

Concrete Policy and Correctional Philosophy

Attitudes of California Correctional Officers
towards Rehabilitation

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Executive Summary

Rehabilitation as a Correctional Philosophy

- California Correctional Officers are divided on what role, if any, rehabilitation should play in guiding the function of the prison system. About half of respondents (46 percent) agree that rehabilitation should be a central goal of incarceration.
- Yet while many officers believe that rehabilitation should be one of the goals of incarceration, there is substantial consensus that it should not be the only, or even the primary, purpose of a prison.

Support for Rehabilitation Relative to Punishment

- A majority of Correctional Officers (77 percent) believe that both rehabilitation and punishment should be part of the purpose of a prison. However, only a quarter of respondents feel that punishment and rehabilitation are equally important.

Support for Rehabilitation Relative to Public Safety

- A larger percentage of officers express support for a philosophy of corrections focused primarily on public safety than a philosophy focused on rehabilitation. About 68 percent of officers agree with the statement, “the job of a prison is to keep the public safe, not to help inmates.”
- However, about a third of officers believe that both public safety and rehabilitation should be central objectives of a prison.

Quality of Current Rehabilitative Programs

- Assessments of current rehabilitative programs in California prisons vary widely across institutions. While at some prisons only a very small percentage of officers believe rehabilitation programs at their facility to be of either poor or very poor quality, at others between a third and a half of respondents believe rehabilitative programs to be low quality.
- The smallest percentage of officers (40 percent) feels that drug and alcohol treatment programs at their prison are of good or very good quality. By comparison, larger percentages feel that vocational programs (51 percent) and psychological services (55 percent) are of good or very good quality.

Support for Rehabilitation Programs

- While there is philosophical conflict over the function of incarceration, disagreement all but disappears when officers are asked about support for specific rehabilitation programs.
 - About **84 percent** agree that inmates who want it should be given access to vocational training; **90 percent** agree that inmates who want it should have access to drug and alcohol treatment; and **91 percent** agree that inmates who want it should have access to academic training up to and including GED prep.
 - Slightly lower support is expressed for college-level educational programs than other types of rehabilitation programs. About half of respondents (**56 percent**) agree that inmates who want it should be offered academic training at the college level.

Arguments Related to Rehabilitation

Efficacy of Rehabilitation Programs

- The majority of officers express concern that rehabilitation programs don't work:
 - A full 84 percent agree with the statement that rehabilitation programs don't work because most inmates don't want to change; about 60 percent believe that by the time inmates enter prison it is too late for rehabilitation programs to do them any good; and 82 percent agree that the only way to keep people from committing crimes is to "get to them while they are still kids".

Cost of Rehabilitation Programs

- A large percentage of officers express misgivings over the cost of rehabilitation programs:
 - A majority of officers (71 percent) feel that there are better ways for the state to spend money than on programs for inmates, and many feel that it would cost too much to provide all inmates with high quality programs (87 percent). Only a minority (39 percent) agree that high quality rehabilitation programs would pay for themselves in the long run with decreased crime and a smaller prison population.

Conceptions of Inmates and Rehabilitation

- Only a minority of officers (33 percent) believe that inmates do not deserve rehabilitation programs, although almost three-quarters of Correctional Officers (71 percent) believe that most people who end up in prison are there due to personal failure rather than a lack of advantages like strong families, good education and job opportunities; and only 29 percent believe that most inmates are "simply regular people who have made some mistakes".

Introduction

The rise of mass incarceration and the political popularity of “tough on crime” rhetoric have marked a fundamental shift in the policy paradigm of the criminal justice system over the past few decades. The California penal system has turned away from a model of rehabilitation towards one that focuses almost exclusively on deterrence, incapacitation and punishment.¹

Yet as a multitude of researchers and practitioners have pointed out, significant disagreement remains today over what prisons can and should be expected to accomplish. Contention about what goals should guide modern correctional practice has led to impassioned debate, the outcome of which has important implications for the practice of corrections.

Broad ideas about the function of incarceration can be thought of as different “correctional philosophies,” “correctional orientations” or “ideologies of corrections.” Each ideology offers its own interpretation of the role of a prison system in modern society, and advocates for a different set of priorities that should motivate prison administration.

Rehabilitation is one example of a correctional philosophy. The World Health Organization defines rehabilitation as “a goal-oriented and time-limited process aimed at enabling an impaired person to reach an optimum mental, physical and/or social level, thus providing her or him with the tools to change her or his own life.” For those who believe that prisons have both the capacity and the responsibility to rehabilitate offenders, prisons can and should provide offenders with the skills and resources they lack. Participation in rehabilitation programs like drug treatment and education can give individuals in prison an opportunity to turn their lives around.

¹ For a thorough review of this policy shift, see Garland 2001.

