The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Communications

SELF-GOVERNANCE, NORMALCY AND CONTROL:
INMATE-PRODUCED MEDIA AT
THE LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY AT ANGOLA

A Dissertation in
Mass Communications
by
Kalen Mary Ann Churcher

© 2008 Kalen M.A. Churcher

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2008
The dissertation of Kalen Mary Ann Churcher was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Jeremy S. Packer  
Associate Professor of Communication  
Dissertation Adviser  
Co-Chair of Committee

Ford Risley  
Associate Professor of Communications  
Head of Department of Journalism  
Co-Chair of Committee

C. Michael Elavsky  
Assistant Professor of Communications

Russell Frank  
Associate Professor of Communications

Meredith Doran  
Assistant Professor of French and Applied Linguistics

John Nichols  
Professor of Communications  
Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

This project explores the uses of inmate-produced media at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, an all-male maximum-security prison with an inmate population of 5,108 men, the majority of whom are serving life or life-equivalent sentences. The triad of media – a magazine, radio station and television station – I contend, serve simultaneously as technologies of (self)governance for the inmates, and control by the state. Based on information gathered through a variety of ethnographic research methods, particularly observations and interviews, I apply Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality as a neo-liberal means of governing the penitentiary through culture. The first seven chapters of the project use thick description and inmate narratives to describe the scene that is Angola. Chapters eight through ten are more historical and theoretically grounded and incorporate the research of past scholars with the new information obtained by this researcher.

The media, in addition to being a necessity for distributing information throughout the eighteen-thousand acre penitentiary, serve as cultural vessels for establishing community and normalcy and promoting and reinforcing Warden Burl Cain's philosophy of moral rehabilitation. They may also act as tools of resistance, advocating for inmate rights and judicial reform. Those men who engage in self-reflection and accept the tenets of moral rehabilitation may be afforded greater autonomy, and may achieve a sense of normalcy and become subjectified, ultimately being able to govern not only themselves, but also others.

This project also identifies the benefits, intrinsic and extrinsic, of working with the inmate-produced media. Those men involved with said media are afforded privileges and
freedoms beyond those given to the average inmate, including the opportunity to leave the penitentiary for specific events. As producers of mass media, these select groups of men wield considerable influence in the control and maintenance of Angola, not unlike media producers in the 'free world.' Thus, the prison serves as a microcosm of the world in which we live, making the impact of the inmate-produced media and the implementation of governmentality all the more important to consider.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER ONE** .......................................................................................................................... 1  
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 1

**CHAPTER TWO** .......................................................................................................................... 23  
THE RESEARCH PROCESS ................................................................................................................. 23  
Defining the Population and Site ..................................................................................................... 24  
Preparing to Enter the Field ............................................................................................................. 30  
Gaining Access .................................................................................................................................. 33  
Methodology and Methods ............................................................................................................... 36  
Achieving trust and credibility ......................................................................................................... 41  
Observations ..................................................................................................................................... 44  
Interviews ......................................................................................................................................... 46  
Focus groups ..................................................................................................................................... 49  
Inmate journaling .............................................................................................................................. 51  
Analyzing Information ..................................................................................................................... 52  
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 59

**CHAPTER THREE** ....................................................................................................................... 61  
THE SPACE THAT IS ANGOLA ......................................................................................................... 61  
Inside Angola ...................................................................................................................................... 64  
An Average Day ................................................................................................................................. 69  
Cain's 'Moral Rehabilitation' ............................................................................................................ 73  
The Media and Moral Rehabilitation ................................................................................................. 82  
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 89

**CHAPTER FOUR** ........................................................................................................................ 93  
*THE ANGOLITE* .............................................................................................................................. 93  
Achieving Normalcy ......................................................................................................................... 95  
A Sense of Agency ............................................................................................................................. 109  
Surveillance and Policing the Inmate ................................................................................................. 112  
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 121

**CHAPTER FIVE** ......................................................................................................................... 123  
CREATING CULTURE ....................................................................................................................... 123  
Graduation ......................................................................................................................................... 125  
The Rodeo .......................................................................................................................................... 130  
Why Angola? ...................................................................................................................................... 141  
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 144
CHAPTER SIX ........................................................................................................... 147
KLSP 91.7 FM: THE INCARCERATION STATION ................................................ 147
Religion and Radio ............................................................................................... 154
Institutional Pride/Fostering Community ......................................................... 162
Responsibilities and Expectations ................................................................... 168
Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 171

CHAPTER SEVEN .................................................................................................. 175
LSP-TV ................................................................................................................ 175
The Staff ............................................................................................................. 179
Televising Rehabilitation .................................................................................... 184
Freedom and scrutiny ....................................................................................... 192
Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 199

CHAPTER EIGHT .................................................................................................. 203
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .......................................................................... 203
Foucault's Triangle of Societal Governance ..................................................... 210
A Brief History .................................................................................................... 218
Technologies of Governance/Dispositifs of Security ...................................... 226
Inmate-produced Media beyond Angola ......................................................... 243
Instilling Forms of Subjectification and Ethical/Moral Reflection ................. 249
"Telos of Governmental or Ethical Practices" ..................................................... 266
Benefiting More than Few .............................................................................. 281

CHAPTER NINE .................................................................................................... 289
SITUATING INMATE-PRODUCED MEDIA ....................................................... 289
History of the Prison Press .............................................................................. 292
Traditional and Alternative Journalism ............................................................ 299
The similarities .................................................................................................. 301
The differences .................................................................................................. 307
Transmission and Ritual Communication Views ............................................ 312
Transmission view ............................................................................................ 314
Ritual view ......................................................................................................... 317

CHAPTER TEN ...................................................................................................... 321
CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................... 321

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................... 335
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation, these hundreds of pages and tens of thousands of words, would not be possible were it not for the incredible support, guidance and thoughtfulness of so many people, some of whom I know I will unintentionally forget to list here. Thank you first, to my adviser, Jeremy Packer, for your unending encouragement and advice to not only go beyond the expected, but to push even further. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and passion and challenging me to think in ways I had never imagined possible. Much appreciation also goes to my committee members: Ford Risley, Michael Elavsky, Russell Frank and Meredith Doran, who have always been interested not only in this project, but my progression as a scholar.

The last four years of my life would not have been nearly as enjoyable without the camaraderie of the amazing group of colleagues I now consider my friends. Sampada Marathe, Kelly Poniatowski, Nathaniel Frederick, Bimal Balakrishnan and Aziz Douai, thank you. Thanks also to Doug Tewksbury, Erika Polson, Shannon Kahle, Erin Whiteside and Kathleen Kuehn for creating the Foucault reading group and stimulating conversation outside of the classroom. Ed Downs and Maja Krakowiak, without your support, e-mails and late-night text messages, I don't think I would have had the strength – mental or otherwise – to finish this dissertation. Thanks for creating laughs and preventing tears.

Of course, this project would never have come to fruition without the approval and support of the Louisiana State Penitentiary. I owe incredible gratitude to the administration and staff of the prison, including: Cathy Fontenot, Angie Norwood, Gary Young, John Joseph, Maurice Rabalais, and of course, Warden Burl Cain. To the dozens
of men interviewed for this project, thank you for opening your hearts and souls, sharing
your fears and triumphs, and educating me with your incredible knowledge and drive.
Without you and your stories, this project would have been nothing. I enjoyed getting to
know every one of you, and I learned more from my experiences at Angola than I could
have ever anticipated, so much of which goes beyond this project.

Finally to my family, extended and otherwise. Thank you Robyn and Mike
Cherinka; Dotty Martin; Joe Healey; and Shelley and Steve Bartolomei for your love and
encouragement. You never gave up on me, and you reminded me that every once in
awhile it's okay to relax. And to my mother, Carol, and best canine friend, Gabby, thank
you for your unconditional love and support. I could not have completed this without
you.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the United States is a nation of incarceration.1 At the end of 2006, one out of every thirty-one U.S. adults was either in one of the nation's prisons or jails or on probation or parole.2 Louisiana possesses a violent crime rate about 41 percent higher than that of any other state3 as well as more men and women in prison, per capita, than any other state as of 2006.4 Yet in the heart of the deep South, the Louisiana State Penitentiary, the state's only maximum-security prison, boasts some of the most progressive – and controversial – forms of rehabilitation while simultaneously serving as an eerie reminder of when slavery and oppression reigned. Angola, as the penitentiary is more commonly known, is indeed unique. Once known as America's bloodiest prison,5 it has experienced a rebirth of sorts, currently making it an international example of how governments can successfully run penitentiaries.

Considering that Angola, at eighteen thousand acres, is roughly the size of Manhattan, and boasts a population of 5,1086 male inmates and approximately six hundred 'free people' who live on its grounds, it is not surprising that constant

---

1 According the Human Rights watch, http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/12/05/usdom17491.htm, the United States boasts an incarceration rate of 751 per 100,000 U.S. residents, the highest such rate in the world. Last viewed on February 1, 2008.
2 "One in every 31 U.S. adults was in a prison or jail or on probation or parole at the end of last year." December 5, 2007. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/p06ppus06pr.htm. This number equates to approximately 3.2 percent of the entire U.S. adult population.
4 According to the National Institute of Corrections 2006 data, Louisiana incarcerates 846 adults per 100,000 people compared to the national average of 405 people per 100,000.
6 Though the number of men serving time at the Louisiana State Penitentiary fluctuates, the Angola prison held 5,108 men as of October 11, 2007. This number was extracted during the last on-site visit by the author.
communication is of the highest priority. However, it is the production of said communication that is worthy of note. With an award-winning magazine, a Federal Communications Commission-licensed radio station and a newly created television station, the penitentiary is an anomaly with its inmate-produced media and free speech initiatives. Knowing the impact media have on free society, it is only natural to explore how the inmates and administration utilize the in-house media at Angola. Based on ethnographic research and writing that allows the inmates to serve directly as experts in this project, I argue that a new form of neo-liberal governmental rationality is taking place at the penitentiary. Angola is more than a disciplinary institution where individuals 'do time' and are controlled exclusively by a system of rules, regulations and force exuded through an administration and staff. I argue that (self)governance at the Louisiana State Penitentiary exists, at least in part, through the cultural technologies of inmate-produced media that serve to establish normalcy, community and in some instances, to initiate change and/or resistance.

Fifty-two percent of Angola's inmates will never leave the penitentiary because of life sentences and upwards of 90 percent will not leave because their sentences will outlive them. The prison, located just an hour northwest of Baton Rouge, and minutes from historic St. Francisville, is, according to many, for the worst of the worst. Eighty-six percent of the men are considered violent offenders, and a number entered the prison as teenagers and grew up behind the razor wire fences. Still others, seemingly settled in their lives, left families and jobs behind. There are also the elderly, who survived the bloodiest days of the prison, when inmate trusty guards carried weapons and enforced prison law at
their own discretion. There are the monsters, who even other inmates do not wish to associate with, who other inmates say deserve to be locked away forever.

**Jeffrey Dale Hilburn:** I live in a dormitory with sixty-four men. There are men in that dorm, some of whom I sleep within spittin' distance of, they could live in my neighborhood; they could live right beside me. I wouldn't care. They could live beside my momma, my daughter, and I wouldn't care. By the same token, I could turn the other way and spit and I'd rather shoot that man myself than let him out of this prison, because I know who he is and I know what he is and he should never leave this prison. And anyone who stands up and says everybody in here should leave this prison is wrong. I don't care what moral ground they stand on. Prisons serve a purpose. … There is a reason we have laws. Now, we just have too many laws with the wrong sentences.

There are the rehabilitated, I firmly believe that, who have committed the unthinkable but who have worked to become a benefit, and not a burden to society. There are also those on their way to rehabilitation, who somehow manage to wake up every day and work toward a dangling carrot called clemency that few ever receive but that no one should dismiss.⁷ And there are the innocent, no doubt. Some continue to fight for their freedom; others have given up hope and are settled into the daily Angola routine with a vacant look in their eyes. Those are the inmates whose spirits have died, whose physical bodies, for better or worse, represent the shells of men who at one time lived.

⁷ Kerry Myers, "Angola Blues," _The Angolite_, January/February, 14. According to the January/February 2007 issue of _The Angolite_, in 2006, the Louisiana pardon board recommended more than one dozen Angola drug lifers receive sentence commutations; six were signed by the governor. One "violent crime" lifer, a seventy-two year old, who had served more than forty-four years, also received a positive commutation recommendation by the board. The governor had not acted on the recommendation as of _The Angolite_'s publication. Other releases were equally minimal. Of those men not serving life sentences, fourteen were granted parole in 2006 (thirteen were denied) and fifty-eight were discharged. Thirty-one men died.
It would have been much easier if my research at Angola was marred by riots and fear. It would have been sexy if I could write about how I witnessed violence and ignorance, how I nervously looked over my shoulder as I rounded corners with my armed escorts, and how I had to take scalding showers nightly to get rid of the filth – physical, verbal and otherwise – I endured on my daily visits. It would have been easier for me to write how, on first glance, the inmate-produced media seemed like ground-breaking techniques that afforded inmates a sense of autonomy and agency but in reality were simply state apparatuses for Warden Burl Cain to micromanage and control.

It would have been easier, but that's not how it turned out.

Angola is not the high-walled, graffiti-ridden penitentiary I expected. Nor are its inhabitants caged animals. Instead, Angola is very much like any other 'city' one might visit, with minor modifications. According to Cain, Angola's warden since 1995:

It is a community. The dormitory is a city, an aisle is the street, and a bed is a house. Three beds down is three doors down and when someone is grieving down there, go and visit your neighbor, three doors down. Talk to them and sit on the bed with them, and keep your street clean and free of violence and keep those cities free of violence and drugs. That's how we do it.

And where would a community and its residents be without communication? The actual form of media is less significant, rather that at least one cultural form, be it newspaper, radio, television, music, or public art, has guided individuals through their lives foreshadows where society is headed and ultimately, how it can be controlled.⁸ That

---

the inmate-produced media of Angola include such sophisticated and popular forms of media as television adds to the novelty and curiosity. The impact of such cultural devices exists not only in free society but also in the confines of state institutions like Angola. The obvious assumption to make is that these technologies help maintain order and are carefully regulated so that order is maintained. However, these cultural forms serve a dual role because the inmates themselves are the producers. At Angola, the inmate-produced media are technologies of (self)governance, allowing both the inmate and the state to become active participants in the surveillance and governing (control) process.

Considering that culture, of which media are a part, is identified as having greater potential than brute discipline and is used to transport and convey a collection of institutional ideologies, what might ordinarily be considered as culture or cultural now becomes a crucial component of government.9 When inmates produce the media, the traditional hegemonic framework of popular media and their messages are disrupted and the inmates are afforded the opportunity to control/govern themselves and one another. This self-governance provides a continuation of Michel Foucault's genealogy of the prison system detailed in his book, Discipline and Punish and illustrates his concept of governmentality,10 introduced to the Collège de France in a "Security, Territory and

---

10 Although the concept of governmentality has been defined broadly to include the art of government, governmentality as addressed in this project and in many of Michel Foucault's lectures takes on the neo-
Population” lecture during the 1977-78 academic year. Certainly, Angola's inmate-produced magazine, radio station and television station serve as vessels of the state, but more interesting, and perhaps more useful, is the effect they have on the inmates' behavior. Whether he realizes it or not, Warden Cain has recognized Foucault's vision and the pertinence to shift the technologies of power in prison systems from punishment to a more combined power structure of discipline and governmentality, where inmates are molded into 'docile bodies'\(^{11}\) and the power to govern is placed more on the self.

This process is not something that happens instantaneously or exclusively. Rather penology, punishment, discipline and governmentality coexist at varying levels depending on the time, situation and location. Without question, some would argue that Angola is not as progressive as this research might suggest. It was only on March 26, 2008, that two men were transferred from solitary confinement cells where they had lived since the 1970s to a maximum-security dormitory.\(^{12}\) Herman Wallace and Alfred Woodcox sued the state alleging they were victims of cruel and unusual punishment because of their decades in isolation. Isolation at the Louisiana State Penitentiary involves twenty-three hours of each day spent in the cell with the remaining hour used for showering and exercising in a fenced-in yard. The two men are part of what has become known as the Angola 3. The third man, Robert King, spent twenty-nine years in isolation before his release.

