Technology and Dehumanization in U.S. Prisons
Prepared by

• Nancy E. Stoller, University of California, Santa Cruz

• Heidi Strupp, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, San Francisco
Methodology of this study:

• Attendance at ACA, NCCHC, and ACHSA meetings
• Observation and interviews at exhibit halls
• Review of corrections marketing in publications and at websites
Context of new correctional technology

• Growth in the U.S. Prison System
• Marketing Pressures
Growth of the U.S. Prison System

Incarceration rate, 1925-2001
prisoners per 100,000 population

Data from Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2001, Table 6.23
The Prison Index
Size of the correctional population

• 2,078,570 people are in prisons and jails

• 1 in every 140 U.S. residents is in prison or jail

» U.S. BJS, May 29, 2004
Racial disparity between U.S. and incarcerated populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S. Population</th>
<th>Incarcerated Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Blue bars</td>
<td>Blue bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>Red bars</td>
<td>Red bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>Yellow bars</td>
<td>Yellow bars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PrisonersoftheCensus.org
Sources of the increase

- Longer sentences
- “Truth in sentencing” laws
- “Three strikes” legislation
- More activities are criminalized
- Parole board release difficulties
- Parole violation returns
Dehumanizing trends: 1975-2004

- Security and control increasingly prioritized.
- Rehabilitation abandoned.
- Rise of the super-max prison
- Spread of long-term isolation and sensory deprivation
- Loss of human rights protections—in court and due to Prisoner Litigation Reform Act
Prisoner Litigation Reform Act

• Passed in 1996
• Severely limits prisoners’ rights to sue over conditions
  – must exhaust available administrative remedies
  – must pay court filing fees in full
  – cannot file a lawsuit for mental or emotional injury unless he or she can also show physical injury.
Humanizing trends:

• On-going prisoners’ rights movement and litigation
• Introduction of standards of care and accreditation
• Provision of community-based medical services
Standards and Accreditation


• National Commission on Correctional Health Care is the largest prison health accrediting body in the U.S. (created by the AMA in 1977); 450 currently participating jails and prisons.
Outside medical services

- Private corporation: Prison Health Services
- Public Institution: University of Texas Medical Branch
But many new care options keep prisoners in the prison.

Mobile surgery unit model

Telemedicine for cardiology
Corporate Suppliers

- Generate new prison-focused technologies
- Emphasize efficiency and cost savings
- Substitute technology for human labor and contact
Pharmaceutical marketing

- GlaxoWellcome
- OraSure
- Medique
- Epitope
• Statlander’s Pharmacy - one of the nation’s largest providers of mail-order prescriptions

• PRIMEMED, specializing in computerized service
Food service:

Corporate food service

Prepackaged trays
Packaged foods encourage in-cell eating
Dental Care

Characterized by

- Privatized services
- Specialized marketing to the corrections industry
Mental Health

- A large population with extensive needs
  and
- Limited therapy and detrimental environments
  leads to
- Emphasis on psychopharmacology
- Behavioral management
• “The wrap”  

Seated restraint system
Restraints and suicide prevention

Safely Clothe Your Suicidal Inmates
Isolation
A thin line between mental health and security
Security, control, or torture?

- Belly chains, leg connectors, shock equipment
The prisoner’s body is seen as dangerous

Spit mask

Toxic cleanup clothing
Technology replaces contact

This system uses x-ray to check for contraband items.
Increased Surveillance

We've got cameras tough enough to tame

**V100 Bullet Resistant**

**Description:**
Machined metal enclosure and thick Lexan® window is impervious to assault from 9mm handgun or 12 gauge shotgun.

**V27 Armorplate**

**Description:**
Defies assault in a Maximum Security (Class 5) correctional facility. Heavy-duty polycarbonate dome withstands an 8-pound sledgehammer blow.
A rise in acceptable and managed violence

Non-lethal ammunitions
Break-in tools
-for “cell-extraction”

Full body armor
Consequences of these trends

- An increase in mental illness
- Loss of community connections
- Reduction in social skills--for prisoners, guards, and health care providers
- Dehumanization of the prisoner
Public Health Interventions

• Expand public health services to include prisoners
• Establish effective community-based monitoring and intervention
• Utilize human rights model
• Promote decarceration as a public health necessity
WITH MILLIONS LOCKED UP, IT'S TIME
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH TO GO TO JAIL