2000, 57). Conover had four weeks of on-the-job training at Sing Sing. The recruit training program was seven weeks at the academy and four weeks on-the-job training before January 2004 and changed to 8 weeks at the academy and three weeks on-the-job training after January 2004 (NCCRS). There is no explanation as to why this change was made, but according to the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) website, this was a change to help improve the safety of officers. DOCCS says that by "expanding the Correction Officer training program from seven weeks to eight weeks, and adding additional annual training for officers while ensuring sufficient staff to provide full security coverage at all times" the department is enhancing prison safety (Occupancy, Staffing and Safety). Adding an extra week to the academy took a week away from on-the-job training though and on-the-job training might be a better way to learn how to complete the everyday duties of a correction officer.

Sing Sing was known unofficially as a "training facility" at the time that Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing was written. New recruits often came to Sing Sing because of the constant shortage. This shortage was due to high rates of retirement and attrition in the facility (Conover 2000, 60). Many of the officers were inexperienced and 34 percent of them had less than a year on the job (Conover 2000, 60). This created a chaotic facility because officers that are on-the-job training (known as OJTs) irritate the inmates because the officers disrupt their routine and inmates do not respect the rules (Conover 2000, 67).
The academy taught recruits rules and anecdotes of corrections, but officers that are on-the-job training (OJTs) lacked the knowledge and experience to perform the duties of a correction officer during the beginning of their career (Conover 2000, 69). Ted Conover worked under an officer on his first day that had finished his training just a few weeks before him (Conover 2000, 71). This officer did not have much experience in the operations of corrections and was not equipped to teach Conover about the job. On-the-job training is important because an officer actually learns how to be a correction officer. This is the first time that correction officers interact with inmates and they must learn how to control inmates. The example of correction officers at Sing Sing show that in this prison, it is very likely that OJTs would train under a new officer like them. Officers who teach OJTs should be experienced officers who know the job well so that the OJTs can be trained properly.

The Job of a Correction Officer

The environment of a prison can be a stressful one because there is a constant threat. There is built in tension since inmates are involuntarily at the correctional facility and inmates believe correction officers get in their way of living the life they want (Gillan 2001). The stress of the prison environment has many negative effects on correction officers. Correction officers have some of the highest rates for divorce, heart disease, and drug and alcohol addictions (Conover 2000, 20). This is why it is important to train correction officers properly because not being trained properly can make the stressors of a prison a lot worse.

Harm and Injuries

Correctional officers have one of the highest rate of non-fatal, work-related injuries (Konda, Tiesman, Reichard, and Hartley 2013). Training is important to attempt to limit these injuries. The most common injuries are overexertion, violent acts, assaults, and transportation of
inmates (Konda et al. 2013, 183). These occur from standing too long, breaking up inmate fights, inmates assaulting them, and accidents from driving inmates to court and other prisons (Konda et al. 2013, 183-184). In 2013, there were 645 inmate assaults on staff according to the Unusual Incident Report by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision in New York State. And the rate is much higher in maximum security facilities than other facilities. Although training might not help lower transportation injuries, learning the proper way to restrain an inmate who is assaults another inmate or an officer is important.

Training is not just important in the physical aspect of the job but also the mental harm that the job can cause. Among the fatal and violent acts of correction officers, 38% of the them are suicides (Konda et al. 2013, 183). One study of correction officers found that half of the participants had some signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Konda et al. 2013, 184). The job of a correction officer is a stressful one. Training should address the stress of the job and ways to cope with it.

There is a perceived danger in the facility and constant threat of harm. Training can limit the effects of some of these harms, especially if correction officers are taught correct techniques to restrain inmates. Training can not eliminate the threat of harm though. No matter how well a correction officer is trained, there will always be a chance of being injured. Stress can come from other factors that do not include inmates though.