\(^{11}\) Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995; originally published in 1975). Foucault defines a docile body as one "that might be subjected, used, transformed and improved," (p. 136). He goes on to state that, "discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)," (p. 138).

\(^{12}\) Jeremy Harper, "Angola 3 Pair Move to Dorm," *The Advocate*, March 27, 2008, 1B.
Still, even with the possibility of restrictive housing, grueling fieldwork, or time spent in solitary confinement, a number of Angola's men say that if they have to be in prison, Angola is where they would prefer to be. Some half-heartedly joke that Warden Cain is a Huey Long character who thrives on the attention the reformation of Angola has brought; others say that the devout Christian with a farming and educational background has the right mix of foresight and values to make a difference in the inmates' lives.

Warden Cain describes his philosophy quite simply: the men's punishment was being sent to prison, not what takes place in prison. Angola itself is punishment enough.

Warden Cain: It's a horrible place to live. You can't ever leave. You got rules. You gotta go to bed at a certain hour; you gotta get up at a certain hour. You don't get to pick your job, we tell you. And you don't get to not work – you gotta work. You can't say I'm not going to work today. You're gonna go to work or you're going to the cellblock. You live a harder life if you don't go to work. … We structure it for what we think is best for you. You give up your adulthood and almost become like a teenager. Then we find the job where you fit, your niche, and then we want you in it because it's easier for us; easier for you. It keeps down the chaos. Real simple.

Cain's use of moral rehabilitation, a controversial practice based on what some consider evangelical, Christian indoctrination – though the warden maintains he encourages any religion because religion keeps men out of trouble – and outside the legal auspices of a state institution, creates subjects of much of the population, allowing them to be controlled yet maintain a sense of productivity. The inmate-produced media,

---

particularly the radio and television stations, disseminate the Christian messages which create the docile bodies and ultimately allow prisoners to expand, and in some instances reverse, the notion of Bentham's panopticon\textsuperscript{14} and place themselves as the subject by which their actions are guided. However, the mere fact that a select group of inmates has any say in what is printed or broadcast in their media and that the inmates ultimately convey those messages in their own words and through their own talents illustrates the beginning of self-governance. Furthermore, because the media producers are selected carefully by the state and undoubtedly want to remain in their prestigious positions, the men serve as a surveillance tool, assessing what type of information is needed to maintain a peaceful and civil community and then conveying said messages to their public. The line between inmate journalist and administrative tool is a fine one and one that historically has been addressed in Angola's magazine, \textit{The Angolite}:

\begin{quote}
Being a convict journalist is probably one of the best jobs you can have in prison. It certainly beats pickin' cotton, scraping ice off the dormitory windows, or hauling trash to the incinerator. All in all, the fringe benefits usually outweigh the inevitable flak that comes with the job. True, there are times when prisoner resentment and official pressures aggravate that gnawing ulcer. You can't scream, curse, or shout…You must be professional – your behavior must be beyond
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The concept of Bentham's panopticon is, very literally, an architectural model for a prison. Following this design, the building, or at least the set-up of the cells, is circular, with a guard situated in the middle of the circle. This orchestration allows for optimum surveillance, with the surveyor being able to watch anything at anytime because of a 360-degree view. However, the prisoner, because of placement and lighting, never knows when he or she is being watched. Because of this uncertainty, the prisoner is expected to behave as if he or she is constantly being observed by the state. Hence, behavior is controlled by an outside entity, or the potentiality of being seen. Jeremy Bentham, "Letter II: Plan for a Penitentiary Inspection House," in \textit{Panopticon: Or the Inspection House} (Dublin: Thomas Byrne, 1787), 4-10.
reproach…The worse prison in the world – beyond any doubt – is to have a free mind caged in a convict body.\textsuperscript{15}

In order to understand better why working with the inmate-produced media is one the best jobs in prison, I gathered information for this project through ethnographic research methods during May and June 2007 as well as October 2007. Though a full methodology explication will take place later in this work, observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups comprised the majority of research techniques. Individuals participating in this project were divided into several groups: non-inmates, including the warden, deputy wardens and television production manager; non-media inmates, men who were incarcerated but did not hold a job with one of the inmate-produced media; and inmate-media employees, which were further broken down by specific media, including \textit{The Angolite}, KLSP radio station, and LSP-TV.\textsuperscript{16}

To help readers better understand the results of my work, I have divided this project into two main parts in much the same way as Paul Willis separated the research in his qualitative study of the "Hammertown Boys" in \textit{Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs}.\textsuperscript{17} Like Willis with his thick description of the working class lads, I begin with an ethnographic account of Angola's inmate-produced media and the media employees, paying close attention to the power-relations between and among the inmates that work with said media, and the state. Because the media are


\textsuperscript{16} Although inmate-produced media are popular at Angola, outside media are also abundant. Inmates do not have personal television sets but do have access to basic televisions in the dormitories, cell blocks, etc. Outside network television stations, as well as some cable channels, are available. The inmate-television crew broadcasts movies, rated PG or less, over the penitentiary's in-house station, Channel 21. Pornography is not allowed. In contrast, the men at Angola are allowed personal radios and headphones and may listen to any channel available. The penitentiary library also contains a variety of books and periodicals. Inmates have no internet access.

quite independent of one another, as will be illustrated, each media has its own specific ethnographic account and impact as a technology of control and/or self-governance. The ethnographies of each media rely heavily on both thick description, a traditional component of ethnography, and the verbatim words of the men (and woman) interviewed. By recreating components of the scene-that-is-Angola, as well as utilizing the actual words, as opposed to an interpretation, of those interviewed, I provide readers with as close to a firsthand experience as possible from which their own interpretations may be drawn. In Chapter Eight, this raw 'data' is used to explicate a theoretical analysis that focuses specifically on cultural studies, Foucault's discussions of governmentality, and their practical implications.

Considering the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola was just decades ago regarded as the Bloodiest Prison in America,\(^1\) it is important to examine aspects of how and why the culture has so drastically changed in a relatively brief period. Local Louisianan historian and author Anne Butler provides a brief glimpse of Angola's past horrors in the introduction to the book, *Angola: Louisiana State Penitentiary A Half-Century of Rage and Reform.*

At a time in the late sixties when the Louisiana State Penitentiary was at the height of what prison journalists call its 'knock 'em down and drag 'em out' days, Angola, as the prison is familiarly known, was considered one of the nation's worst, a brutal world of violence and intrigue, political abuse and racial turmoil, where a staggering one in ten inmates would suffer stab wounds annually and

---

\(^1\) In some instances, Angola is also referred to as once having the status of the bloodiest prison in the South.
others slept with thick mail-order catalogues [sic] taped to the chest to deflect knives in the night.  

Butler and co-author C. Murray Henderson, a former Angola warden, also detail one of the best-known instances of (self-inflicted) violence at Angola, when more than thirty inmates in 1951 slashed their Achilles' tendons in protest over the brutality and substandard conditions at the penitentiary. Those conditions included cramped and unsanitary living conditions, slave-like working environments, inmate-guards, a lack of clean clothes and hot water, meals of only vegetables and cornbread, and an in-house judicial system based on violence. At least one inmate, however, described the slashing as more personal than political. With one – or both – tendons cut, working at hard labor in the hot, Louisiana fields was not an option. Warden Henderson acknowledged the events, and undoubtedly the media response, as "representing the birth of real reform at Angola," admitting that the system "in actuality bordered on legalized slavery."

After reflecting on the prison's notorious background and the fact that the vast majority of the inmate population will never leave the prison, one surely must question why any warden would want to afford these hardened criminals, convicts, freedoms that many other prison administrators throughout the United States and the world say they are not entitled to. A proliferation of popular crime and/or prison-based dramas, including *Law & Order*, *Crime Scene Investigation*, and prior to those, *NYPD Blue*, has provided

---

20 There are conflicting reports as to the number of inmates involved. According to Butler's account, eight inmates initially began the protest; other inmates eventually participated, with newspaper reports bringing the total to thirty-seven. A pamphlet produced by the penitentiary, *The Angola Story*, states 31 inmates were involved in the event.  
22 Ibid., 29.
viewers with a glimpse into prisons and their inhabitants. And although only a small number of prison films have been produced since the turn of the century, the last one hundred years has witnessed more than three hundred prison films come out of Hollywood. Taking into account that small- and big-screen productions play largely into the stereotypes associated with imprisonment and the imprisoned, one must also question how often anyone challenges the accuracy of the character representations or the frequency of the portrayed activities. Furthermore, with news media still very much attached to the notion of, 'if it bleeds, it leads,' it is clear that violent crime reporting drives single-copy sales more than inmate success stories. In essence, the criminal becomes a commodity to those individuals and entities that want to profit from the spectacle of crime and imprisonment. The prison, the crime, the institution and the circumstances equate to dollar values; the more sensational the story is, the better.

With the perpetuation of prison and inmate stereotyping so vivid, and the public's fascination with crime so apparent, it is no wonder that administrators are reluctant to implement progressive forms of rehabilitation in their prisons. Allowing individuals to criticize the very system that handed down their prison sentence may sound outlandish and affording inmates liberties and freedoms may seem insane. Yet the United States maintains its prisons are correctional facilities, with objectives to rehabilitate the incarcerated. As Angola's Warden Cain states, his inmates' punishment was being sent to prison. It is not his purpose to further punish them, but rather to create moral and responsible citizens, should they be allowed to return to society.

---

Warden Cain: So the free people and the inmates all are together ... making this a normal place, a more normal place, not such an abnormal place, to live. And if you're doing a life sentence, you're doing time – we're all doing time – and it's where we live. You can live under a bridge and be homeless. You can live in prison and have nothing, but you can live in prison and have a little dignity, but we have to remember the victim that's in the grave. And we have to never forget that, because a violent crime caused them to be here – a very violent crime. The goal is to reduce that, is to have that – less victims of violent crime. And if we can change the culture here, and if any of these (guys) get out, and surely maybe that will happen, then there won't be another victim behind them.

Richard Peabody, deputy warden of programming, concurs. Peabody's duties include overseeing the prison media, particularly the radio station.

Deputy Warden Peabody: I guess I look at running a prison in two ways. One is you do it by force. The other is you do it by leading people in the direction you want them to go. And I think that's our way of doing it. We want to set the example; we want to do the right thing. And I think when you're doing that, you want to use things like this to help you do that.

Angola is not perfect, and I believe there are those free people there who know that. They see the rehabilitation of inmates, but recognize those same men are likely to never leave the prison. They see lines of inequities in Louisiana's judicial system drawn along race and socioeconomic status, but are resigned to the courts not changing. And they see hope in the inmates' eyes with each political election or Supreme Court decision that could possibly give lifers a chance at parole, yet realize that hope is manufactured
out of necessity. However, there remain those who believe that rehabilitation equates to coddling and there should be more men picking vegetables, digging ditches, and living locked behind bars as opposed to in dormitories. That mentality, which exists not only at Angola but also at other United States prisons, is what makes Angola's success stories so unique. On the rare occasion when one of the penitentiary's lifers receives a sentence commutation and is able to leave the space that is Angola, the men look on with competing emotions. Yes, they are thankful that one of their own is leaving and the possibility of a hope-filled tomorrow is stronger than ever. However, as quick as that idea enters, it often leaves when the men realize that the likelihood of a personal commutation is a long shot.

Still, many of the men hold tight to hope, however slight it may be. Some of the inmates say that as long as they have hope, as long as they continue to fight to leave Angola and not become complacent in their current state, they simultaneously fight the battle of becoming institutionalized. They fight the battle against becoming one of the many Angola men who traverse the prison with a telltale vacancy in their eyes. These are the men who have lost their hope, who have lost all hope. But were it not for hope, be it manufactured or otherwise, where would Wilbert Rideau or Eugene "Bishop" Tanniehill be today? As two of Angola's most publicized former lifers who, in this century, were both released from the penitentiary, the men typify what can happen when rehabilitation is acknowledged and rewarded.

After serving more than three decades in prison, Rideau, who is arguably the nation's most famous inmate journalist and one of Angola's best-known (former)

---

24 Rideau won the George Polk and Robert F. Kennedy awards and was co-nominated for an Academy Award for his work on *The Farm*, a documentary on Angola.
inmates, was named by *Life* magazine in 1993 as America's most rehabilitated prisoner.\(^ {25} \)

Following an initial death sentence in 1961,\(^ {26} \) forty-four years in prison, multiple trials and positive recommendations from the clemency board, the sixty-two-year-old man left Angola in January 2005 after being re-tried and found guilty not of murder, but manslaughter, which carries a less severe sentence.\(^ {27} \) Tanniehill arrived at Angola one year before Rideau after being convicted of murder during an armed robbery. For more than eleven years, he served as a rifle-toting inmate trusty guard.\(^ {28} \) Then, the seventh grade dropout became a born-again Christian while in prison\(^ {29} \) and affectionately known as Bishop because of his ministering and preaching abilities. In August 2007, the seventy-three-year-old left Angola after Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco commuted his life sentence.

Although the previous paragraphs represent an historical perspective of Angola and the men living there, the remainder of this project overwhelmingly favors the penitentiary's current prison population and state, drawing on history only when necessary for comparative purposes. Chapter Two, *The Research Process*, goes beyond addressing the processes used for collecting data for this project. It begins by defining the population on which this project is based and continues to illustrate the procedural issues involved with gaining access to a state correctional facility and garnering institutional review board approval. Because Angola is unique, it was important that I use the actual name of the penitentiary. Furthermore, because I argue that the inmate-produced media


\(^ {26} \) Rideau's initial death sentence was overturned when, in the 1970s, the death penalty was declared by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

\(^ {27} \) Haygood, "The Long Road Out of Lake Charles."

\(^ {28} \) Shere, *Cain's Redemption.*

foster a sense of autonomy and governmentality, I wanted inmates to have the opportunity be linked with their actual names should they desire.  

Chapter Three of this dissertation examines *The Space that Is Angola*. I begin by situating Louisiana's only maximum-security prison in the sleepy, former plantation area near historic St. Francisville. Angola is unlike many prisons that resemble castle-like fortresses with multi-floored, noisy cellblocks. Instead, the penitentiary is eerily peaceful, with several prison 'camps' scattered throughout the eighteen thousand acres. Lush crops line the sides of Angola's main roadway and cattle graze in the fields. Using the words of an inmate tour guide, I describe the average day at Angola and introduce how many lifers succeed at doing their time. The chapter ends with a look at Warden Burl Cain's "moral rehabilitation," a concept that appears successful but is not without its critics.

Chapter Four introduces readers to the penitentiary's award-winning, inmate-produced magazine, *The Angolite*. Created in the 1950s, the magazine is known worldwide for its free speech and true examination of issues confronting inmates in Louisiana specifically, and elsewhere. The oldest of Angola's three inmate-produced media, *The Angolite* is overwhelmingly popular with the inmate population. Editor Kerry Myers distinguishes the magazine from the prison's other media, saying it is journalism while they are entertainment. Indeed, unlike the other media, *The Angolite* serves as a distinct tool of resistance against what could be considered institutional or state norms. Darrel Vannoy, deputy warden of security, attributes the success of *The Angolite* to the

---

30 Almost all of the men working with the inmate-produced media consented to my utilizing their names. However, due to administrative rules regarding victim notifications, I could not use several of the men's names. Coincidentally, those men were all from the television station. Therefore, I provided the six LSP-Productions workers with pseudonyms. Also, to minimize confusion, those men interviewed who do not work directly with the inmate-produced media are identified by either a letter or number (Example: Inmate 1 or Inmate B).
inmate staff, and believes *The Angolite* served as an impetus for the radio and television stations. "They have a good reputation, they've earned it," Vannoy said, of *The Angolite* staffers. "They've worked a long time, they've worked real hard for it, and they've fought a lot of adversity on their way up – from security, from the outside. But they've been professional, never been radical, just always been on that straight line and I think that's why they've always been so successful."