Alternatives to the rehabilitation ideology include others centered on deterrence, punishment, or incapacitation. For people who believe prisons should function primarily to deter criminal activity, incarceration is meant to serve as a threat that will discourage potential offenders from carrying out crimes. Those who espouse this view of the prison argue that an individual, in deciding whether or not to carry out a crime, will weigh the potential gain from committing the crime against the possibility of being caught and sentenced to confinement. To the degree that an offender desires to avoid this possible outcome, he will be discouraged from committing the crime.²

In a third model, prisons do not serve primarily to rehabilitate or deter, but are instead a way of inflicting punishment. For those who believe incarceration is primarily a tool to punish criminal behavior, prisons provide a way to impose a retributive measure of “just deserts”. Rooted in *lex talionis*, or the “law of retaliation,” the prison in this model is a means of imposing justice by doing harm to those who have harmed others.

Finally, for those who advocate a philosophy of corrections oriented towards incapacitation, the primary function of a prison is nothing more than to physically separate criminals from the rest of the public. The containment of offenders during incarceration will assure that, at least while incarcerated, these individuals do not commit further crimes.³

This study examines the attitudes of California Correctional Officers towards these different correctional philosophies. It finds that officers’ attitudes are both diverse and complex. While about half of officers support rehabilitation as a central goal of incarceration, many believe that it should not be the only, or even the primary, function of a prison. A large

² Whether decisions about committing crime are based on this type of “rational” calculation has been a subject of much empirical study.

³ This does not, however, account for crimes that can be committed by inmates while in prison, either against other inmates or against Correctional Officers and staff.

proportion support some combination of rehabilitation and punishment, or rehabilitation combined with a focus on public safety.

However, this study also finds that Correctional Officers make a distinction between rehabilitation as a philosophical goal of corrections, and issues related to the types of rehabilitation programs that should be offered. Despite significant diversity of opinions on questions of correctional ideology, an overwhelming majority of officers support the idea of offering specific rehabilitation programs—including educational programs, vocational training, and drug and alcohol treatment—to those inmates who desire them. While there is a strong relationship between support for rehabilitation as an ideology and support for rehabilitation programs, officers nevertheless distinguish between the two.

This finding has important implications for understanding the on-going debate in California over what role “rehabilitation” should play in the creation of correctional policy and practice. Consensus among officers may be difficult to achieve when it comes to stating the broad goals of incarceration. However, there is clear agreement when it comes to the implementation of correctional policy: a majority of officers agree that rehabilitation programs should be made available to those inmates who want them.

Data and Methods

This report relies on original data from the California Correctional Officer Survey (CCOS), conducted from April to October of 2006. The CCOS was a large-scale effort to gather information on the thoughts, attitudes, and experiences of Correctional Officers working in the California state prison system. The survey asked officers a series of closed-ended questions about a variety of topics, including job satisfaction, work stress, personal safety and security, attitudes towards inmates, and professional orientation. The large size of the survey sample (N=5,775) provides a nice cross section of officers by race and gender, as well as across all of California's correctional institutions. This is particularly important, as it allows for an assessment of how attitudes vary between security levels and prison facilities.

From the beginning of the research design process, it was clear that the survey needed to be conducted as independently as possible from both the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), the union that represents Correctional Officers and Correctional Counselors in the state.⁴ Surveys were therefore sent to each Correctional Officer through the mail, to each officer's home address, rather than distributed at either union meetings or the workplace. This was intended to assure respondents that surveys would be completely anonymous, and that no one but the researchers would ever have access to individual surveys.

As nearly as possible, surveys were sent to every Correctional Officer currently working in the California system. While a highly stratified random sample was considered, a focus group conducted during the field test revealed a great deal of concern about the integrity of survey

⁴ While neither CDCR nor CCPOA had input into the survey design or data analysis, both organizations provided invaluable support to the project. CCPOA funded the distribution of the survey instrument, and CDCR provided funds towards data input through a sub-grant from the Center for Evidence-Based Corrections at UC Irvine.

research. Several officers commented that they felt past survey efforts had “hand-picked” particular people to receive surveys, in order to obtain data that would paint the prison system in a positive light. In order to allay these concerns, it was decided that the additional time and expense of including the total population was worthwhile.

Table 1. CCOS Response Sample Demographics

	Sample (%)	Population (%)
Race		
White	55.1	46.2
Black or African American	8.8	12.3
Hispanic	27.3	34.4
Asian	3.0	1.8
Other	4.0	5.3
Race Unknown	3.9	--
Gender		
Male	84.3	82
Female	15.7	17.7
	N=5,775	N=21,243

Population data is taken from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Office of Personnel Services for October 12, 2006. Sample race sums to more than 100% due to some respondents identifying more than one racial category.

The survey yielded 5,775 completed and returned surveys, for a response rate of about 33 percent.⁵ Response rates varied by institution, but no single prison was severely under-reported. Moreover, as Table 1 shows, though white men were somewhat over-represented in the sample, respondent demographics were quite representative of the total population. About 84.3 percent of the survey sample is male relative to 82 percent in the population, and 55.1 percent of the sample is white as compared to 46.2 percent of the population. In addition, 27.3 percent is

⁵ As of June 30, 2006, the CDCR Position Inventory by Institution reported 21,243 established positions filled, and the survey went out to a database of 21,478. Of the mailed surveys, 2,161 were returned with problem addresses. An additional subset of 1,500 is estimated to have been sent to officers who were either retired, called to active military service, or working in the fire camps. These cases were excluded from the population.