Work-related stress is high among correction officers (Konda et al. 2013, 184) and not only occurs from the threat of physical harm but also stressors relating to the administration of the prison (Finn 1998). These include mandatory overtime, supervisors demands, and understaffing. In New York, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) wants to keep overtime costs down (Karlin 2015). Instead of hiring more officers, the
department has correction officers work overtime and even then the administration puts pressure on prison supervisors to keep overtime costs down (Karlin 2015). This can create a lot of stress for correction officers because their jobs are stressful just dealing with inmates, let alone when they have been working a double shift of 16 hours. And understaffing can become an issue when there are not enough officers to cover all posts. A conflict also arises between the administration and correctional officers because correction officers might feel as if the administration is getting in their way of performing their jobs correctly (Karlin 2015). This would be considered role overload, when officers are given too many tasks to do or officers are not given the proper resources to complete their jobs (Lambert 2013, 22). Training is supposed to help teach correction officers how to do their jobs. No matter how well correction officers know how to do their jobs though, administrators can make the jobs of correction officers difficult if there is not mutual support between the correction officers and officials.

Role conflict is another example of administration harm to a correction officer. Role conflict is duties for a job are not consistent with each other (Lambert 2013, 21). For example, an officer might be told to do one thing from a supervisor but that contradicts what another supervisor's orders are. Role ambiguity is correction officers are unsure how to complete a task or handle a job (Lambert 2013, 22). This is especially normal when an officer is right out of the academy and is an officer on-the-job training (OJTs). OJTs, also known as newjacks, do not really know all the ropes of the job and it takes experience to learn them all (Conover 2000, 249). Experienced officers will know how to deal with conflict more efficiently, will know what their supervisors are like and what they expect, and will be used to their role as a correction officers.

**Duties**
According to the New York State Department of Civil Service Examination, the duties for a correction officer are to "supervise the activities and movements of inmates", "make periodic rounds of assigned areas", "conduct searches for contraband", "maintain order within the facility", "prepare reports", "advise inmates of rules and regulations", and "assist inmates in resolving problems." Additionally, the duties of a correction officer include playing "a large role in the rehabilitative process related to the incarcerated population" (New York State Department of Civil Service Examination). As discussed earlier though, the training in the academy is based largely on security and the controlling of inmates. At no point was there a course that tried to solve why inmates commit crimes and what can be done to change this. And even at the academy an instructor told Conover that "rehabilitation is not our job. The truth of it that we are warehousers of human beings" (Conover 2000, 41). Clearly at no point in training are correction officers taught to rehabilitate inmates and they are even told that there job is not to rehabilitate. The job of a correction officer is a security one and not a rehabilitative one so training and job duties should reflect this.

**What Training Does for a Correction Officer**

**Academy vs. On-the-Job Training**

The question that must be answered is which is more effective in training a correction officer, the academy or on-the-job training? The academy, located in Albany, gives a centralized location for correction officers to go through and receive the same training that other recruits receive. The academy consists of 8 weeks and a recruit can receive twelve credits for the courses. The training is in class and this could cause problems because lectures can be sleep-inducers. According to Conover (2000), recruits could get fired for sleeping in class and an instructor said that if the recruits felt like they were going to fall asleep, then they should stand in the back of
the classroom so they stay awake (23). By the number of people that had to stand in the back of
the classroom, the lectures must have been very dull (Conover 2000, 23). It is reasonable to say
that when a lecture is dull, it is very hard to pay attention to it. So if one finds the majority of
training lectures boring and does not pay attention to them, the recruit is not learning from them.
This makes the academy not as effective in teaching correction officers. The academy is good
because it utilizes uniform training. Everyone receives the same training, officers and civilians
are trained to teach, and the recruits learn about rules and regulations of the correctional facility.
On-the-job training lacks uniform, but consists of more hands on tasks and this might be a more
effective way to learn.

On-the-job training is 3 weeks and an officer can earn three credits during this time. Usually the officer goes to a facility where there is a shortage of officers and this creates a more stressful environment. Officers that train OJTs are not trained themselves to teach. These first three weeks are the first time that an officer actually gets to perform the duties of a correction officer. And hands-on tasks might be a more efficient way to learn than class lectures. Three weeks might not give correction officers enough time to learn everything about their jobs and how to perform their duties though.