Chapter Five, *Creating Culture*, examines two penitentiary events and the roles of the inmate-produced media at those events. The first event is a (relatively) small graduation ceremony for the May 2007 graduates of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary – Angola Branch. The ceremony took place on my first official day of research at the prison and is important because of the acceptance I was shown by the inmates at the prison. The second event is the open-to-the-public inmate rodeo, dubbed "The Wildest Show in the South." The annual event draws visitors from throughout the world and is a site for a myriad of cultural technologies. Both events, the latter in particular, illustrate how the media and other communicative devices help maintain the aforementioned notion of manufactured hope.

In Chapter Six, readers learn about *KLSP 91.7: The Incarceration Station*, "the station that kicks behind the bricks." The men at Angola are proud that their FCC-licensed, inmate-run radio station is the only one in the nation. That fact, coupled with a talented staff of disc jockeys, one of whom has appeared on CNN and in the *New York Times* as well as *Billboard Magazine*, fosters a strong sense of community among the men. However, perhaps even more important than the creation of community and shared experience is the reinforcement of Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation. KLSP is largely
religious-based, with a particular emphasis on Christian preaching. Those deejays who are also inmate ministers use the airwaves as a pulpit to spread the Lord's word.

Created in 2006, *LSP-TV* is the baby of Angola's triad of media and the subject of Chapter Seven. In this chapter, I address not only the impact of the television station, but some of the growing pains associated with introducing inmate-produced culture to the population. Like the other inmate-produced media and several other inmate employment opportunities, the LSP-TV crewmembers are afforded certain freedoms not granted to other inmates. One of those freedoms involves leaving the penitentiary to travel throughout Louisiana, covering prison-related events. The benefits to working with the inmate-produced media are particularly examined in this section, as are the benefits to the inmate population overall. As a final component, I examine what the opportunity to work at the television station means to the group of largely thirty-somethings who have already spent nearly a decade of their lives each in prison.

Chapter Eight presents the *Theoretical Framework* of this project, specifically the neo-liberal ideal of responsibilization and the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. Using these theories, I address both macro- and micro-levels of impact the inmate-produced media have both in a sense of their messages and their mere existence. Again utilizing thick description and dialogue, I illustrate the juxtaposition of neo-liberal rehabilitative techniques, of which I argue the inmate-produced media exemplify, amidst the traditionally conservative South.

Moving beyond cultural studies theories/policy, Chapter Nine acknowledges other uses of inmate-produced media, particularly from an alternative journalism standpoint. Also included in this chapter is a historical perspective on prison journalism, which dates
back to 1800 and New York City's debtors prisons. At that point in time, the prison newspaper was written for the sole function of initiating social change, in much the same way as the Black or Women's Suffragist presses served their niche audiences. Kerry Myers and his staff maintain this remains the primary mission of *The Angolite*. The chapter also addresses James Carey's transmission and ritual views of communication as well as how they are applicable to Angola's inmate-produced media. The project ends with Chapter Ten, a *Conclusion* chapter that addresses the overall importance of the project and its potential implications.

As mentioned, those looking for tales of violence and spectacle from this project will be disappointed. Although some men disclosed the reason(s) for their incarceration, I never asked for details of their crime – only their sentence. Of those men working with the inmate-produced media, all but two are serving life sentences. Most were convicted of second-degree murder, which in Louisiana carries a mandatory life sentence. Like Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Pennsylvania and South Dakota, a life sentence in Louisiana means just that – life. In addition to providing a sense of agency and self-governance, the inmate-produced media at Angola also engender a sense of normalcy, a link to freedom, and for those working with the media, a higher sense of purpose that equates to a positive impact on the 5,100+ inmate population.

Angola could be operated as a literal warehouse for those convicted of crimes, as numerous other penitentiaries are, but what would that say for the goals of rehabilitation or correction? William F. Pinar writes, "America has been and is now a culture of discipline and punishment structured by racialized criminalization, imprisonment, and
sexualized torture.\textsuperscript{31} If, in fact, the objectives of United States penology have reverted back to the spectacle of torture and punishment, and the new aim of corrections is retribution, then society must brace itself for the potential consequences those alterations could create. Foucault would argue that executions, perhaps the ultimate form of punishment, have little impact if they are done "in secret." "The aim was to make an example, not only by making people aware that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person…"\textsuperscript{32} If such punishment is indeed the sole purpose of incarceration, and not simply to punish the criminal but to serve as a deterrent to the rest of the public, then society must prepare itself physically, emotionally and morally to stand among the floggers or exchange places with the executioner.

However, if society is truly committed to rehabilitation, it must recognize that the mandatory sentencing boom of the 1980s created a prison population explosion throughout the nation that sooner, rather than later, must be addressed. Reformers, activists and legislators must look at the positive aspects of Angola and seek their implementation in other penal institutions instead of decreasing such programs and increasing the criminal intelligence of the incarcerated. For long-term facilities like Angola, one must decide if these men are to be discarded and simply housed until their eventual deaths or if they too, are to be rehabilitated and the success stories mainstreamed back into the public to make room for those who are societal threats. Even if the opportunity for parole is removed from the equation, should the incarcerated be meant to

\textsuperscript{32} Foucault, \textit{Discipline & Punish}, 58.
live like animals until their mental capacity is so broken that they turn not only on one another, but also on the prison employees, caseworkers or visitors?

**Deputy Warden Peabody:** I think you have to remember that Angola is mainly, it houses long-term offenders who are going to be here. This is their home. They're not going anywhere. Most of them are not getting out. It is a community. It's not just a place where you lock 'em up and throw away the key. If you're going to help them help us keep things under control then you have to give them some things where they can have some expression and some outlet for positive things. I think when *The Angolite* started years and years ago, it was felt that 'we don't have anything to hide, so let the inmates tell what's goin' on here.' And I think that's even true – more true – today. Same with the radio station. If we were afraid of what the inmates would say on the radio, we wouldn't have it. We're not afraid, because we're trying to do the right thing. I think that just promotes it.

The semblance of normalcy visible at Angola, however contrived, does indeed allow the men to function "as men," earning a living, and being as productive as they can in their current state. Some inmates said that for every benefit they receive, two are taken. There is a tipping point, they argue, at which point inmate order will crack. The inmate-produced media again serve a multiplicity of roles at Angola: surveillance tools, control mechanisms, means of (self)governance and to some extent, pacifiers in much the same way free society uses its culture. Todd Clear, distinguished professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, argues that those advocating harder treatment of prisoners are working with fuzzy numbers. In fact, there is no evidence proving that "harder treatment is superior to less-hard treatment in reforming the minds of those who have committed
On the contrary, the scant evidence points to the opposite – that severe treatment equates to less positive outcomes. "The case against hard treatment is so strong that I am tempted to classify its advocates with those who believe in Santa Claus: The source of the belief lives on in the face of contrary evidence because of the good feelings it gives to the believer."\(^3^4\)


\(^3^4\) Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Those (sub)cultural groups that disrupt the traditional hegemonic organization of society, and particularly those which involve defying law and order, fascinate human beings. There is some sort of mystique that draws individuals to want to learn more about behaviors that are considered anti-social, unlawful or abnormal. However, for much of society, attention to deviance stops when those individuals are imprisoned or their behavior becomes too extreme. Then such curiosity becomes morbid and shameful for the outsider to engage in. It is unfortunate that interest ends at a prison's gates, especially considering that according to the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, one out of every thirty-one United States adults was incarcerated or on probation or parole at the end of 2006. Reaching what could be considered epidemic proportions, the inmate population indeed represents a subculture – if not a more prominent counterculture – in today's world that is indeed worthy of study.

This is particularly true of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, where the majority of its inmates will never be released and where Warden Burl Cain's emphasis on moral rehabilitation places, metaphorically, much of the prison's surveillance on the inmates. The men are afforded the opportunity to govern themselves as well as others in the prison population. This is achieved through a host of activities and programs, including a triad of inmate-produced media that allow staffs to convey messages to their community at-large. This chapter begins with a definition of the population studied and continues on to outline the process of gaining access and approval to conduct research involving, what

institutional review boards consider a vulnerable population. The qualitative research
methods utilized for the project are then briefly explained, followed by a rationale as to
why these methods were not only helpful but also necessary for understanding how and
why the men utilize the media as they do. The results allow thick description and inmate
responses and narratives to illustrate the cultural studies theories argued as existing
within Angola. Likewise, the self-governance exemplified in, but not limited to, the
inmate-produced media is carried through into this research. Wherever possible, I use the
men's words directly, as opposed to an interpretation of them, to support my arguments.

**Defining the Population and Site**

It is my contention that the community of Angola represents a subculture (or
counterculture) of society, but what exactly is this subculture and more importantly, what
should one call those individuals that comprise it? Erving Goffman warns against the use
of the overly generalizable word "deviant," and questions if all nonconformists share
enough similarities to lump them into one category. He continues on to list a variety of
terms applicable to subcultures, including disaffiliates, eccentrics and social deviants. The latter category is presumably one into which inmates would be placed, as Goffman states,

These are the folk who are considered to be engaged in some kind of collective
denial of the social order. They are perceived as failing to use available
opportunity for advancement in the various approved runways of society; they

---

37 Ibid., 143.
show open disrespect for their betters; they lack piety; they represent failures in
the motivational schemes of society. 38

The problem with this definition, however, lies in the societal perception. Indeed, a denial
of social order – a crime – imprisoned the majority of men at Angola. However, to say
that men continue to be involved with a "collective denial" of order is to reject the
concept of rehabilitation and perpetuates the notion of once a criminal always a criminal.

Foucault makes better use of the terms "delinquent" and "abnormal" when
describing the inmate, choosing to focus more on the power/knowledge relationship than
the social. 39 He explains in Discipline & Punish that an individual leaves the justice
system (and enters the penitentiary) as a convicted person. However, "for a corrective
technology," the penitentiary must change a "convicted offender" to a "delinquent" so the
person, rather than the crime, may be addressed. 40 Foucault continues to explain, "The
delinquent is also to be distinguished from the offender in that he is not only the author of
his acts…but is linked to his offence by a whole bundle of complex threads…" 41

During his 1974-1975 lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault also entertained
the term "abnormal" to define individuals who are descendents of three groups of
individuals: the monster, the incorrigible and the masturbator. 42 Establishing correlation,
yet also creating distinctions, between medical and juridical practices, he writes, "…the
nineteenth century abnormal individual is distinguished by a kind of monstrosity that is
increasingly faded and diaphanous and by a rectifiable incorrigibility increasingly

38 Ibid., 144.
39 See Foucault, Discipline & Punish; and Michel Foucault, "22 January 1975," in Michael Foucault:
Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975, ed. Valerio Marchetti, Antonella Salmini, and
Graham Burchell (Brooklyn: Verso, 2003), 55-80.
40 Id. Discipline & Punish, 251.
41 Ibid., 252-253.
surrounded by apparatuses of rectification." The power-relationships among the three groups (monster, incorrigible and masturbator) are not exclusive, as of the early-nineteenth century, but rather they blend in much the same fashion as the power relationships for societal governance outlined in *Discipline & Punish*. The monster more closely associates with the juridical tendencies of the sovereign state, while the incorrigible develops under disciplinary techniques. The combination of the three groups into one power-knowledge network allows for the creation, control and normalization of the abnormal. For this project, several participants were asked how they saw themselves and what they preferred to be called. Responses ranged from "inmate" to "messenger (of God)," but the common answer was simply, "man," and that they hoped their past mistake(s) would not define them for the rest of their lives.

In his work on subcultures, Dick Hebdige describes such groups as being influential, despite their "sub" categorization, against society norms. He writes,

Subcultures represent 'noise' (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the signifying power of the spectacular subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy 'out there' but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation.  

---

43 Ibid., 60
44 It is not until the early nineteenth century that the masturbator is addressed, following an emphasis on powers surrounding the actual body.
In the case of inmates, initial "interference" may be interpreted as the unlawful behavior that caused the individual to be called a criminal. However, once imprisoned, the day-to-day activities of 'the inmate' ranging from work behavior, to language, to social interactions, as well as the physical place in which the inmate lives, become a sort of alternate societal space. The public's intrigue with subcultures eventually causes the group to become a valuable commodity that is repackaged and sold back to the community.46 This phenomenon is directly apparent in events like the Angola rodeo, addressed more fully in a later chapter, but also through popular culture, including television shows, movies and books. One may consider The Angolite magazine as another example of commodification as well as a technology of resistance against societal norms. Considering the staff sees the publication not only a journal of record but also as a tool of advocacy, the influence against societal norms is apparent.

Studying inmate-produced media and its uses in the maximum-security prison of Angola pulls from a myriad of fields, making the insight taken from this particular subculture of all-male prisoners applicable to various areas of study. While cultural studies researchers have delved somewhat into inmate-produced media and the messages they contain, the area represents virtually uncharted territory for social science researchers, perhaps due to a belief that entré into such institutions is largely forbidden.47 Yet gaining access is necessary not only to educate the unfamiliar but also to spur social change. The publications and broadcasts provide snapshots of a marginalized segment of society and offer scholars the opportunity to learn about a fast-growing segment of the

46 Ibid., 144-162.
U.S. population.\textsuperscript{48} Furthermore, and most pertinent to this dissertation, research into inmate-produced media provides evidence as to how culture is used as a means of control and governmentality.\textsuperscript{49} In addition to this micro-level analysis of a particular state institution, culture as a means of control or self-governance can also be applied at the macro level of society. At Angola, the inmates working with the media were asked to explain their jobs and what their particular positions meant to the inmate population. The inmate-produced media were analyzed separately as cultural artifacts and studied for overarching themes and ideologies. As a final step, the aforementioned ideologies were examined to see from where said messages stemmed – the inmates or the state.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola is an anomaly in a myriad of ways, and because of this, the decision to explore the purposes of the inmate-produced media at the prison was not made without considerable thought. Certainly, gaining access to any site for ethnographic purposes is often an arduous task because of the intense and lengthy immersion that the researcher seeks. Likewise, institutions – be it the subject itself or an institutional review board – may hinder gaining access because of the population sought to be studied. In the case of a penitentiary, where the audience to be studied is, quite literally, captive and potentially vulnerable to coercive participation, it is understandable that additional measures ought to be taken to ensure the safety of those involved.


Because Angola is the only prison in the country with an inmate-produced magazine, radio station and television station, the issue of privacy poses an immediate concern. Furthermore, because Angola's inmate-produced magazine, *The Angolite*, has a subscription base beyond the penitentiary, anyone could conceivably link any material pulled from the periodical to a journalist's name. Thus, anonymity, typically an assumed characteristic of most research, especially that which involves marginalized groups, becomes an issue. However, the very characteristics that could be potentially problematic are what make the Louisiana State Penitentiary so attractive to study.

I mention these points not to garner praise for this project but to encourage others not to become defeated before the research begins. In the case of this dissertation, I immediately assumed that pseudonyms were necessary not only for the penitentiary itself, but for all those involved. This assumption was supported by multiple researchers who themselves had conducted qualitative research studies in the past. However, coming from a print journalism background, I found the argument difficult to swallow, especially considering the ease with which someone could cross-reference facts to learn names of inmates as well as the penitentiary. Furthermore, I believed that participants should have the ability to associate themselves with something positive, considering the likely negative publicity surrounding what accounted for their current state. As I will detail in this chapter, foregoing anonymity for consenting participants was but a minor issue in obtaining approval for this project, but the knowledge gained from the experience was incredibly useful.
Preparing to Enter the Field

Preparation for entering the Louisiana State Penitentiary began two years prior to the actual 2007 visits. Two books on inmate-produced media, *The Penal Press* and *Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate Behind Bars*, served as the impetus for this project. Several journal articles also have been written detailing prison newspapers, although there is little – if any – research that links Foucault's concept of governmentality with inmate-produced media. To better understand inmate-produced journalism, I began researching other prison newspapers, including *Forlorn Hope*, which, in 1800, was the nation's first prison newspaper; the *Rikers Review*, the in-house learning device at the New York State Penitentiary at Rikers Island; and *The Angolite*, the Louisiana State Penitentiary's award-winning advocacy magazine. Because scholars have written so little on inmate-produced media, it was important to situate prison journalism in an historical context. The historical and contextual information helped establish the increased importance of studying inmate-produced media in light of its steady decline throughout the United States.