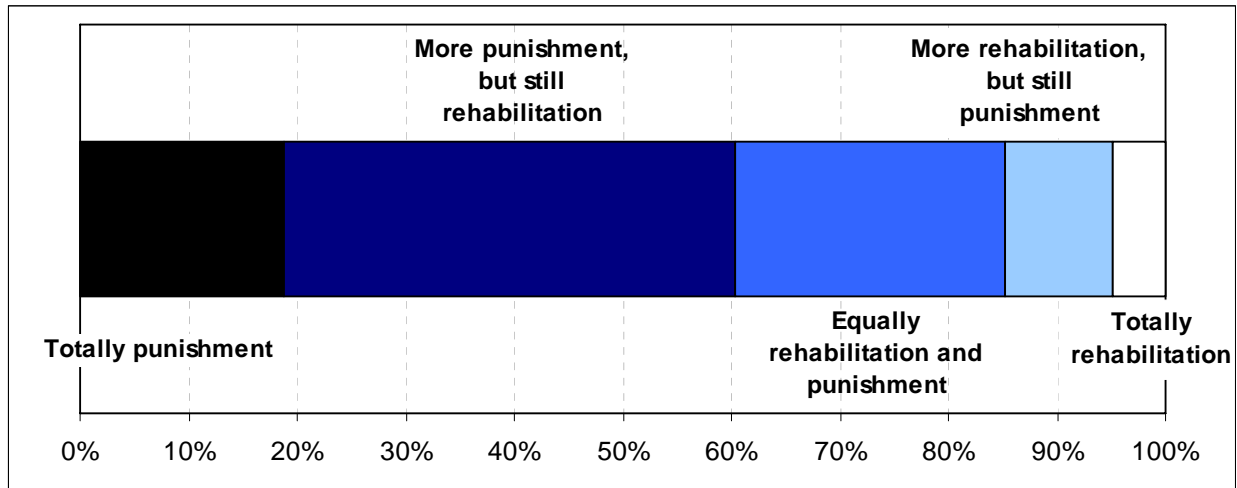
Hispanic (compared to 34.3 percent in the population), 8.8 percent black (compared to 12.3 percent), and 3 percent Asian (compared to 1.8 percent).

The Goals of Corrections

California Correctional Officers are divided on what role, if any, rehabilitation should play in the prison system. While about 46 percent agree that rehabilitation should be a central goal of incarceration, there is reasonable consensus that it should not be the only, or even the primary, purpose of a prison.

A majority of Correctional Officers believe that *both* rehabilitation and punishment should be goals of a prison (see Figure 1). When asked whether the “purpose of a prison is rehabilitation, punishment, or both,” only 19 percent express the belief that the purpose of a prison is totally punishment, and 5 percent that a prison is exclusively about rehabilitation. By comparison, about 77 percent support some balance between the two objectives.

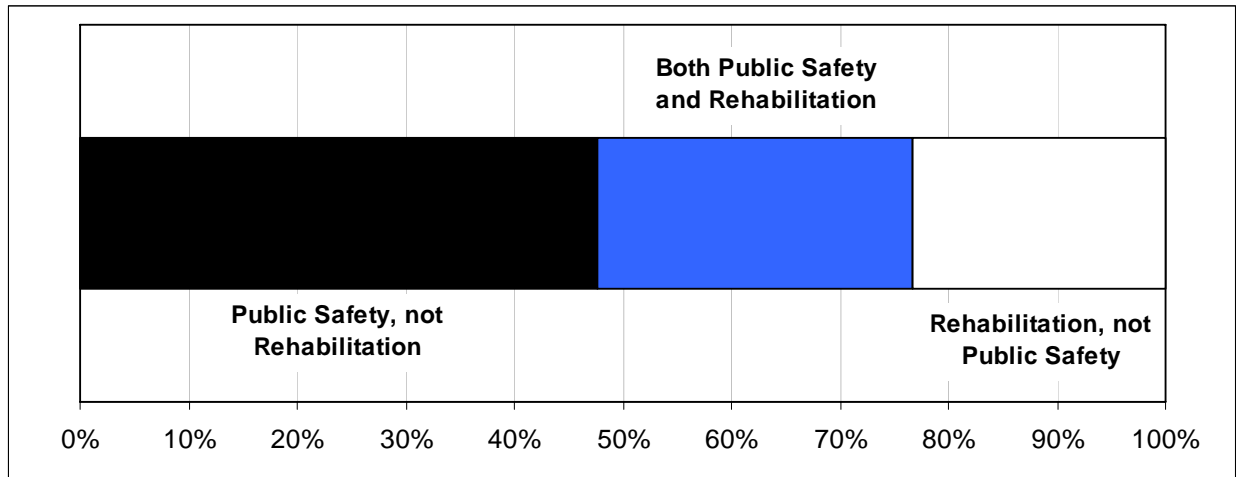
Figure 1. Support for Rehabilitation versus Support for Punishment



However, only a quarter of respondents feel that punishment and rehabilitation are equally important. The largest proportion of officers believe that prisons should be oriented more towards punishment than rehabilitation: 42 percent express the belief that the purpose of a

prison is more punishment but still rehabilitation, while only 10 percent believe a prison’s function is more about rehabilitation but still punishment.