I argue that the academy and on-the-job training cannot create officers who knows how to perform all of the duties that their job requires and instead time will create experienced officers. According to Conover (2000), many instructors said that it would take four to five years to make a good correction officer (249). Correction officers often do not know what kind of officers they will be and with the amount of discretion officers have to preform their jobs, it takes time and many confrontations with inmates to discover what type of officer one will be (Conover 2000, 249). Officers will learn what is the best way for them to control inmates through experience.
Everyday Duties

How does training prepare correction officers for everyday duties they must perform in correctional facilities? The curriculum for the academy courses consists of teaching everyday duties like writing reports, procedures of the prison, tool and key control, and collecting evidence (NCCRS). These are lessons that can be learned in a classroom because they are items that can be memorized. Although the academy attempts to teach recruits how to communicate with inmates, I argue that this is not effective because the recruits do not even talk with inmates. The first time that correction officers are going to try and control an inmate by communicating with him is on their first day of on-the-job training. At that point, on-the-job training is to teach these skills and put them in practice, but OJTs can be on their own if they do not have a proper trainer.

Another important aspect of everyday duties is to know the prison and how it should operate. The academy teaches about abnormal behavior of inmates, but to know when something is not right or unusual in the prison is a skill that takes experience. In Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing, an instructor told of some signs like inmates who stockpile food and wear heavy clothing, cell blocks that are too quiet and inmates who normally have good behavior are keeplocked (inmates kept in their cells for most of the day) (Conover 2000, 52). There are still many more clues to abnormalities in the prison than just those. For example, when someone knows that a fight is about to arise in the yard, how gangs act and who they interact with, or when tensions are so high that there is a fear of a riot. The only way to know is to have experience in the prison and know how it operates. With time comes experience and officers are able to know the prison and inmates and what the culture looks like. With this experience, officers are able to tell when something is not right. According to Lieutenant Richard Maroney "for some time we had all been concerned about this trouble that was brewing in the prison. You could feel it in the air. . . ."
You knew some thing was brewing but you couldn't tell when it was going to happen. Every night we expected it." (New York State Special Commission on Attica 1972). Lieutenant Maroney along with many other fellow officers were able to tell when a riot was going to happen. Strangers in a prison might be able to tell there was tension, but they would not know how this differs from other times and what this tension would cause.

**Proposal for the Future of Corrections Training**

Training for correction officers in the future should have goals to prepare them for their jobs more efficiently. DOCCS expanded the academy training to eight weeks (Occupancy, Staffing and Safety 2009) but as a result, on-the-job training lost a week. Since many saw the academy as a formality and felt that they learned how to be a correction officer while actually performing the duties of a correction officer, on-the-job training should have a greater emphasis. On-the-job training should be longer and with an experienced officer. The training officer should not be on probation, meaning the officer should have at least a year on the job. Additionally, since each correctional facility is different, the officer training the OJT should have been at that current facility for at least a year.

While at the academy, correction officers took a day trip to a nearby correctional facility (Conover 2000). They visited different sections of the prison and Conover felt that it was sort of an initiation to see if they could handle the abuse they would face from the inmates (Conover 2000, 30). I believe that it would be beneficial for recruits to shadow correction officers early on in their academy training. Even if it was just a day, they would be able to at least relate their training to first-hand experience.

There was a lack of research for training for correction officers already working in a facility. According to the DOCCS website, the department has added additional annual training
for correction officers to enhance prison safety (Occupancy, Staffing and Safety 2009). Continuing to train officers is important so they can be up-to-date on the latest technology, standards, and programs. More research needs to be done on these programs and how effective they are in helping correction officers.

**Discussion**

There has been progress in correctional training since the early 1900s in New York State. There is now a centralized academy that all correction officers have to go through and pass to graduate and officers continue with on-the-job training for a few weeks. Correction officers are also on 'probation' for their first year. The department has made an effort to prepare correction officers for their jobs and to supervise them when they are fairly new to the job, but training is not as effective as it can be and improvements can be made.

The academy is a place where recruits are processed, learn of the job of a correction officer, write reports, and participate in physical training. The academy is good because it brings recruits together and offers a chance for everyone to have the same basis of knowledge. The academy offers insight to the culture of correction officers and prisons, but does little to give officers experience. At no point do they interact or control inmates and this is a key part of their jobs.

When correction officers show up on their first day, they are most likely going to be given a job where they have to interact with inmates. If OJTs do not have an officer who is willing to teach them and look after them, then they are on their own. More emphasis should be put on on-the-job training. This is where correction officers are first going to learn everyday duties of a correction officer. Officers should have a proper trainer and supervision so they learn how to complete duties the proper way. This will hopefully better prepare correction officers for
their jobs when they have to be on their own completing everyday duties like controlling and interacting with inmates.
References