Beyond Baird and McGrath Morris' books on prison journalism, few academics have explored the relationship between inmates and media usage from a qualitative standpoint. Novek, Howley, and Dordick and Rachlin make excellent use of qualitative methodologies, including interviews and participant observations, to study media and deviants, to use a social science term. However, the pieces lack a strong

---

52 See Novek, "The Devil's Bargain," and Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here."
53 Ibid.
54 Howley, *A Poverty of Voices.*

Establishing an historical understanding and ultimately offering an explanation for the history of inmate-produced media was necessary, but equally important was not falling victim to present-mindedness. One must not view "the past in term of the present" or engage in a "future-minded reading of the past," but rather consider the context that originally existed. This forces the potential researcher of inmate-produced media to look beyond the mass media perspective and study what other events were occurring at that time. For example, based on preliminary research, I deduced early on that inmate-produced media might serve as a means of advocacy for prisoners looking for, among other things, better health care and living conditions. Evidence of such attempts at reform can be found in back issues of *The Rikers Review* and *The Angolite*. However, at a time when health maintenance organizations restrict access to health care for millions of people and state penitentiaries are equipped with cable television and workout rooms, it is hard to give credence to the prisoners' pleas. These might not be the

---

57 Willis, *Learning to Labor*.
arguments of today's prisoners, though in many cases they are. Instead, they stem from
decades ago when the historical context was very different.

"The purpose of history is neither to justify an action of the past nor to offer facile
judgments about the past nor to suggest careless analogies between past and present. It is
rather to provide reasonable explanation for the complexity of evidence for some part of
the past."\(^6\) Establishing the history of prison journalism, or inmate-produced media in
general, is necessary to establish that not only is the genre legitimate, but is worthy of
research. Because history bestows power, Nerone\(^6\) argues that groups either invent a
history for themselves or uncover the one that already exists. Currently, little research
exists on U.S. prison journalism despite the fact that it has existed for more than two
hundred years and is available in various archives.\(^6\) In addition to its absence from the
annals of communications history, prison journalism (or inmate-produced media) is
steadily heading toward extinction, with institutions eliminating such publications for
various reasons including lack of funds.\(^6\) It was not that long ago that popular culture
went through similar issues.\(^6\) Popular culture had to be established in historical context
and explored (largely) through an economic lens to establish firmly its validity.

Startt and Sloan\(^6\) identify historical understanding as "having understanding of
the circumstances and personalities pertaining to a study. The term also can be taken to
mean an understanding of historical movement, cause, and change as well as an

\(^{63}\) A brief and focused history of prison journalism is provided, in part, in Chapter Nine.
\(^{64}\) At the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, inmate-produced media are either self-sustaining, as in the
case of *The Angolite*, or operational because of employee or outside donations.
\(^{66}\) Startt and Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*. 
understanding of life as it was in the past. It is important to remember that despite these understandings, historians cannot make predictions based on what happened earlier; they can only speculate. This may help readers understand what people will do, but they cannot make predictions about the future because of what has happened in the past.

Though this project is not an historical document, some knowledge of the history of prison journalism, as provided in Chapter Nine, is important to understanding more fully the present state and future possibilities of inmate-produced media. Thus, prison journalism's history illustrates a jumping-off point from which to examine the cultural studies component of inmate-produced media.

**Gaining Access**

Initial contact for approval to conduct research in early 2007 with the Louisiana State Penitentiary began in June 2006. On June 29, 2006, e-mail dialogue began with representatives from the penitentiary. Approximately one week later on July 6, Angola requested a more formal, yet brief and non-academic, proposal. On July 28, said proposal was emailed to the penitentiary and a day later, confirmed by the penitentiary. One month later, on August 30, approval for the project was granted via email. On October 5, 2006, official letters of approval – from Richard Peabody, Louisiana State Penitentiary deputy warden of programming, and Whalen Gibbs, assistant secretary of the Louisiana State Department of Public Secretary, were faxed to the Pennsylvania State University. While Peabody and Gibbs provided the official approval notifications, none of this research would have been possible without the authorization of Warden Burl Cain. Cain, while undoubtedly controversial regarding his politics and rehabilitative techniques, cannot be criticized for the openness he encourages within his prison.

---

67 Ibid., 50.
Though the process of gaining access to Angola was incredibly smooth and the penitentiary employees unbelievably accommodating, it must be noted the approval does not happen overnight, especially when authorization must come from various administrators at various institutional levels. I encourage researchers, especially those who are not yet established in their respective fields, to look at gaining access as a 'one shot deal.' Knowledge of the site – historical and otherwise – is paramount; proposals must be organized and specific; and support for the work, apparent. In this case, in addition to submitting an initial letter and curriculum vitae to the penitentiary, I garnered letters of support from my dissertation adviser as well as the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research in the College of Communications at the Pennsylvania State University.

Obtaining access is only one part of the research process, however. Without approval from an institutional review board, dissertation research is basically impossible. On January 31, 2007, I submitted an application packet to the Pennsylvania State University institutional review board that included multiple appendices to cover items like using recording devices and focusing on prisoners. Because of the sensitive – and captive – participation base I was seeking permission to use, the university's full nineteen-person review board, complete with an inmate advocate, had to approve the application/project proposal. Although the process was incredibly time-consuming, it was relatively simple. And, as noted earlier, my initial fear of being required to maintain anonymity for those individuals who had consented otherwise was unfounded. The overwhelming concern throughout the IRB process was coercion, something that ultimately would have to be dealt with on-site if apparent. There seems to be a shroud of
ambiguity surrounding IRBs, yet my personal experience, albeit limited, indicated it was
myself, and not the board, that placed unnecessary restrictions on the proposed research.

On May 1, 2007, the university IRB granted full approval for research to begin at
the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Based on the permission given by Angola as well as the
university, anonymity was required only in instances where inmates did not consent or
where victim notification rules were at issue; recordings, both audio and visual were
allowed; and interviews, observations, focus groups and media analyses were approved.

On Thursday, May 17, I arrived in St. Francisville, Louisiana, a quaint southern
community, just a bit more than twenty miles from Angola. After unpacking my bags, I
took a 'dry run' to find Angola. Off a main highway, the prison is not difficult to find, just
two miles on Interstate 61 and a left onto state Route 66. Twenty miles on the windy
roadway leads visitors right to the penitentiary's entrance. In fact, state Route 66 literally
ends at Angola's entrance gate.

My time at the penitentiary began officially at 9 a.m. May 21 and concluded, for
the first trip, at 5 p.m. on June 25. During that time, I spent approximately 152.75 hours
directly observing and interviewing inmates and employees. I returned to Angola for one
week on Oct. 7, spending an additional 59.75 hours at the prison, bringing my total on-
site (penitentiary) research time to more than 212.5 hours. I formally interviewed five
prison employees, fourteen inmates who were not directly associated with the inmate-
produced media, six Angolite employees, seven KLSP radio disc jockeys, and six LSP-
TV crewmembers.
Methodology and Methods

It is no secret that media have a major effect on society. But what about the forgotten portions of society, the unmentionable subcultures? My goal with this dissertation was to tell a story of inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary and their work with inmate-produced media. In determining how and why inmate-produced media are used at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, qualitative methods lend themselves to this project because they allow for the collection of information that will describe "how social experience is created and given meaning." This is in contrast to quantitative methodologies that instead "emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes." Qualitative methods, particularly observations and interviews, allowed me as the researcher to immerse myself, to some degree, into the institutional setting in which the inmates live. Observations allowed for firsthand information gathering as to how the media is both produced and consumed. They also allowed me to watch from a distance as to how the men governed themselves and others, as well as how the state governed them.

Narrative research and analysis has long been popular with historical research and its emphasis on oral histories. Startt and Sloan describe oral history as, "a less than perfect term that refers to the historical recovery of the remembered, but unrecorded past." Though typically distinguished in methodology books from qualitative interviewing, both facilitate narratives by the interviewees. Although oral histories do

---

69 Ibid.
70 Starrt and Sloan, Historical Methods in Mass Communication, 182.
not always end up as a biographical portrait, biographies can – and do – contain historical narratives.\textsuperscript{72} It should be noted here that not all interviews end up as narratives; in fact, most do not. Narratives are more typically thought of in terms of being autobiographical or autoethnographical and therefore written or recorded by the self.\textsuperscript{73} However, the potential does exist for interviews to aid in the creation of a grand narrative constructed by the researcher.

Approaching Angola, the inmates, and the inmate-produced media from an ethnographic and narrative standpoint was crucial to providing readers with the thick description necessary to understand one interpretation of the culture surrounding this subculture. Furthermore, ethnographic research methods, including interviews, observations and focus groups get to the reasons behind how and why – control and self-governance – inmate-produced media are used at the penitentiary. Certainly, one could argue that on-site research was not necessary and similar results could have been achieved by extrapolating information from copies of \textit{The Angolite} magazine. However, it is my belief that in order to argue that a new form of governmental rationality is being carried out at Angola through cultural technologies and that the men simultaneously use said technologies both to establish community and in some cases to initiate resistance, it is necessary to live the experience. Recognizing the limitations of my own on-site observations, I turned to men who lived the experience on a daily basis. They are the real experts in this project.

\textsuperscript{73} Carolyn Ellis, \textit{The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography} (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004).
Ethnographic research goes beyond merely sitting down with someone for a one-time interview. It entails spending time observing and interacting in a particular setting.74 For this particular project, I chose to immerse myself on a daily basis into the Louisiana State Penitentiary, allowing myself maximum opportunities for interacting with the men. One may question why someone would want to get to know prisoners in the first place. Why waste one's time studying criminals, especially those who are destined not to leave their penitentiaries? I would argue, why wouldn't someone choose to get to know someone who is in prison? If a scholar is to research any aspect of the prison system, to not include the very individuals that comprise the actual institution is, in my opinion, a mistake that perpetuates the hegemonic framework on which the United States is built. Furthermore, to simply administer a series of formal interviews does not allow a researcher to establish any sense of rapport with the individuals, hence there is little opportunity to obtain information beyond that which is specifically asked.

Understanding the traditions and protocols of the penitentiary was an important facet of the research, in order to decipher what was the norm and what was extraordinary. However, it is my contention that one should not enter any field with preconceived expectations and notions so as not to see only what is desired rather than what actually is. According to Martha Feldman,

Ethnomethodologists claim that culture consists of processes for figuring out or giving meaning to the actions of members rather than consisting of a stable set of things that members are supposed to know. The ethnomethodologist's primary

---

focus is on how the norms of a society are developed, maintained, and changed rather than on what those norms are.\textsuperscript{75}

Indeed, the use of narratives has been accused of being not theoretical enough,\textsuperscript{76} which makes specific cultural theory analysis and ideal partner in this marriage of qualitative and cultural studies research traditions. Shifting toward a more cultural historical approach, as opposed to traditional, cultural historians are interested in the impact society has on media. Referencing Robert E. Park, a member of the University of Chicago School of Sociology, Startt and Sloan write that the foremost factors in determining the nature of a newspaper are the societal conditions and the particular system under which the press operates.\textsuperscript{77} Sidney Kobre goes so far as to explain mass media as "a product of environment."\textsuperscript{78}

Newspapers began because of the growth in cities and the public's desire for news. As times changed, so did the newspapers as they took on issues of advocacy, social change and other timely matters. Angola, first with The Angolite, then with its radio station, and now with its on-site television station, is an ideal example of this. As a home to more than five thousand inmates, the Louisiana State Penitentiary is its own city, a gated community, if you will. The men of Angola, just like members of free society, have a desire for news that is pertinent to them, and there are few better qualified people to provide that media than those who call the prison home.

\textsuperscript{76} D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).
\textsuperscript{77} Startt and Sloan, Historical Methods in Mass Communication.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 40.
Some of the greatest challenges surrounding ethnographic research include conducting substantive and accurate observations and functioning as both an insider and an outsider. "Ethnographic research requires attentive observation, empathetic listening, and courageous analysis. Ethnographers must be good at seeing 'what's there,' which sounds simple, but is not."\(^7\) Constant note taking is necessary when collecting data, but even more important, is keeping a daily log/diary to record not only observations, but also personal reactions and emotive responses. In addition to notes and daily personal/research logs, I used a digital audio recorder as well as video and digital cameras when collecting information at Angola. Though taking the aforementioned steps added to the depth of the data gathered, accuracy remained a major concern. It was, and is, important that the information relayed through this project be a true depiction of the Angola culture so that the application of theory would be sound.

To minimize accuracy concerns, member checking throughout the data collection process was crucial, as was a triangulation between observations, interviews and media analyses. Recognizing that the same events may be interpreted in a myriad of ways, triangulation helps identify these ways as equally valid, and in fact representing alternate realities.\(^8\) By using a multi-method approach, I was able to validate externally and compare data (and interpretations of data) obtained from personal observations with data provided during interviews and focus groups, as well as information taken directly from the inmate-produced media. If three of the methods resulted in similar results, I considered my personal interpretations accurate and the comments made trustworthy, at

\(^7\) Margot Ely et al., Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles (Philadelphia: RoutledgeFalmer, 1991), 41.
least at that time and for that individual. If there were discrepancies, I continued to explore the particular topic or challenge information provided.

What proved to be most beneficial was returning to the penitentiary for a second visit. After being gone from Angola for more than three months, returning in October 2007 allowed me to present some of my own analyses and interpretations to the inmates for their own critiques, again conducting a data triangulation of sorts. The return visit also afforded me an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and points of clarification of the men while simultaneously giving the men an opportunity to disclose additional information if they desired. Gaining insider status is a goal of quality ethnographic research. As a free woman in an all-male penitentiary, 'insider' was a role that I could never realistically hope to attain. Although I found many of the men to be open and vulnerable in their interviews, others were much less willing to disclose any more than the most basic of responses. Still others appeared enamored by "someone of importance" wanting their opinion on something and provided answers they believed I wanted to hear.\(^{81}\) By my return trip to Angola, I was no longer as much of a novelty as I was during my first trip. I blended into the walls and appeared less as "that researcher" and more as someone who belonged, a point made by both inmates and employees. But even more importantly, I gained street credibility.

Achieving trust and credibility

Prior to my leaving Angola on June 25, I made it known to the inmates that I hoped to return in the fall for a shorter follow-up visit, though it was obvious not all of the men believed my intentions. Alex asked me when I planned to return, and after some

---

\(^{81}\) I discerned this from double talk, contradictory information and approval-seeking asides given by several of the inmates interviewed.
thought I replied with the week of October 7. Pulling a calendar from the LSP-TV wall, he scribbled my initials on the day and re-hung the calendar. David, sitting on the edge of one of the desks in the cramped broadcasting room, looked briefly at me and then down at the floor, shaking his head from side to side in disapproval. "What's wrong?" I asked him. "He shouldn't have done that," David replied. I immediately asked why, wondering if their supervisor was going to be upset. Instead, he looked at Alex and remarked that he did not know if I would be coming back, and if I did not, he was going to be upset.

"You're putting her in a box," David said.

Confused by the dialogue occurring, I interjected that I hoped to return to Angola between October 7 and 14 to attend one or two rodeos and finish my research. But, I stressed, I was unsure if all would work out as planned. Alex left the room and I continued to question David on the matter. I asked him why it was wrong that Alex wrote down my potential visit. His response, once explained, seemed perfectly logical and reminded me why promises should not be made unless the likelihood of them being kept is strong. It also reminded me of yet another reason this particular population is considered vulnerable.

David said that by writing down my 'potential' return, Alex had put me into a box. Still puzzled by his words, I asked for clarification. He then relayed the following scenario as a partial explanation. Imagine a friend or family member of David's says she is going to visit on the last day of the month. All month, David looks forward to that day and counts down the time to when he may see his loved one, his link to a previous life. When the day comes, however, no one shows. For whatever reason, there is no visitor. That is upsetting and disappointing to someone who had anticipated all month the
promised visit. Alex returns during the explanation and David states, "You're going to wait for that date, and if something happens and she doesn't show up, you're going to be disappointed."