Figure 2. Support for Rehabilitation versus Support for Public Safety



Individuals who voice support for neither rehabilitation nor public safety are excluded from the figure.

A large percentage of officers also express support for a prison system focused primarily on public safety (see Figure 2). Compared to the 46 percent who agree that “rehabilitation should be a central goal of incarceration,” 68 percent agree that “the job of a prison is to keep the public safe, not to help inmates.” However, again, we find that many officers agree with both statements. About a third of officers (29 percent) voice support for rehabilitation as a central goal of incarceration, and *also* agree that the job of a prison is to keep the public safe, not to help inmates.⁶ In other words, for about a third of officers the two goals are not mutually exclusive.

A large proportion of officers believe that the dual function of the prison is both possible and desirable. Officers who support both positions may believe that both goals should guide the correctional system. A prison can focus on punishment, but also rehabilitate. In fact, the objectives might be seen by some as intertwined: If rehabilitation helps keep offenders from

⁶ By comparison, 48 percent agree with the statement about public safety and not the statement concerning rehabilitation, and 23 percent rehabilitation and not public safety.

committing new crimes once they are released, then the goal of rehabilitation could be considered part of the larger objective of “keep[ing] the public safe”. Likewise, punishment itself might be viewed as serving to rehabilitate offenders. Alternatively, a prison might serve to rehabilitate some offenders and punish others.

Variation across Prisons

Levels of support for different correctional ideologies vary significantly across prisons (see Table 2). While 47 percent of officers across all prisons agree that rehabilitation should be central to the mission of a prison, between prisons the percentage of officers supporting rehabilitation ranges from a low of 33 percent to a high of 66 percent.

Likewise, there is significant variation between prisons in the proportion of officers advocating for a balance between rehabilitation and other philosophies. On average about 29 percent of officers across all prisons agree that rehabilitation should be a central goal of a prison *and* that the purpose of a prison is public safety. The variation across prisons is significant, though. While at some prisons about 21 percent of officers support both objectives, at others as high as 40 percent of officers hold this view, a difference of about 20 percent.

Table 2. Variation across Prisons in Support for Correctional Ideologies

Correctional Philosophy	Percent of Officers Who Support each Position		
	Prison Average	Minimum	Maximum
Rehabilitation Total	47	33	66
Both Public Safety and Rehabilitation	29	21	40
Both Punishment and Rehabilitation	77	64	88
Public Safety, not Rehabilitation	46	25	64
Punishment, not Rehabilitation	18	8	34

There is a similar range across prisons (24 percent) in the proportion of officers supporting both a punishment and rehabilitation philosophy: though on average about 77 percent of officers agree that the purpose of a prison should be some combination of rehabilitation and punishment, prisons range between 64 percent and 88 percent of officers holding this dual view.

Though officers' correctional philosophies appear to differ significantly across prisons, attitudes do not appear to differ according to the security level and gender of inmates with whom an officer works most often. Levels of support for rehabilitation as a goal are roughly equivalent among officers working with inmates at Levels I, II, III, and Level IV security prisons. Support for rehabilitation likewise does not appear to vary according to whether an officer works at a prison housing male or female inmates. On average, officers assigned to men's prisons appear to hold comparable philosophies to those assigned to women's prisons.⁷

⁷ Chi Squares testing for group differences are not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Rehabilitation Programs in California Prisons

Assessing the Quality of Current Programs

When asked to assess the quality of current rehabilitative services offered in the prison at which they work—including educational and vocational programs, psychological services, and drug and alcohol treatment—Correctional Officers express diverse opinions. On the whole, officers believe that current programs are of moderate to good quality; system-wide, about half of officers describe the quality of each type of service or program as being either good or very good, while less than a third of officers believe each type of program to be of either very poor or poor quality.

Table 3 shows the percentage of officers who believe program quality at their prison to be either very poor, poor, moderate, good or very good, by the type of program or service. Of the four types of programs, the smallest percentage of officers (40 percent) feel that drug and alcohol treatment programs are of good or very good quality. By comparison, larger percentages feel that vocational programs (51 percent) and psychological services (55 percent) are of either good or very good quality.