David also discussed putting up walls. Various groups and tours come through the prison on a fairly regular basis. Sometimes, group members say they will write or be back, but it does not happen. David's point is that there are only so many times you can open yourself up to someone, hoping to establish some sort of relationship, however innocent, only to find that relationship is not to happen. By Alex putting my visit on the calendar, he showed, in David's opinion, that he hoped I would come back on that date. In one sense, I became metaphorically similar to the men I was interviewing. Just as they are confined to the box that is Angola, I too, became confined by a few words. Certainly, I was under no real obligation to return on that date, or any other date for that matter. The response I gave was not even a promise, though it was considered as such by at least one of the men.

David was not the only one who had his doubts about my return. I learned through others – inmates and prison employees – that several other men doubted that I would return. Thus, my somewhat unannounced October trip took several of them off guard, but garnered me a new degree of respect and trust. The seven days I spent at Angola during my second trip allowed me to learn more about some of the inmates than I did throughout the two summer months. "We can just be us now," one of the men said. "We can relax. We can trust you…at least we think we can." Men who previously spoke only briefly on prison politics, prison problems and prison positives much more readily revealed the inside details on Angola, both the good and the not so good. Kerry Myers, *The Angolite*
editor, even commented on the unprecedented access to the men and the prison that Warden Burl Cain afforded me. The newfound disclosure provided considerable context in which I could situate both the inmate-produced media and the everyday lives of the men.

Without a doubt, my return visit to Angola seemed much less scripted, and therefore more natural, than my original stay. In the eyes of some of the men, I gained street credibility, respect, and even trust. But had the men gained my trust? Should I have trusted what they told me to be the truth, at least the truth as they see it? Certainly, there are those who would question whether I was 'conned by a con.' Realistically, there is no way ever to know if information gathered by researchers is completely accurate, thus the importance of triangulation. That the men I chose to interview are incarcerated should be no more of an issue than if I interviewed welfare recipients or Fortune 500 chief executive officers. To enter a field with the preconceived notion that one will be told lies is to already have a skewed perception. Were untruths told? For sure. Were true stories embellished for dramatic effect? Absolutely. Did those instances stand out among otherwise truthful information? Yes. To assume that one is going to be told lies is just as troublesome as assuming one is going to be told the truth. Researchers must examine and challenge all information if the work is to withstand scrutiny.

Observations

Watching inmates work with the media and each other played a crucial role in learning how the men have benefited from the privilege, as well as how they conduct themselves and how they respond to media. Observations represent the core of ethnographic research by allowing the researcher "to directly and forcibly
experience…both the ordinary routines and conditions under which people conduct their lives, and the constraints and pressures to which such subject is living.\textsuperscript{82} Before even entering Angola, I begin observing the physical institution. The overall physical attributes of the penitentiary are integral if readers are to empathize even somewhat with the 5,108 men who live at Angola.

One of the first observations I make is of the penitentiary itself. If one is able to look beyond the barbed and razor wire, the prison grounds are actually quite inviting. At approximately 18,000 acres, Angola is rich farmland as far as the eye can see. Inmates handle the majority of labor that ranges from farming and gardening to maintenance and construction to cooking and of course, media production. Upon my arrival at the penitentiary, I immediately take what will become the first of multiple tours around the facility and visit a host of prison stops, including cafeterias, cemeteries, and the execution room. The initial tour was necessary and incredibly helpful to becoming familiarized with the prison and its grounds. Notes taken throughout the tour evolved into a list of questions for the following day's visit.

In addition to being the core of ethnographic research, observations also serve as acclimation tools for researchers. Despite having read multiple books on Angola, copies of \textit{The Angolite}, and research on inmate-produced media, I remained unfamiliar with the prison politics and customs of the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Unbeknownst to me during my trip planning, my second day at the Louisiana State Penitentiary coincided with graduation of the Angola branch of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Forty-four inmates graduated from the seminary, including David, one of the LSP-TV

crewmembers. The graduation ceremony provided the ideal setting to observe the inmates at work and afforded me an opportunity to ease into the prison environment. The observations also helped me prepare my personal conduct for the penitentiary, including appropriate dialogue, eye contact and other nonverbal behaviors.

Because Angola receives a considerable amount of free-people foot traffic, it took only about ten days for most of the inmates to become relaxed around me and more comfortable speaking to one another in my presence. After a few weeks, they were much more apt to offer information without a direct question, and by my second visit in October, a number of the men were quite comfortable with my presence and treated me more like an equal than a free woman. This transformation was important because it allowed me to authenticate more easily observations and analyses based on my first trip. Furthermore, it validated my abilities as an ethnographer attempting to assimilate into a subculture that would realistically never accept me as one of its own.

Interviews

Typically associated with qualitative methodologies, interviews have become widely accepted in both qualitative and quantitative research realms. Interviews, be they formal or informal, structured or semi-structured, aid researchers in achieving the why behind a given phenomenon. "There is inherent faith that the results are trustworthy and accurate and that the relation of the interviewer to the respondent that evolves during the interview process has not unduly biased the account."83 As journalists can attest, obtaining unbiased information or objectivity in interviewing and reporting is difficult, if

not impossible and unrealistic.\textsuperscript{84} Researchers too, have acknowledged this potential problem, and some feminist scholars have opted instead to forgo more traditional, detached interviewing techniques in favor of interviewing that "requires openness, emotional engagement, and the development of a potentially long-term trusting relationship between the interviewer and the subject."\textsuperscript{85}

The feminist approach to interviewing was crucial for establishing a level of trust between the inmates and me. Although one must remain cognizant to not skew information with leading questions, providing an empathetic venue for the men to discuss issues of importance to them was important on multiple levels. It provided an alternative view that is noticeably absent from mainstream media. From a researcher's standpoint, engaging in a two-way dialogue\textsuperscript{86} on topics like prison culture is necessary to understand more fully the topic. The men serving sentences at Angola provided me with an education and knowledge I could never have obtained from books. Such information must be absorbed, digested, analyzed, critiqued and explored if a researcher desires to initiate any social change.

Openness and emotional engagement, as addressed in Denzin and Lincoln's qualitative research handbook, should not and cannot be entered into lightly or deceptively. First, individuals, especially inmates, are quick to notice a lack of sincerity. Nothing stops dialogue with an inmate faster than a lie, especially a lie by an outsider. Second, from a humanistic standpoint, false openness and/or false sincerity are unfair to


\textsuperscript{86} Fontana and Frey, "The Interview," 695-727.
the interviewee, a fact supported by David's concern over Alex's placing me "in a box" regarding my return visit. Individuals choosing to approach interviewing from this feminist ethic must ultimately feel comfortable in relinquishing part of their own power as researcher. "This ethic transforms interviewers and respondents into coequals who are carrying on a conversation about mutually relevant, often biographically critical, issues."²⁸⁷

Inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary were very willing to speak about the media they help to produce, allowing the interview process to begin much earlier than I had anticipated. This may be attributed to several factors that were considered in the composition of this research project. It was obvious that the men working at the magazine, radio station and television station were proud of their accomplishments and pleased that someone from beyond Angola was interested in their work. A second obvious aspect was that the researcher in the all-male penitentiary was a woman, a point brought up by several inmates who commented, "You realize you're being vied for;" "I would have come over to talk with you, but you were being guarded by those two (inmates);" and "He's never come into the office this early." Although gender, I am sure, played a role in this research, it is necessary to note (in more than an endnote), that the conduct of the men interviewed for this project was beyond reproach. Never once did those men whom I interviewed as well as those with whom I did not have direct contact treat me with anything other than respect. Having visited other penitentiaries prior to Angola, I can say wholeheartedly that this respect is not always afforded to visitors.

Confidentiality is indeed an issue with research, and although many inmates waived confidentiality in their consent forms, it was important that the incarcerated men

had the opportunity to speak freely during their interviews. Although I occasionally had an employee escort who transported me to various parts of the prison, interviews, with the exception of two, were conducted in private, without a guard, and usually in the inmate's work environment. Interviews with men working directly with the inmate-produced media were semi-structured, which better allowed the aforementioned feminist ethic to emerge, and ranged from twenty minutes to nearly three hours. In contrast, interviews with inmates who did not work with the inmate-produced media were structured, and participants were obtained using snowball or convenience sampling. In snowball sampling, participants stem from an initial participant who recommends someone who recommends someone. Carol Warren and Tracy Karner refer to the interviewees as coming from "interlocking social networks" as opposed to being available in a particular location at a particular time, as is the case with what I refer to as convenience sampling. These interviews lasted between four and twenty-seven minutes. Interviews with the warden and deputy wardens also were structured, while interviews with the LSP-TV general manager were semi-structured, largely due to logistical purposes. Employee interviews ranged from approximately nineteen minutes to more than one hour.

Focus groups

Focus groups provide ethnomethodologists with an intermediary between observations and interviews; they are not as broad as observations, which may involve dozens of individuals at any given time, nor are they as intimate as a one-on-one

---

interview. However, because participants can feed off the responses of others, focus groups can often yield information that would have otherwise been impossible to obtain. Sometimes considered group interviews, focus groups were for this project loosely designed and conducted whenever there happened to be multiple inmate-media workers in the same area at the same time. This informal planning, coupled with a more feminist approach to interviewing, rearticulated any power structure between myself, as a free person, and the men. The shift from a potential "vertical interaction" to a more horizontal one, allowed the men to drive the discussion as well as some of the questioning.

The group format also provided an expeditious way to challenge points and gauge opinions. This became particularly useful when triangulating my own interpretations and observations of the penitentiary and its media. Speaking to the importance of the method, George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis write,

Individual interviews strip away the critical interactional dynamics that constitute much of social practice and collective meaning making. Observations are a bit of a 'crap shoot' in terms of capturing the focused activity in which researchers may be interested. In contrast to observations, focus groups can be used strategically to cultivate new kinds of interactional dynamics and, thus, access to new kinds of information.

However, I would argue that for the type of information I was looking for, it would have been a mistake to rely only, or exclusively, on focus groups. Although I do not believe

---

90 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 902-903.
that groupthink or polarization\textsuperscript{93} – speaking in extremes – influenced responses, it could have had if not already conducted individual interviews with the men and had some idea of their thoughts and viewpoints. Furthermore, the depth and intimacy of responses given in one-on-one interviews may very well have been suppressed in the group setting.

Inmate journaling

Laurel Richardson, author of \textit{Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life}, states, "Writing stories and personal narratives have increasingly become the structures through which I make sense of my world, locating my particular biographical experiences in larger historical and sociological contexts."\textsuperscript{94} Initially, I had hoped to involve a number of inmates with some sort of journaling activity where they could express themselves without formal questions from me and at their leisure. My goal was to use these self-constructed narratives with my own observations and collected information. However, as time elapsed quickly, I realized that several inmates whom I approached about the journaling project were more interested in giving me what I wanted instead of providing a glimpse into themselves. Furthermore, I determined that I was able to learn more about the men as people through impromptu conversations and their actual work products. Thus, I had only one man successfully complete a journaling activity. In that instance, I do believe that I obtained a truthful snapshot of the inmate's belief system. Using this arts-based research method, the inmate was able to express his feelings about his time in

\textsuperscript{93} Morgan, \textit{Focus Groups}.

prison in an essay/poetic format, allowing him to become a self-reflective co-researcher of sorts.\textsuperscript{95}

Although the arts-based form of research/data collection did not turn out as I had hoped, I would encourage other researchers to take advantage of this increasingly popular qualitative method.\textsuperscript{96} By journaling and participating in the arts-based research, participants become, in essence, co-researchers by exploring their own selves. Arts-based methods are particularly appealing because they have the least amount of interference by the researcher; the participants guide the process. Unlike interviewing, where even the most careful and experienced of researchers may taint data because of a poorly phrased question or an inappropriate nonverbal response, the journaling and arts-based research activities are virtually free from the biases or inadequacies of the principal investigator. In addition to serving as an additional research tool, arts-based research activities act as additional tools for triangulation purposes, thereby increasing the validity of the researcher's interpretations and analyses.

\textbf{Analyzing Information}

Building checks into research and the research process is important for validity. Equally important, however, is addressing negative cases that may surface or information that does not support initial theories. In the case of inmate-produced media at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, I utilized member checking and data triangulation but also presented other reasons for working with and/or utilizing said media. Both arguments and counterarguments on (self)governance were pulled directly from inmate interviews. Thus,


I chose to allow inmate and employee narratives and thick description to stand alone in the more ethnographically-focused chapters of this project, hoping to pull the audience into the tellers' world. Where appropriate, I addressed other possible conclusions for behavior and conduct and their likelihoods and/or legitimacies debated.

Although some qualitative researchers argue against triangulation, stating there is no one single truth, multi-method approaches are supported by other qualitative researchers, including Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, who write, "Humans are complex, and their lives are ever changing. The more methods we use to study them, the better our chances will be to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell us about them." I would argue, as does Catherine Kohler Reissman in her book, *Narrative Analysis*, that validation, especially validation of narratives and their interpretations, relies on trustworthiness and not truth. "The latter assumes an objective reality, whereas the former moves the process into the social world."

Although it is difficult to make accurate, sweeping generalizations in qualitative research, causal statements do find their way into narratives and are often how we identify with history. Just as media historians and their audiences "are interested in the 'why' as much as the 'who' and the 'what' of history," so too, are qualitative researchers who search for the bigger reasoning behind the action, or the cause of the effect. However, no cause is ever definitive. From an historical perspective, Startt and Sloan

---

100 Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 65.
state that "(s)ince there is not a single cause for all occasions and since a number of
causes can be associated with any important event, historians deal with multiple
causation." An alternative way to consider this is to forgo the term causation and opt
instead for the word conditions. This represents a truer picture of what action(s) is/are
represented through the research. It is analogous also to a problem that social scientists
must deal with in their own work – establishing correlation but not causation.
Furthermore, it addresses the validity of the research as one potential way of reading the
scene.

As previously stated, it was not my intention for this particular research project to
be an historical one. Yet a lack of scholarly research regarding inmate-produced media
requires that a brief historical perspective be included for contextual purposes.
Considering research of cultural history has become more popular, and because "cultural
theory takes language seriously" in addition to applying traditional historic or
qualitative methods to this project, I also analyzed the discourses used in the various
inmate-produced media. By doing so, I was able to establish overarching themes that
exist in relation to the appropriate times and places addressed. While this particular
project is by no means a formal discourse analysis of the inmate-produced media, I
examined more than twenty-five years of The Angolite to understand more fully Angola's
culture and inmates' issues. Prior to beginning my ethnographic research, I studied nearly

---

102 Ibid., 205, italics in original.
a decade of *Angolite* publications so that I could better formulate questions and establish recurring issues and themes. Once on site, I conducted a similar analysis of KLSP radio and LSP-TV discourse and determined overarching themes as well as whose voices were being conveyed.

Examining inmate-produced media from a linguistic perspective is important, although the implications of considering it from a more sociological perspective are even greater. Because of this, Chalaby's\(^{106}\) definition of discourse will be used throughout this paper unless otherwise noted. In defining discourse, Chalaby\(^{107}\) expands the traditional, linguistic meaning to be more situated in the realm of sociology. Instead of focusing solely on language and each individual text, the definition is broadened to specify a more autonomous "class of texts" in which the individual texts lie. For example, in the case of inmate-produced journalism, each individual article is critical as a form of (linguistic) discourse and is treated as such. However, it is the larger discursive category of inmate-produced journalism that is of greatest importance to my research. Ultimately my goal is to establish the discursive norms of inmate-produced media much like objectivity is defined as a discursive norm in traditional, mainstream journalism.