Table 3. Correctional Officer Assessments of Rehabilitation Program Quality

Quality	Type of Rehabilitative Program			
	Educational Programs (%)	Vocational Programs (%)	Psychological Services (%)	Drug and Alcohol Treatment (%)
Very poor or poor	22	21	18	29
Moderate	34	29	27	31
Good or very good	44	51	55	40

Like attitudes towards rehabilitation as a correctional philosophy, Correctional Officer assessments of current rehabilitation programs vary widely across prisons (see Table 4). On average, between 19 and 29 percent of officers at each prison describe the quality of current rehabilitation programs as either poor or very poor. While at one institution as little as 3 percent of officers believe rehabilitation programs at their prison to be of either poor or very poor quality, at others between a third and a half of respondents believe the quality of rehabilitative programs to be either poor or very poor.⁸

Table 4. Variation across Prisons in Average Assessments of Rehabilitative Programs

Type of Rehabilitative Program	Percent of Officers Describing Programs as Either Poor or Very Poor Quality		
	Prison Average	Minimum	Maximum
Educational Programs	23	3	46
Vocational Programs	23	3	49
Psychological Services	19	3	36
Drug and Alcohol Treatment	29	5	49

Support for Rehabilitation Programs

Correctional Officers hold diverse views about the goals of incarceration. About half of Correctional Officers (46 percent) appear to oppose the idea of rehabilitation as a central objective of incarceration. Yet significantly more officers support rehabilitation when asked about the implementation of specific rehabilitative services. In fact, despite the sizable disagreement over rehabilitation as an abstract ideological goal, differences all but disappear when it comes to support for rehabilitation programs.

⁸ Officers who did not know the quality of rehabilitation programs at their prison are excluded from analysis. This represents a large percentage of officers, as in many prisons rehabilitation programs are operated in a separate part of the prison from where most custody staff are assigned.

An overwhelming majority of officers support the provision of educational, vocational, and drug and alcohol treatment programs to those inmates who desire them: 84 percent of respondents agree that inmates who want it should be given access to vocational training; 90 percent say inmates should have access to drug and alcohol treatment; and 91 percent of respondents agree that inmates who want it should have access to academic training up to and including GED preparation.

Officers' attitudes toward each type of rehabilitation program differ across prisons, though support at all prisons is consistently high (see Table 5). Support for adult basic education and GED preparatory programs, as well as for drug and alcohol treatment, is above 80 percent at all prisons. Support for vocational training varies slightly more across prisons, from a minimum of 61 percent to a maximum of 95 percent.

Table 5. Variation across Prisons in Support for Rehabilitation Programs

Type of Rehabilitative Program	Percent of Officers Supporting Each Type of Program		
	Prison Average	Minimum	Maximum
Academic Training including GED	91	86	98
Vocational Training	85	61	95
Drug and Alcohol Treatment	90	81	96
College level Academic Training	56	39	80

Unlike support for rehabilitation as a general goal, support for rehabilitation programs differs relative to the security level and gender of inmates with whom an officer works most frequently. Officers who work with lower security inmates are on average more supportive of each type of program than officers who work with higher security inmates. Officers working with female inmates are more supportive of academic and vocational programs than officers who

work primarily with male inmates, though they are equally likely to support drug and alcohol treatment.

Relative to the high levels of support for drug and alcohol treatment, educational programs up to and including GED, and vocational training, support for programs that offer college-level education is low. Compared to the large majorities supporting these other types of rehabilitative services, only about half of respondents (56 percent) agree that inmates should be offered academic training at the college level.

These attitudes vary across prisons. In particular, at one prison officers' attitudes towards prison-based higher education are on average significantly more positive. Relative to most prisons, at which only slightly more than half of officers voice support for college programs, at San Quentin about 80 percent of officers agree this type of program should be offered. This is roughly comparable to levels of support for the other types of rehabilitation programs.

This disparity is likely related to the fact that San Quentin is the only California state prison that currently hosts an on-site accredited college program.⁹ It may simply be that officers' personal familiarity with a prison-based college program leads to more supportive attitudes. Officers may be better able to image a prison college program, having seen a first-hand example. It may be also be that officers at that prison particularly like the program's director, administrators or teachers. Or, it may be that officers like what they perceive as the effects of the program, either on inmates themselves or on the prison as a whole.

Alternatively, it may be that this relatively high support is related to the fact that, while historically, prison-based college programs were operated with public funds, this is not the model employed at San Quentin. The program at San Quentin is supported by a non-profit

⁹ I have taught in the college program at San Quentin for the past several years, and so am personally familiar with details of the program and its functioning.

organization, relies on volunteer instructors from area colleges and universities, and is funded exclusively through private donations.¹⁰ Hesitancy among Correctional Officers to support the provision of college programs in California prisons may reflect an aversion to the use of public funds for this purpose, while this concern may be less dominant at a prison like San Quentin where the college program is run at no cost to taxpayers.

¹⁰ Prior to 1994, there were about 350 higher education programs in prisons across the country, the majority of which were funded by federal Pell Grants. When the 1993 Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994 were enacted, all but a handful of the prison-based higher education programs operating at the time shut down due to lack of funds. For California programs this happened particularly swiftly, as the use of state funds for prison higher education had also been banned just a year earlier.