Discourse analysis is crucial to the overall study of discourse because it provides insight into the relationship between language and social identities and relations as well as knowledge and belief systems.\(^{108}\) Fairclough further defines critical discourse analysis as:

---


\(^{107}\) Ibid.

discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.109

More simply put, and more appropriate as to how I (minimally) utilize discourse analysis for this project, the process involves examining how different texts (re)produce relationships of power and inequities in society.110 Such ideologies are implicitly embedded in media discourse through the use of what has become in many cases, standard journalistic practice.111 While some may see media as "little more than tools of dominant interests," Fairclough acknowledges that conflicts do arise.112 Such was the case when mainstream media outlets eventually criticized the U.S. government's handling of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.113 The same holds true for inmate-produced media that is constantly at odds – often more implicitly than explicitly – with dominant ideologies, defined by Fairclough as "propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of domination."114

109 Ibid., 132-133.
112 Fairclough, "Communication in the Mass Media," 45.
113 Kalen M.A. Churcher, "Media Discourse in Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and Journalist Identification in the Sun Herald" (paper presented at the National Communication Association annual conference, San Antonio, TX: November 18, 2006).
When dealing specifically with media discourse representation, Fairclough\textsuperscript{115} distinguishes between primary and secondary discourse and lists five parameters for comparing discourse representation in media discourse. Primary discourse refers to the "reporting discourse," or that of the reporter, while secondary discourse is that which is being "represented or reported."\textsuperscript{116} O'Connor's\textsuperscript{117} work obtaining autobiographical narratives from prisoners regarding their criminal act(s) speaks directly to Fairclough's primary discourse. Through the interviews, O'Connor\textsuperscript{118} discovered that the use of pronouns indicated a high sense of inmate-agency, a fact she believed could be useful for rehabilitative purposes. She writes, "I see personal agency as the positioning of the self in an act or in the reflection on an action indexed to that person as shown along a continuum of responsibility."\textsuperscript{119} Though the growing number of inmates within penal institutions leaves little time for this type of disclosure, inmate-produced media could provide prisoners with a different outlet for conveying what otherwise might remain as introspective thoughts.

Identifying the voice(s) behind inmate-produced media helps further establish whose ideologies and sentiments are being conveyed, as well as the amount of autonomy afforded to the men. It is likely that institutional administrators desire a clear line drawn between what ideologies inmates prescribe to versus their own unless there is a means of duping those in the alternate public sphere to convert to and advocate the dominant

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 435-436.
ideologies. If the dominant, hegemonic position as described by Stuart Hall is realized, the encoding of messages within inmate-produced media and the consumption and decoding of said messages by their consumers would reflect the dominant ideologies as commonsense. A similar scenario holds true among free citizens and mainstream journalism. Journalists must interpret the ideologies of the bourgeoisie and convey them to the public at-large. In turn, society also engages in decoding the journalists' message, thereby creating a double – or triple – hermeneutics. "The profession code…operates within the 'hegemony' of the dominant code. Indeed it serves to reproduce the dominant definitions precisely by bracketing their hegemonic quality and operating instead with displaced professional codings…”

Setting, as defined by Fairclough, places emphasis on how secondary discourse is analyzed based largely on its context. The contextual reference of which Fairclough writes may include the use of adjectives and adverbs that appeal to the emotive responses of readers. In the June 30, 1938 issue of the *Rikers Review*, inmate Zealox criticized the argument of free will and proposed evil of criminals, writing:

This ingenious rationalization of increasingly difficult social problems may be illustrated like this, 'The dog to gain some private end, went mad and bit the man.' Yet we know that no dog goes mad from choice. … The dog's behavior pattern, its reactions to objective situations were priorly conditioned and the pattern

---

121 Ibid., 171.
122 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis.*
determined by the interaction between the factors of its internal and external environment.\textsuperscript{123} The use of the animalistic metaphor places an increased intensity on what might otherwise be considered a banal argument.

Though Wallace Chafe sees consciousness as "the obvious locus of humans' ongoing interaction with the environment as well as the site for inner thought and feeling,"\textsuperscript{124} formulating a more concrete definition has been difficult. Instead, Chafe opts to describe consciousness through a myriad of constant and variable properties. When applied to discourse, consciousness becomes (metaphorically) visible by using verbal, written or non-verbal language to convey knowledge, ideas, interest and/or needs through a chosen perspective. This consciousness illustrates an active or participatory event in which an actor knowingly engages in an experience. Ironically, it is not until said actor places his focus into a semi-active state, that he recognizes what had previously been part of the active consciousness.

**Conclusion**

Because life and culture are built largely around language,\textsuperscript{125} analyzing the discursive nature of texts is an important aspect of social science and cultural studies research. However, unlike some critical discourse analyses that need not be conducted at a certain venue or at a particular time, I argue that studying inmate-produced media \textit{in situ} was critical for the larger purpose of this dissertation. To explore such media as a means of governmentality, the belief systems of inmates and the institution needed to be

\textsuperscript{123} Rikers Review, June 30, 1938: 3.


\textsuperscript{125} Id, \textit{Critical Discourse Analysis}. 
explored; I achieved this through a multi-method, qualitative research approach that focused primarily on on-site observations and interviews. O'Connor\textsuperscript{126} found that obtaining prisoner narratives revealed information that was otherwise unavailable. "(N)arratives are currently ignored in the systems of incarceration which lack strong emphasis on rehabilitation and which rarely cultivate discursive activities…When a criminal is willing to present his acts discursively, that act of telling may provide the seed of moral agency."\textsuperscript{127}

In reality, the discourse analysis component to this project as written was minimal and utilized primarily to uncover overarching themes within the media. Once collected, information from the analyses, observations and interviews were examined to gauge the amount of autonomy – perceived or otherwise – afforded to the men. Alternatively, it helped establish whether the inmates see themselves as having a sense of agency regarding their actions or if they are docile bodies controlled by the state.\textsuperscript{128} The end result begs the question as to whether the media produced are truly indicative of the inmate population or simply control mechanisms within existing cultural hegemonies.\textsuperscript{129} I would argue that the media are indicative of the majority of Angola's population, primarily those who have achieved – or are on their way to achieving – moral rehabilitation.

\textsuperscript{126} O'Connor, "Speaking of Crime."
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 434
\textsuperscript{128} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}.
\textsuperscript{129} Fairclough, \textit{Critical Discourse Analysis}.
CHAPTER THREE
THE SPACE THAT IS ANGOLA

The road to Angola is long, quite literally – twenty miles from where Highway 66 intersects with Interstate 61. The two-lane highway snakes throughout the Tunica Hills, past rusted trailers and grazing farmlands. Past the Tunica Hills Elementary School and Tunica Hills Baptist Church, Angola sits alone at the end of the road. Highway 66 stops at the open entrance to the penitentiary grounds, just a few yards from a brick sign that states simply: Louisiana State Penitentiary Burl Cain, Warden. Beyond the entrance that more closely resembles a tollbooth than a blockade for separating deviants from the moral majority of society, Highway 66 turns into the main road through Angola's campus. Stay on the road long enough and you'll wind up back at the beginning, as Angola's entrance doubles as its exit. Considering the eighteen thousand acres of some of the south's finest farmlands are bordered on three sides by the Mississippi River and the fourth side by the rugged Tunica Hills, there truly is only one way out of Angola, unless you opt for the road taken by men serving life sentences – death. Even then, the bodies of inmates that are not claimed by family are transported by an inmate-built hearse to Point Lookout II, a seven hundred-plot cemetery kept by Angola's inmates on the prison's north side. As of April 2007, ninety inmates were buried there. There are more than 300 plot markers at the original Point Lookout Cemetery, though that number is likely not indicative of the actual number of men buried there.

Once through the penitentiary entrance, the space that is Angola is, at first glance, quite a beautiful place, a campus of sorts with unpretentious buildings and accompanying parking lots. Tree-lined roadways, luscious floral landscapes and perfectly manicured
lawns provide the backdrop for the main prison complex and additional inmate outcamps. For safety reasons, the penitentiary's administration intentionally disperses the inmates throughout the acreage, although twenty-five hundred, almost half, reside in the Main Prison. Yet despite the sprawling farmland, despite the prison's isolated existence at the end of Highway 66, Angola is not a private place. Coiled razor and barbed wires encircle various prison yards and watchtowers stand like mushrooms, scattered throughout the campus, a reminder that even though the area is spacious, you are never alone, yet never aware of whom may be watching.

I walk into the Main Prison and almost immediately am reminded that despite the flowers and visiting area picnic tables, this is indeed prison. A security guard buzzes me through a barred door and into a small registration area where I write my name, destination and time of entry. To pass through the next barred door, the first one must be closed and locked – an institutional security measure. After that, I am inside the complex, surrounded by men in faded jeans and T-shirts. Some smile, some say hello, others go about their business as if I am not there. Interspersed among the men is the occasional guard, usually stationed to unlock gates to other areas of the main prison complex.

I continue down "the walk," past men pushing mops and others waiting in line to enter – or come in from – the fields. The fields are entities unto themselves and beckon remembrances to the Civil War era. It seems clearer why some consider LSP not the Louisiana State Penitentiary, but rather the Last Slave Plantation or The Farm. Under the hot Louisiana sun, muscular black men pick vegetables for about four cents an hour, their shirts and pants soaked from sweat. They enter and leave the prison like ants in a row; everyone must be accounted for. At the end of the walk is another gate. It doesn't take
long before you realize there is a lot of 'hurry up and wait' in prison. I, along with several others – freemen and inmates – wait at the barred gate to be let in by yet another guard. The gate slowly slides open and the men move to the side to allow me to pass. My escort gives a nod to the guards who buzz open yet another door situated next to their station. We walk down a long, empty corridor to a door marked The Angolite. I stop to knock; my escort walks right in, initially making me question his manners but quickly reminding me that I am in prison. A man seated at a desk barely looks up. He's clearly accustomed to people coming and going.

"This here is Ms. Churcher," my escort says to the man who finally looks up from his computer screen. "You gonna be all right here?" he asks as I stand there nervously glancing around the room – more nervous to meet new people than because I'm virtually alone with 'convicted criminals.' I nod my head and he leaves, reminding me that someone will be in to check on me throughout the day. If I want to leave earlier or go somewhere else, all I have to do is leave the office, cross the hallway, and stop at the Classification Office. Someone there will take care of me. I nod again. It's 8:37 a.m. on my watch. The next time I see another free person is at 2:04 p.m.

The aforementioned scenario plays out nearly every time I visit The Angolite. Sometimes, a guard stops in once or twice to see how things are going, but as time passes, I seem to fade into the woodwork. Inmates ask me if I work there and guards quip jokingly, "You back again?" It takes but a few days for me to feel comfortable walking into The Angolite office and observing the men work, though the staff never really changes its behavior. My initial feelings of nervousness subside within a week. The men are helpful, but somewhat detached, as if mentally questioning my purpose and intent.
"You've really been given unprecedented access," one of the inmates tells me. "Really, I've never really seen something like this happen before."

**Inside Angola**

Although Angola is a maximum-security prison, the men serving sentences are further categorized as maximum-, medium- or minimum-custody inmates. Housing assignments, and by relation accessibility privileges, are one of the standout differences among the three custody ranks. Maximum-security inmates live in cells as traditionally thought of in prisons, while medium- and minimum-custody inmates live in dormitory settings, traditionally with more than sixty other men. Like some other prison systems, the Louisiana State Penitentiary utilizes a trusty system for categorizing its inmates. An inmate's behavior, initial crime and jacket,\(^{130}\) in additional to letters of recommendation, are all examined by the prison's Classification Department before an inmate is placed.

At the top of the categorization is the Class A Trusty. Class A trustys can travel around the complex with very little supervision, although permission must first be given. It takes a number of years, often nearly a decade, before an inmate can achieve this status. A Class B trusty has a limited status and must be supervised, including during work detail. The final Class C Trusty status requires an inmate be accompanied by an armed guard whenever he passes through a gate; sex offenders are typically placed in this category. Below the trusty levels are a series of other more restrictive categories. Inmates must apply if they wish to try to gain status as a trusty. Like with many things in prison there is no guarantee all application requests will be granted. In fact, the opposite is quite often the case. *Angolite* reporter Jeffrey Hilburn recalls initially being denied a Trusty A

---

\(^{130}\) An inmate's jacket, speaking generally, includes his life history while at Angola. In addition to any behavioral issues or write-ups, the file may also contain information on accomplishments while in prison.
status because at the time of his application, an escape attempt, in which he played no part, occurred on the grounds. Such a scenario exemplifies how the acts of one person, especially within the confines of a prison, affect others. Jeffrey said he was seen as "too young, too fast, and too white." He explains the latter part of the rationale by saying that there was a time when if white men stood in a group for too long, guards immediately thought they were plotting an escape. A group of black inmates, however, was considered only to be discussing "sports, whores or drugs."

The original trusty system on which Angola's classification system is loosely based originated in the mid-1800s after convict leasing, a process that involved leasing prisoners (like slaves) to private entities – to initially save money but later for profit if possible – ended in 1901. The system, which used inmates called trustys to handle basic day-to-day prison operations, control the prison population, administer punishment, and guard other prisoners, is most frequently associated with the Mississippi State Penitentiary, or Parchman Farm. In the case of trusty guards, these elite groups of inmates "were armed and given custodial responsibility over their fellow inmates…To a greater extent than other inmate roles, the trusty role represented a structural accommodation to the official system which created it to meet certain institutional goals. Among these were the maintenance of prison order and work productivity." In 1974, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld a lower court decision to end, among other prison-related items, the trusty system, as it was known at Parchman Farm. According to the Gates v. Collier decision,

There was no formal program for training trusties. Trusties were instructed to maintain discipline by shooting at inmates who got out of gun line; in many cases trusties had received little training in the handling of firearms. In addition to abusing their authority and engaging in loansharking, extortion and other illegal conduct, the trusties shot, maimed or otherwise physically maltreated scores of inmates subject to their control.133

Though Mississippi is often linked with the trusty and trusty guard system, Louisiana utilized the system fully, including rewarding inmates for their work.

Those inmates who assumed the individual responsibility to perform the duties of an inmate guard or of a skilled trusty worker were given a small income, relieved of custodial requirements in that they did not have to stand count, permitted to traverse freely the entire penitentiary and even to leave the grounds for limited visits to nearby communities or home, given unofficial permission to have conjugal visits with their wives, and some were even allowed to eat and sleep, in a word, live at their job sites.134

Published accounts indicate that in late 1969, the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola utilized 239 trusty guards.135 However, by the mid-seventies, the state followed the Gates v. Collier decision and eliminated its trusty system as it had been known.136 Yet while the trusty system no longer exists with its armed inmate-guards and inmate disciplinarians, the penitentiary still utilizes a trusty classification system, as addressed earlier. More

133 Gates v. Collier, 501 F.2d 1291 (5th Cir. 1974).
importantly, it is my contention, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight, that although inmates are no longer given weapons to control the population, the men, especially those holding a Class A Trusty status, are able to influence one another, largely for morally rehabilitative purposes.

No matter what a man's classification status, there are two basic musts at Angola: Inmates must obey the rules, and, if they have been given a job, they must work. The men are directly responsible for a number of the day-to-day operations of the prison, including cooking, cleaning, landscaping, repairing and constructing. They also assist with clerical work in departments like classification and recreation; provide legal and religious counsel to fellow inmates; care for the penitentiary's livestock; and handle industrial work in areas like the print and metal fabrication shops and the license plate manufacturing plant. As KLSP deejay Sirvoris "Shaq" Sutton puts it, Angola has a "zero unemployment rate."

Among the job opportunities at Angola is that of working with the inmate-produced media. And while the men involved with the media equate to less than two dozen individuals – a miniscule fraction of the actual inmate population – their work impacts everyone from the man on Death Row to the man whose name is under the Louisiana State Penitentiary sign outside the prison's gate. Media in prison, just like media throughout free society, pervades every dormitory, every cell, every space and every life within its reach. On one hand, the creator of said media is insignificant. Instead, the message it carries is what draws its audience. In some instances, the message is educational; in others, it is practical. Author Yvonne Jewkes argues "that the prison is an unusually insular and inward-looking environment and that the social uses associated
with media in the wider community are likely to be magnified in this setting." The triad of inmate-produced media, while serving the aforementioned purposes, also contributes to another crucial aspect of media – its escape mechanisms. *Angolite* journalist John Corley sees this fantasy component of media as one of the most important to those incarcerated at Angola.