Interpreting Attitudes towards Rehabilitation

Understanding Arguments about Rehabilitation

There are many reasons why people might either support or oppose a correctional philosophy oriented towards treatment. Opposition to a rehabilitation model may be rooted in beliefs about either the responsibility or capacity of the prison system—what the prison should be expected to accomplish, and what it is actually capable of accomplishing.

Likewise, support for or opposition to particular correctional programs may be based on different underlying issues. Opposition to programs might be rooted in concerns about their cost, their chances of positively impacting inmates or the prison environment, or the feasibility of implementing them given current staffing levels and space constraints.

The California Correctional Officer survey asked a series of nine questions designed to explore three distinct arguments related to rehabilitation: whether rehabilitation can work, whether it is the right way to spend state funds, and whether inmates deserve to receive rehabilitation programs. Each question posed a statement, and asked officers how strongly they agree or disagree with it.

Two of these three arguments appear to resonate among Correctional Officers: many officers express doubts about whether rehabilitation programs can really work, as well as whether rehabilitation programming is the best way to spend state funds. By contrast, only a minority of officers express the opinion that inmates do not deserve rehabilitation programs, opposing rehabilitation programs on principle.

The Efficacy of Rehabilitation Programs

When asked whether they believe rehabilitation programs can work, a majority of officers responds negatively. Some believe that this is because inmates do not want to be rehabilitated; a full 84 percent agree that rehabilitation programs don't work because most inmates don't want to change. Others believe that rehabilitation programs often come too late to make a difference; about 60 percent believe that by the time inmates enter prison it is too late for rehabilitation programs to do them any good, and 82 percent agree that the only way to keep people from committing crimes is to intervene in their lives while they are still kids.

The Cost of Rehabilitation Programs

A large percentage of officers also express concern over the cost of rehabilitation programs. A majority of officers (71 percent) feel that there are better ways for the state to spend money than on programs for inmates, and many feel that it would cost too much to provide all inmates with high quality programs (87 percent). Only a minority (39 percent) agree that high quality rehabilitation programs would pay for themselves in the long run with decreased crime and a smaller prison population. This may reflect the assumption that funding for prison programs would be made available at the expense of other prison priorities.

Conceptions of Inmates and Rehabilitation

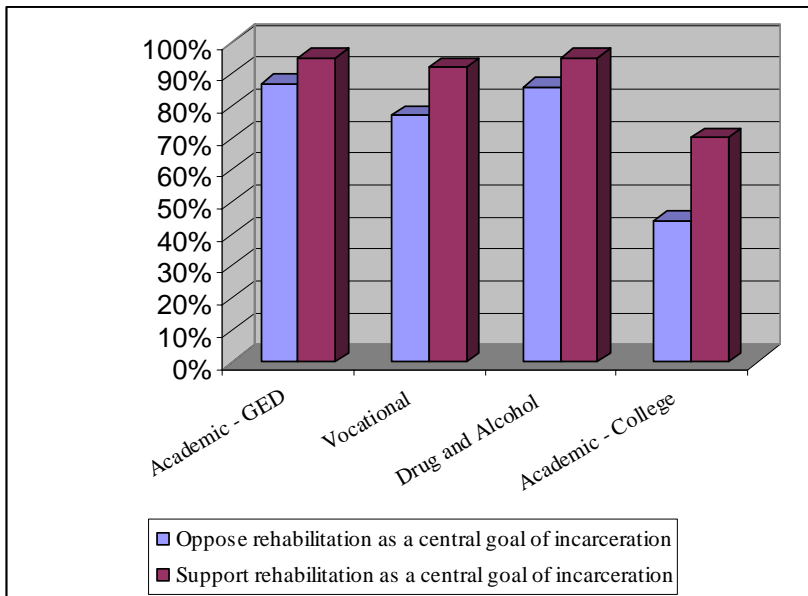
In contrast to the large proportions of officers who express concern over the financial costs associated with rehabilitation programs, and the potential for such programs to fail, a minority of officers express the belief that inmates are unworthy of such programs. Only a third of officers (33 percent) believe that inmates do not deserve rehabilitation.

This is not, however, to say that officers on the whole believe most inmates are not culpable for their failings. Almost three-quarters of Correctional Officers (71 percent) believe that most people who end up in prison are there due to personal failure rather than a lack of advantages like strong families, good education and job opportunities, and only 29 percent believe that most inmates are “simply regular people who have made some mistakes”.

Comparing Support for Rehabilitation as Philosophy and Policy

As might be expected, there is a strong relationship between support for rehabilitation as a central goal of incarceration and support for offering educational, vocational, and drug treatment programs to those who want them. Figure 3 compares attitudes towards rehabilitation as a philosophy and towards rehabilitation as a set of policies. Among those who agree that rehabilitation should be a central goal, support for offering rehabilitation programs ranges from a low of 70 percent (for academic programs at the college level) to a high of 95 percent (for academic programs up to and including GED, and for drug and alcohol treatment).

Figure 3. Support for Rehabilitation as a Philosophy and for Rehabilitation Programs



By comparison, levels of support for each type of rehabilitation program are significantly lower among those who do not believe rehabilitation should be considered a prison's central objective. Among this group, support ranges from a low of 44 percent (for academic programs at the college level) to a high of 87 percent (for academic programs up to and including GED).

While it seems intuitive that those who support rehabilitation in theory would be more likely to support it in practice, it seems more difficult to make sense of the sizable group who oppose rehabilitation as a central goal of corrections, but support offering rehabilitation programs to inmates.

Critical to understanding this apparent discrepancy is the fact that most officers appear to think about rehabilitation in two different realms: a realm of abstract goals or values, and a realm of concrete programs and policies. The value of each may be assessed independently of the other, and officers appear to think of them as related, but ultimately separate, domains.

On the one hand, officers are asked to consider whether rehabilitation should be a guiding principle: should it be the central purpose of the prison? On the other hand, officers are asked to consider the more concrete question of correctional policy: should rehabilitation programs be offered to those who want them? While for many these two questions may be related, for most they draw on different underlying patterns of thinking.¹¹

Some scholars have voiced this distinction by arguing that prisons should be assessed first and foremost according to their capacity to confine, a criterion uniquely specific to prisons, instead of by their ability to help people build skills, a task more suited to institutions like schools or job training programs. This does not mean that rehabilitative programs should be discarded, only that their effectiveness at actually changing offenders should be incidental to

¹¹ A principal components factor analysis reveals a multi-dimensional data structure, with policy questions loading high on one dimensions and philosophy questions loading high on the other.

determining whether a prison is achieving its goals. Whether or not such programs can or should be expected to assist inmates in changing their lives, they may be desirable for other reasons, such as helping to maintain order in the prison by giving inmates a productive way to fill free time.

The reason many officers appear to respond differently to these two different sets of questions may also have to do with the wording of the questions themselves. The questions probing rehabilitation as a philosophy are broad, asking for only a general assessment of a large, and perhaps vague, concept. Those probing attitudes towards rehabilitation programs are more specific. These questions specify a particular type of program, giving a concrete point of reference for consideration. Officers are not asked to consider “rehabilitation” in the abstract, but rather a particular service like GED programs or drug treatment. If other types of programs had been specified, attitudes might have differed more widely.

It may also be that officers believe rehabilitation programs are useful for some inmates, but not for others. Thus, while rehabilitation programs might be important, in that they are helpful to those who are ready to change, for others they are likely to be ineffective. Questions about rehabilitation programs posed in the survey specified whether services should be offered to inmates who *want* to take part in them. Officers may have been more likely to support this position than if they had been asked whether rehabilitation programs should be offered to all inmates.

Whatever the root cause of the distinction between the philosophy and the practice of rehabilitation, it is clear that there are fundamental differences between the two domains. In the domain of goals and values, rehabilitation appears to be a partisan issue: officers who identify as Republican are less likely to agree that rehabilitation should be a central goal of a prison.

Compared to 41 percent of Republicans, 58 percent of Democrats support a correctional philosophy oriented around rehabilitation. By comparison, there is no such partisan difference in the domain of policy and practice. On questions of rehabilitation programs, Democrats and Republicans are equally likely to support offering rehabilitation programs to those inmates who want them.

Those who voice concerns about the efficacy and cost of rehabilitation programs, as well as those who believe that inmates are undeserving of such programs, are all less likely to support rehabilitation as a primary objective, and to support the provision of specific rehabilitative services. However, there are also differences in how the issues of cost, feasibility, and desirability of rehabilitation programs relate to rehabilitation in each domain. Concerns about efficacy and cost appear more strongly related to attitudes towards a rehabilitation philosophy than with attitudes towards rehabilitation programs. Conversely, the belief that inmates are undeserving of rehabilitation programs appears somewhat more strongly related to opposition towards rehabilitation programs.

Implications and Conclusions

The preceding sections have presented a description of Correctional Officer attitudes towards rehabilitation. Several important characteristics of these attitudes are clear: first, Correctional Officers are divided over what the goals of incarceration should be. While many officers believe that rehabilitation should be a central goal of incarceration, most believe that it should be balanced with other objectives, such as public safety or punishment. For others, rehabilitation should not be a central goal at all, and other objectives should take precedence.

By comparison, it appears that officers overwhelmingly support the provision of specific rehabilitation programs to those inmates who want them. A large majority of officers supports the provision of academic programs up to and including GED, vocational programs, and drug and alcohol treatment. A somewhat smaller majority supports offering academic training at the college level.

These findings point to an important aspect of correctional officer attitudes towards rehabilitation. “Support for rehabilitation” may consist of several different dimensions. Rehabilitation may describe a philosophy of corrections, concerned with the responsibility and potential of the prison to change individual inmates. Or, rehabilitation may describe concrete correctional policy, and issues related to the implementation of specific types of programs. Officers appear to think about the philosophy of corrections and the provision of programs as related, but ultimately as two distinct domains.