**John Corley:** Television is an escape. Television…you can get lost in a television program, and for that brief period, you can be away from Angola and you can be away from the stress and the pressures and the demands of the prison environment. … (I)f they took out the televisions, I think that would be a tragic thing because not only…human beings need to be entertained. We need that in our lives. We can't just walk around stonily all the time and have no mechanism for entertainment. People need that, especially in prison. TVs are important. They get you out of this place for a while. Newspapers. So many people are so absorbed in the newspaper, knowing what's going on, I think that's probably just a human characteristic, to want to know what's going on around you. And that would be tragic. You take *The Angolite* away, again along those same lines, that would be tragic. You cut off all your contact with the outside world and even with the inside world.

Corley is not alone in his beliefs. Jewkes also writes, "Television viewing thus not only consumes large blocks of time for the impatient prisoner anticipating his release, but it also provides a means of disengaging from the inmate culture and keeping away from

---

potential trouble." Though the men are allowed individual radios and headphones, television sets are communal, meaning some sort of consensus must occur as to what to watch and when. That being said, disagreements do occur, causing some men to forego television viewing altogether. Yet despite the occasional problem, few want to see the televisions removed, and dormitory lounges almost always have someone watching something. The importance of the televisions is also not lost on the administration, especially considering the creation of the in-house television station, LSP-TV. Warden Cain considers the media, especially the inmate-produced media of which he has ultimate control, as being a necessity to a place like Angola. Angola, with its thousands of occupants and various mini-prisons in addition to the main prison complex, is more of a community than a simple prison. Controlling and maintaining an entity of that magnitude requires more than bulletin boards and a public address system.

**An Average Day**

For Angola's inmate population, there is little difference from one day to the next. Dormitory lights go on at 5 a.m., and those who want to eat can grab breakfast about a half hour later. "A lot of guys skip breakfast in order to get an hour, an hour and a half more to sleep," says Lane Nelson, an Angolite staffer and tour speaker for Angola. He jokes that he can recite the 'typical day of an inmate' like a monologue because almost every visitor wants to know what its like.

**Lane:** They gotta get up around 6:30 a.m. or so 'cause the work whistle, they blow that around 6:50 a.m. and everybody's got to go to their assigned jobs on the compound, doing license plates or out in the field, or wherever. They go to their

---

138 Ibid.
139 At its busiest, Angola can see more than 1,000 people touring the penitentiary on a monthly basis.
jobs; they come back in. Depending on what job they're at, they'll come in at 11 or 12 for lunch. They'll eat lunch and they'll go back to work.

General workday at Angola is over at 4 o'clock. They feed ya supper and ya come back and during daylight saving time you got the yard open so the guys can go in the yard and walk around or play some sports or whatever. At 6 o'clock, a lot of guys go on what we call callouts. That's like Toastmasters…or the Jaycees classes I was talking about, or church. They got church every night of the week. So a lot of guys go on these callouts, most of those callouts are done at 9 o'clock and you gotta go back to the dormitory. Lights in the dormitory go out at 10:30 p.m., and most people are in bed and go to sleep. Then they wake up to a new, yet monotonous day. That's about it. Also at 6 o'clock, they can go to the library to get books out of the law library. So there's a lot of things for prisoners to do here. But they don't have to do anything but work and obey the rules. They're the only two things you have to do. So some guys just prefer to stay in the dormitory all night and watch TV or whatever.

And what about weekends?

**Lane:** Weekends, most people are off except for jobs for the kitchen and guys who have extra duty. Extra duty is when you get a minor disciplinary infraction. That's usually the punishment for that. That means you have to work your regular work job Monday through Friday and then you gotta work Saturday and Sunday. It's not a better job. It's usually picking weeds in the yard or mopping the walk. Other than that, the weekends are usually free. People sleep in; they go to the yard and enjoy the yard outside. But still, it's the monotony of it all.

---

140 Callouts may include certain club events, meetings or other special programs.
At The Angolite, as well as LSP-TV and to some extent, the radio station, the men's work schedule is more flexible, mainly because their work is ongoing. Some may not start their workday until 9 or 10 a.m. but not finish until well into the night. The minor deviation from a 'standard workday' provides fleeting relief from the banality of prison life. It is one of the luxuries afforded to the inmate media workers and some of the other inmate positions. But the magazine staffers are quick to point out that when Warden Cain wants something covered, they've got to be prepared. The work may not be physically tiring, like working in the fields, but it can be mentally challenging, with the economic benefits being virtually nonexistent. Many of the inmate media workers put in more than a forty-hour workweek, though overtime is not part of the regime. There is no getting rich in prison, and the inmates, for the most part understand that.

Twenty cents has been the per-hour inmate pay cap since 1978, according to The Angolite archives. That is how much The Angolite, KLSP, and LSP-TV staffs make, as well as several other inmate positions. Those who work in the fields, the first stop for all new inmates, make literally pennies per hour. The administration withholds pay for the first two years as reparation to the state for initial entrance costs for jeans, sneakers, shirts and underwear that are made at the state women's prison. A portion of each man's pay is placed into savings to be returned to him upon release, a practice that regularly receives criticism by those men serving life sentences. The remainder of the money goes into an account from which each man can draw for additional clothes; craft or educational supplies; or zoo zoos, snacks purchased from the prison canteen. Generally speaking, the canteen prices are comparable to prices outside of prison. Cans of soda are 38 cents; potato chips, 25 cents; candy bars, 65 cents; and a loaf of bread, $1.25. The men can also
purchase clothes from varying price levels. Levi blue jeans cost approximately twenty-seven dollars while Dickies are nine dollars less. New Balance sneakers cost fifty dollars; Reeboks, forty-six dollars; and a generic pair of sneakers, about twenty-two dollars. Even for the highest paid inmates a new outfit costs more than six months of wages.

But sometimes it is the little things, not clothes or food, which bother the men the most. Not being able to afford to purchase brand name soap as opposed to the institutional variety is tough to swallow, especially for those who see their work as akin to those on the outside. Still, the men wake everyday, head to their jobs, and return to their dormitories at night. As one LSP-TV staffer\textsuperscript{141} puts it, it is not all that different from holding down a job in the free world. To be happy, you've got to do what you do because you like it, not for the financial gain.

\textbf{Alex:} I went to work yesterday at 7 a.m. and didn't get back until 11:30 p.m., and I was thinking, 'Man, I work for free.' I'm one of those guys by the side of the road that will work for food. But it has to come down to enjoyment and the responsibilities of being there...Maybe I didn't get anything accomplished except bringing something to the population through the television. But when my day's over with, I had a productive day. That's all I really worry about. Did I survive today? Tomorrow will take care of itself.

It used to be that 'surviving today' was meant quite literally. In 1880, Confederate Major Samuel James purchased the West Feliciana Parish plantation property of Angola and began holding prisoners. The prison remained in the James family until 1901, when the state assumed control. Angola experienced both successes and pitfalls as violence on

\textsuperscript{141} Inmates working at LSP-TV, even those who signed consent forms to be identified, have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this project. According to Angola officials, victim notification regulations require the concealment of certain inmates' identities.
inmates fell while the Mississippi River rose, flooding the area several times and eradicating crops. The Great Depression didn't help matters either, as the state – and the nation – focused on survival and World War II. When more than thirty inmates sliced their Achilles' tendons in 1951 to protest unbearable working conditions and brutality, Governor Robert Kennon vowed to clean up the prison and did. But in 1961, the Louisiana correctional system budget was sharply reduced, and once again sent the facility on a downward spiral. By the end of that decade, Angola, originally named for the section in Africa from where slaves were brought, was nicknamed 'The Bloodiest Prison in the South' because of the horrific inmate violence.

Thirty-three-year-old Alex, who has served more than a decade of his life sentence, has never seen the incessant brutality that once was synonymous with Angola. The 1970s brought reform to the prison, and by 1994, the Louisiana State Correctional Facility at Angola achieved accreditation from the American Correctional Association. A year later, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established a branch campus at Angola, making the prison the only one in the nation to offer an on-site college degree program to its inmates. In addition, the penitentiary's on-site correctional officer training academy was the eighth in the nation to received accreditation in 2002. Therefore, to Alex, surviving another day is much more metaphoric. It means recognizing the past and coming to terms with being unable to change it. Once that is achieved, ethical and moral self-reflection – finding a purpose and means of contributing – can begin.

Cain's 'Moral Rehabilitation'

To describe Angola without addressing Warden Cain's idea of moral rehabilitation would be a grave error. It is virtually impossible to have a conversation

142 *The Angola Story.*
with any prison employee or member of the inmate-produced media without hearing the phrase. It is a public relations practitioner's dream; whether or not anyone or everyone buys into Cain's tactics for creating moral men, as opposed to better-educated criminals, they are certainly willing to sell it. But before discussing Warden Cain's prison-wide mantra, it's important to understand just who the official face of Angola is.

Standing at roughly five feet seven inches tall, with white hair, a pale complexion and blue eyes peering from behind his glasses, the warden is not particularly intimidating. In fact, it is difficult at first to imagine him commandeering a 5,100+ inmate prison. Dressed in dark slacks and a light blue shirt, he secures a lavaliere microphone to his button-down as he readies for an interview with Louisiana Public Broadcasting. It has been only a day or two since the death of Ruth Graham, wife of the Reverend Billy Graham, and the station is producing a story on her coffin, built by inmates at Angola. Men at the penitentiary began crafting coffins for inmates after one body fell through the bottom of a 'box' during a funeral service. Inmates were left with no other choice than to toss the "pauper's coffin" on top of the man. Though the coffins are not sold outside of the prison, Warden Cain made an exception when the reverend's son sought to purchase two, one for his mother and one for his father. Inmate coffin makers darkly joke that they are sure to polish each coffin well because they never know if the coffin they build will be their own. Ironically when Angola's most prominent coffin maker Richard Lee "Grasshopper" Liggett died on March 21, 2007, he was buried in a coffin he had crafted with his own hands.

It takes but moments to recognize that Cain is no stranger to interviews. As the longest warden to serve at Angola, he is accustomed to the press – positive and negative
but does not always agree with it, mentioning run-ins with several "unscrupulous" journalists throughout his tenure. With a thick southern accent, he answers the reporter's questions, always speaking in soundbites and mentioning key phrases like "bloodiest prison in America" and "moral rehabilitation." Inmates sometime describe him as a farmer and "a true Southern Boy, a real Huey Long." "He's someone who's not afraid to bend the rule if it will get something accomplished," I have been told. As I listen to him, I can understand their characterizations. Part politics, part public relations, but always with sincerity, Warden Cain's rhetoric is impossible to pigeonhole.

After his interview with Louisiana Public Broadcasting, lavaliere microphone still attached to his shirt, Warden Cain immediately turns to me and questions, "So, you're going to write a book?" The greeting does not surprise me. It is a similar greeting to the one Daniel Bergner addresses in his book, *God of the Rodeo: The Quest for Redemption in Louisiana's Angola Prison*. Bergner writes, "Our introduction came at the end of a week I had spent at the prison, preparing what I'd thought would be only a magazine article about the inmate riders. 'So you want to talk about the barbarism of the rodeo,' he said before hello, before we shook hands, when I was shown into his office." Two books have been written specifically on Burl Cain's work at Angola. *Cain's Redemption: A Story of Hope and Transformation in America's Bloodiest Prison* was published seven years after Bergner portrayed the warden as an ego-driven master of his plantation, concerned more about money than his men. Written by Dennis Shere, *Cain's Redemption* focuses more on the men of Angola, including two *Angolite* staffers, Editor Kerry Myers and writer Lane Nelson. However, his portrayal of Cain is much more complimentary.

---

144 Dennis Shere, *Cain's Redemption*. 
Warden Cain and Berger had issues over editorial control of the book that ultimately led to a lawsuit, so Cain's greeting is not particularly odd.

Cain may not look intimidating, but after speaking with him, there is no doubt he can hold his own among the inmate population. He speaks with authority yet with distinct empathy for the men. "Even Charles Manson gets a parole hearing," Cain argues, adding that even though the infamous killer will never be granted parole, he still has the opportunity to apply. That is something to which lifers at Angola are not privy. As for Angola's elderly prisoners, some of whom are in their seventies, Cain believes many could and should be home with their families. The majority of those men, he explains, have gone through "criminal menopause," meaning they have neither the desire, nor often the means, to engage in criminal activity. Despite my personal fascination with the inmate-produced media and the overwhelmingly positive cultural climate of the prison, Warden Cain rebuffs credit for Angola's transformation, maintaining that many of the changes simply fell into his lap. He just had "the good sense" to allow them to proceed. Like Cain or hate him, it is difficult to argue that his forward thinking has not helped the inmate population.

One aspect of the prison's culture he will take credit for is his desire to implement moral rehabilitation into as many aspects of prison life as possible.

**Warden Cain:** (T)he only true rehabilitation in prison is moral rehabilitation. And our morals change us. It's real simple. A criminal is a selfish person. He takes your money; he takes whatever he wants. He's selfish. So to break that cycle, it's morality, and in our culture, normally morality comes with religion.
What religion, I don't really care. But … religion is moral. Buddhists are moral; the Koran is moral, if you read it and follow it; and the Bible is moral.

The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is the most obvious example of Cain's support of moral rehabilitation, although the school's presence came as somewhat of a surprise even to him. When a Christian group came to tour the penitentiary, Cain remarked that he was upset there were no opportunities for the men to receive a higher education. Someone in the group suggested that Cain be open to the NOBTS and then approached the school about working with Angola. "(T)he wisdom of the president of the college … was that if he could change the inmates themselves to become moral and spiritual leaders, he would change the culture inside the prison," Cain explained. "He figured it out, I didn't. So he did it, and it worked. I get no credit. I didn't think of it. I'm just along for the ride." In 1995, the "Bible College," as it is known around the Farm, opened an Angola campus, offering a two-year associate's degree and four-year bachelor's degree to the inmate population.

David, a twenty-nine-year-old Angola inmate serving a life sentence, graduated in May from the Bible College and worked at the television station. Entering prison at eighteen, he says he tried living the life of a "prisoner" because that was what he thought he was and what others expected him to be. He soon realized that was not how he was raised and opted to change the direction he was headed.

David: My family's not like that. I tried it for awhile, but it's a miserable life. I got tired of it. The seminary helped me out. Dr. (John) Robeson helped me out. The

145 Prior to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary providing a branch campus at Angola, inmates' higher education opportunities were primarily limited to expensive correspondence courses. Inmates may still participate in such programs if they so desire.

146 Since my research at Angola, David no longer works with the television station.
more education I got, the more positive aspects, positive people I met. My family were there every step of the way – before, during, and still to this day. …

It's not that you don't recognize, you don't want to become so positive that you don't recognize that there are parts in life that are unpleasant, but that is life. If you put your hand in fire, you're gonna get burnt. That's an unpleasant feeling, but you learn from it. It has a purpose, so actually it's a good thing. I got burned and it hurt, but why do we always look at pain in a negative light? I want someone to look at me and say, 'You know somethin' man, let me try to do better.' In growing up, when you learned to ride a bike, how did you do it? You had help. How much did you practice? A lot. So if I practice thinkin' like a convict or an incarcerated person eventually what am I going to become? But if I practice thinking in a positive manner, what would I do if I was home – if I never come to jail – with the morals and ethics I was raised with?

Kyle Hebert, another NOBTS graduate, maintains Cain's introduction of moral rehabilitation coupled with the Bible College, helped him change the course of his life, too. Hebert, a writer for *The Angolite*, is one of the few inmates spoken to who is not serving a life sentence. He is eligible for parole around 2020.

**Kyle Hebert:** Warden Cain says it like this: 'What I did was I opened the door and I let God in,' so in the midst of that, a lot of good things have happened. … It gives individuals an opportunity to be a human being. It gives a person their life back. It gives a person their morale back. It gives a person a sense of accomplishment instead of just being thrown away and deteriorate. An individual
who gets thrown in a cell with no hope, he deteriorates. What good is that? He's a human being.