Conventional wisdom suggests that talking in broad terms helps build agreement. By speaking in the language of large ideals and overarching philosophies, it may sometimes be possible to avoid discussing details that will alienate particular groups. Many believe that “the devil is in the details,” and this is perhaps often the case.

Yet if policymakers and administrators are looking for areas where rehabilitation will find broad support among Correctional Officers, they may do well to take the lead from custody staff themselves: when rehabilitation as an abstract goal or philosophy is probed, officers appear significantly divided. However, officers overwhelmingly support offering most types of rehabilitation programs to those inmates who want them. Instead of continuing to talk about rehabilitation in broad terms, it might therefore be more fruitful to re-focus the debate on the tasks that matter most: concrete programs, offered to specific groups of offenders.

Appendix A. Additional Information on Data and Methods

Each year, the Federal Bureau of Prisons conducts a comprehensive survey to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of staff around a variety of issues. Questions are asked in six broad categories: Socio-Demographics, Personal Safety & Security, Work Environment, Quality of Life, Personal Well-Being, and a Special Interest Section on a topic that varies each year. The BOP made this survey available to adapt to the needs of the California system, and it served as the basis for the initial survey instrument.

A field test of the drafted instrument was conducted in February of 2006, at a CCPOA Board of Directors meeting. Those in attendance included Correctional Officer representatives from each prison in the state system, for a total of roughly 90 attendees. Each attendee was invited to take the survey, after which a question and answer period was held to address any issues or concerns that participants had with the survey instrument. The survey instrument was then significantly revised based on these completed surveys and the comments offered by participants. The final survey instrument included sixty-eight closed-ended questions, requiring respondents to choose one or more of the given answers. One of these questions has parts A and B; two have parts A, B and C; two have parts A-D; one has parts A-E; one has parts A-F; and one has parts A-O.

In the week preceding the initial survey mailing, a full page advertisement was placed in the Peacekeeper, a publication of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, informing officers about the survey, explaining its objectives, and inviting participation. A postcard, survey and cover letter were then sent to each Correctional Officer at the end of March, 2006 with a stamped and addressed reply envelope. The cover letter explained the goals of the survey, as well as providing information about confidentiality. Cash prizes were offered to three

Correctional Officers to be picked at random from the prison that returned the largest percentage of their surveys.

Two weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up postcard was sent to every officer, reminding people to fill out their surveys. In addition, a second full page advertisement was run in the Peacekeeper. At the end of June, a second mailing of the survey was sent to the full sample. The second mailing included a duplicate copy of the survey, a slightly different cover letter, and a pre-addressed business reply envelope.

Table 8 breaks down the survey sample by percentages for each institution. While there was some variation between prisons in terms of the proportion of officers participating in the survey, no individual prison had to be excluded from analysis due to a paucity of respondents.

Table 6. Response Rates by Institution

Institution	Estimated Positions Filled	Returned Surveys (#)	Response Rate (%)
AVENAL STATE PRISON	671	161	24.0
CA. CORRECTIONAL CENTER	520	164	31.5
CA. CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION	975	245	25.1
CA. INSTITUTION FOR MEN	888	236	26.6
CA. INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN	302	67	22.2
CA. MEDICAL FACILITY	526	190	36.1
CA. MEN'S COLONY	748	249	33.3
CA REHABILITATION CENTER	605	138	22.8
CA. STATE PRISON - CORCORAN	1057	220	20.8
CA. STATE PRISON - SACRAMENTO	747	215	28.8
CA. STATE PRISON - SOLANO	597	123	20.6
CA. STATE PRISON - WASCO	703	172	24.5
CALIPATRIA STATE PRISON	564	157	27.8
CENTINELA STATE PRISON	607	139	22.9
CENTRAL CA. WOMENS FACILITY	376	95	25.3
CHUCKAWALLA VALLEY STATE PRISON	331	77	23.3
CORRECTIONAL TRAINING FACILITY	728	182	25.0
CSP - LOS ANGELES COUNTY	637	170	26.7
DELANO II STATE PRISON	751	136	18.1
DEUEL VOCATIONAL INSTITUTION	549	157	28.6

FOLSOM STATE PRISON	449	150	33.4
HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON	671	214	31.9
IRONWOOD STATE PRISON	587	150	25.6
MULE CREEK STATE PRISON	475	148	31.2
NORTH KERN STATE PRISON	653	137	21.0
PELICAN BAY STATE PRISON	805	271	33.7
PLEASANT VALLEY STATE PRISON	689	159	23.1
R J DONOVAN CORR FACILITY	683	184	26.9
SALINAS VALLEY STATE PRISON	725	181	25.0
SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON	805	198	24.6
SIERRA CONSERVATION CENTER	543	159	29.3
SUBSTANCE ABUSE TR.FACILITY	872	203	23.3
VALLEY STATE PRISON FOR WOMEN	404	121	30.0

Additional surveys were returned that did not specify an institution.