Moral rehabilitation manifests itself in a myriad of offerings at the penitentiary, not just those in direct correlation with religion. Michel Foucault writes that "work on the prisoner's soul must be carried out as often as possible. The prison, through an administrative apparatus, will at the same time be a machine for altering minds." Those inmates who subject themselves – mind, body and soul – to the principles of moral rehabilitation do well and are called upon to carry those ideals to other inmates, effectually helping to govern the population. With the population better controlled, Cain argues that employees can focus their energy on improving programs and living conditions at the prison. The rehabilitated men, or those on their way toward rehabilitation, are a valuable commodity, not only in terms of work productivity, but also in terms of the amount of resources necessary to control them. A morally rehabilitated inmate population also benefits the community beyond Angola. A portion of Angola's inmates, albeit a small one, will leave the prison. Actually rehabilitating the individual before he leaves the penitentiary means said individual has the potential of being a better father, son, husband, neighbor and a more productive citizen.

Warden Cain also acknowledges that not everyone at Angola – inmate or employee – agrees with his rehabilitative methods. In his earliest days at the penitentiary, he explained moral rehabilitation's importance to the success of any prison. In the March/April 1995 issue of The Angolite, he told inmate journalist Michael Glover,

I studied the recidivism rates and realized that nothing was helping, harsh treatment or soft treatment, long sentences or early parole, none of it effected

---

147 Foucault, Discipline & Punish, 125.
those rates. I came to the conclusion that rehabilitation is a moral, not social phenomenon. The only thing that helps is when you change a man's soul […] I'm sure some social workers will disagree, but even if I was an atheist I'd still want religion in the prison because the side-effects are peace and harmony.\textsuperscript{148}

Some do criticize the freedoms associated with several of the inmate job options, including the inmate ministers and inmate media workers who have a certain degree of freedom to travel around the Farm. Some also criticize the educational opportunities and hobbycraft\textsuperscript{149} allowances. However, Cain considers those deputy and assistant wardens working close to him as "visionaries" in correctional reform. Deputy Warden Richard Peabody oversees programming at the penitentiary and works closely with the inmate-produced media. Like Cain, Deputy Warden Peabody sees the benefit of giving select inmates a degree of autonomy, especially when that autonomy includes furthering the tenets of moral rehabilitation. The ability and desire to not micro-manage must first exist, however. "If you have a very controlling administration that wants to make sure everything is done in a rigid fashion, you can't do these things."

From a security aspect, one might question if the administration is not asking for trouble with its unconventional approaches to prison control. After all, as a maximum-security facility, Angola is not dealing with petty thieves and is expected to live up to its historic definition of "an institution of total control."\textsuperscript{150} Punishment, or governing by force, a tactic made popular in the earliest days of the penal system, still exists in some

\textsuperscript{149} Inmates can earn the privilege of working in Angola's hobbyshop, where they can build, paint and construct a variety of items. In addition to helping pass time, working in the hobbyshop can be economically rewarding if the inmate sells his wares at the annual rodeo.
capacity today. Foucault's social history of the prison system traces the spectacle of punishment and the transition to a more disciplinary, or correctional institution.\textsuperscript{151} However, these stages of penal history do not exist exclusive of one another, but rather blend to establish an awkward and sometimes contradictory bricolage. The situation is compounded when the idea of governmentality, or the governing of oneself, is added, as this project argues.

Darrel Vannoy, deputy warden of Angola's security, insists that he does not encourage an us-against-them relationship that relies on unwarranted force and intimidation and a lack of mutual respect.

**Deputy Warden Vannoy:** We could not operate this prison that way. I don't believe you can operate … I think that's why you see a lot of trouble in prisons across America because unfortunately that's the way they operate. I look at it. I've got a son. Anyone can get in trouble. If my son was to go to prison, I'd want my son treated fairly and right, you know? So that's how we operate. We try to treat everybody as fair as we can. They respect us, we'll respect them. We'll do what we have to do if we have to, but we'd rather things be normal and peaceful.

When mutual respect is in play and the products of moral rehabilitation are flourishing, the rewards are abundant. Inmates are rewarded for positive behavior by being allowed to participate in the annual prison rodeo that brings thousands of free world spectators into the Angola complex. In addition to being able to sell hobbycraft items and compete for monetary prizes in the rodeo, the men can interact with the public in a carnival-like atmosphere. Not every inmate can participate, however, and access is based largely on conduct.

\textsuperscript{151} A more detailed account of Foucault's prison history can be found in Chapter Eight.
The Media and Moral Rehabilitation

Considering the importance of moral rehabilitation to the day-to-day operation of Angola, it is not surprising that the inmate-produced media serve as cultural vessels for transmitting institutional ideals. Even *The Angolite*, which prides itself on being a journalistic, advocacy publication and a tool of resistance against the status quo, carries the institutional ideologies because the principles are so intertwined into everyday life. Because the magazine serves not only advocacy purposes, but news purposes as well, it must report on the plethora of religious-based activities that are brought to the penitentiary. Warden Cain maintains that religion is not the only place for finding morality, but admits that in southern culture, the two are closely bonded.

**Warden Cain:** In our culture in the south, our morality is basically in religion, so we're looking for the moral component. … (B)ecause remember our name is corrections. We want to correct. We don't want to make just wild and wooly. And so therefore, we're going to go to war for morality. I don't care what religion, if any religion. Atheists can be moral.

*The Angolite* is not nearly as focused on religion as KLSP radio station or LSP-TV. Though Cain, a devout Christian, says prescribing to Christianity is not a requirement for the moral rehabilitation process, Christianity is by far the most represented religion at Angola, especially on the radio station, which operates on equipment donated by a Christian-based organization. Because of whom the donor was, KLSP, partly out of obligation, is gospel-based. That a number of the deejays are inmate ministers also makes the correlation more obvious.
**Warden Cain:** I'm not just saying that you have to be religious, but I'm saying that the other thing is, that was the donor. So they expect a little bit. The radio station, we give to the Muslims at 3 'o clock on Fridays, and they have a couple of hours to do their thing. And so, it's not just Christian. And religion is all encompassing. So what is religion? Indians have the Great Spirit. Everybody has something. Every culture has always had something. Morality is what we are, and we're looking for moral rehabilitation, so we want to play and do programming that's moral rehabilitation, that enhances it.

Though LSP-TV is relatively new, it has established itself as more closely following the radio station than *The Angolite*, a direction that has not gone unnoticed by the inmates. "The purpose of the television station is to provide another outlet … in which moral rehabilitative means and measures can be channeled throughout the prison and its immediacy," David explains. "Its purpose is to help promote moral rehabilitation in prison through the immediacy television offers." Just like in free society, the popularity of television in prison is unsurpassed, making it the next obvious vehicle for administering information to the inmates. However, unlike the radio station, LSP-TV delves more into other aspects of prison life, including educational and secular programming as well as sports, which ultimately provides the inmate crew an opportunity to travel beyond Angola.

The radio station emphasis was not always on religion. Deputy Warden Peabody remembers when the station was more general in its broadcasts, focusing more on announcements and music than preaching. The switch to religion, though congruent with
the overall change of Angola's cultural climate, caused some inmates to alter their listening habits.

**Inmate 3:** Sunday was to have the gospel. Monday through Saturday, they played a variety of everything. So when they changed, I feel like for the religion, it's always been here. They might have took it to another level to bring the Bible College and stuff like that. But I think to push the people to do what you want them to do, I feel that oughta be a choice of their own, whatever it may be. A lot of us in this prison, we're not bad people. A lot of us got caught up in circumstances and some of us did bad things, but a lot of people change. … It's good to go to church. When I was a kid I'd go to church, but I don't think it's good for you to want people to go to church everyday. I feel like it ain't right. It's a sense of control when you want everybody to think the same way. We're in the institution. If you want a person to better themselves, you let the person make their own choices.

Situated in religion or not, Angola's inmate-produced media are unique and inmates, for the most part, appreciate the efforts of the administration to create some semblance of normalcy. They also recognize that not everyone, especially those individuals who are unfamiliar with the "changed" Angola believe criminals should have such luxuries. When asked how they would respond to those people who disagree with Warden Cain's methods of governing Angola, some say they would turn a deaf ear but most would like to rationalize – and educate – their opponents on how moral rehabilitation has changed the lives of many of the men. Still others focus on the
practicality and necessity of the media and other programming options to maintaining order in what could become a dangerous situation.

**Inmate 1:** When you think that right now we're sitting in a room in the heart of the main prison complex, where there are over two thousand inmates all around you, and most people would say, 'Man. This is a dangerous place.' Just because of that name 'Angola' and the stigmas attached to it from years past...being the bloodiest prison in the nation. But you can see the change in that people would say, 'Wait a minute. I think we can do this. I think we can have a radio station. I think we can have a television station. I think we can have an Angolite. I think we can allow the inmates to voice themselves through those medias. Because there's something different about these men. They're a changed group of men.' And I think that the administration has allowed themselves to bring forth the things that should be used. Media. For sure the media. We can trust these guys because if they couldn't trust us, we wouldn't have none of this. And I believe that they trust us.

**Inmate D:** Because it's so wide open. Every penitentiary in the south is behind a big wall. If you've been to other penitentiaries, you know there's nothing else like this. It's good. It's good. It's a pacifier. It's a pacifier. It's to keep you from getting in trouble. If you have something, like sports, you got different callouts. In Mississippi they took all that. You've got to have something to do. As we've said, you keep the animal inside, don't let the animal out.

Those holding positions with the media also know that they have their own adversaries to deal with, in and outside of the prison. The men, acutely aware that they
are under much higher scrutiny than the general inmate population, speak diplomatically when addressing free world concerns. They have witnessed inmates throughout the prison lose their jobs for minor infractions that would not be an issue beyond the prison grounds. Furthermore, they recognize that one incident, perhaps not even involving them, could force the administration to modify its overall structure and exclude projects like the television or radio station. Donald Spencer, a KLSP deejay, sees his position as providing greater help to the inmate population than if he worked picking cotton or vegetables in the fields.

**Donald Spencer:** We're not in the Dark Ages anymore, where it's chains and balls and stripes. I believe we do more positive things for the prison in this capacity then we can out there in the fields with an axe or a shovel, digging in the dirt. I learned that being with the inmates for so long, they have confidence in us. They have trust in us. We can say one thing to 'em, and you can come say that thing, and when you say it, "Ah phony baloney. But if I tell it to 'em, they'll receive it. So for the people who feel we shouldn't be in these types of jobs, I think they need the grace of God in their lives. God is making all these things possible. He's doing it for us for his reasons, for his glory. Now that we do have these things, the prison is at peace. It used to be the Bloodiest Prison in the Nation. We don't have that anymore. It's peaceful. We can broadcast gospel music which is soothing to the soul, across the air. We can look at the television and see that Warden Cain is supporting Christian standards. All of these are positive images that go out to the inmate population. And we're helping one another. So for those people who feel we shouldn't be doing this. I want to ask them a
question: What would you rather us do, kill one another? Stab one another up all
day? What about being involved with homosexuality? Would you be satisfied if
we did that? Would you want us out in the sun digging ditches or in the dorms
doing nothing, in an idle state with the devil using us to do what he want to do?
What would you rather? Would you rather us do this, if we can comfort one
another, or would you rather see us like barbarians? Killing one another up? In
my mind, prison is for rehabilitation, for one to make himself better, not for
worse. For the people to have that mindset, God bless ’em. God have mercy on
them.

_Angolite_ journalist John Corley attributes some free world misconceptions of
prison to blatant ignorance. He uses the magazine as a tool for educating the public,
recognizing that _Angolite_ readers outside of the penitentiary have a greater opportunity to
impact prison reform.

**John Corley:** I think probably only a fool would think prison is just a place, some
dark place where you throw your incorrigibles and forget about them, some place
that you're immune from, because no one's immune from it. You got good people
running around here who were just like you, out doing their job, or going to
school or whatever and all of a sudden, in the blink of an eye, tragedy struck and
here they are. And I think if more people were aware that this is not just a place
for people, for the wicked, for the bad, for the terrible people who probably
deserve, or need, rather, to be separated form society, I think if more people were
aware that they, too, are actually facing the same thing, then maybe, maybe again
some changes would be made. Because I don't wanna know that something could
happen to me and I might not be able to get out of it. I think there's certainly undeserving people in prison, who deserve a second chance, who deserve to get out. I think a lot of times society is not really aware of that or doesn't want to care, so it's important that they be made aware of that and that's another thing we try to do with our magazine.

Lane Nelson, an Angola inmate and co-author and editor of the book *Death Watch: A Death Penalty Anthology*, also sees mainstream media as contributing directly to the perpetuation of prison stereotyping and an uneducated, misinformed public. He calls on journalists to challenge information they are given and fact check even that which is provided by so-called expert sources. His argument speaks again to the concept of the criminal as a commodity. Just as advertisers know that sex sells, a criminal and the sorted details of his or her crime are worth more than a rehabilitated person.

**Lane Nelson:** (Media) want to sensationalize everything, so they're going to concentrate on the serial killer or whatever, and portray it like all prisoners are that way. They don't try to distinguish. They write about prison and they hardly know anything about it, particularly Angola. They don't know anything about Angola. They don't come here enough to know what it's like, and they don't care. Then when they're writing something about the laws that are going to affect prisoners, they don't do any fact checking. They just write whatever a politician says, and that's it. Just like I think I told you last time about recidivism. There's all these politicians, a lot of them are spouting out it's 70 or 80 percent recidivism rate in this state, when it's not. But the reporters will write that down and not

---

correct them. I don't know why they do that. They either don't care, or they're lazy, or, I don't know.

Conclusion

The title of this chapter is "The Space that is Angola," yet to narrow Angola to any one particular space is a challenge. Certainly, the penitentiary with its sprawling farmlands and various buildings does exist at the end of Highway 66. Yet the space that is Angola very realistically extends beyond the prison's eighteen thousand acres. The space that is Angola permeates the life of every individual that has ever entered its gates – voluntarily or involuntary – or has been touched by someone who has. Considering at least one form of the penitentiary's inmate-produced media has an audience beyond the actual prison, the space that is Angola extends, through the pages of The Angolite and the words of the inmates, to other nations. Moreover, if The Angolite journalists are successful with their writing, their intentions of educating the public will not be lost. Thus, audiences thousands of miles from Louisiana are drawn into the penitentiary's space.

Establishing a relationship between Angola and the rest of the world, while indeed an impressive feat, is not the only connection made by the inmate-produced media. Equally important, if not more so to the inmates, is the link established between the men who live scattered throughout the penitentiary, some confined almost constantly, to their cells. The media allow for shared experiences. Death Row inmates and those on confined cell restrictions cannot leave their cells to attend mass or hear visiting preachers. Their world consists not of the entire penitentiary, but rather a cubicle of space that is measured in feet and not acres. However, they can still hear the messages through the
radio and television stations and read about them in the magazine. These are their links to the outside world, even if that outside world is the penitentiary.

Ironically, as small as Angola may be for some men, it is equally infinitesimal to others. Michael, one of the newest members of LSP-TV, had the goal of seeing all of Angola before he left the penitentiary. While some of the men working with the inmate-produced media look forward to leaving the grounds of the prison for work, Michael found excitement in simply traveling to one of Angola's trusty outcamps for a television assignment. He relays his experience in much the same awe-filled manner as a child who sees Santa Claus for the first time.

**Michael:** I had the privilege of going to Camp F. I haven't left the Farm as a whole, because I just recently been assigned. Being able to go to Camp F with the rest of the guys and film a war ceremony they had goin' on, it was one of the highlights of my life. There's certain places that I haven't seen of Angola that I've heard so much about, that I've wanted to see. Prior to me gettin' the inmate minister's job, prior to me gettin' the television station job, I said one of these days I'm going to see Angola.

Camp F … It's a trusty camp. Back there, it sits off from the rest of the prison, so just to go back there was one of the highlights of my life. I'd heard so much about it, I was told it was back out there. I'd been close to it, but never actually to it. So being on the camera crew, it opened up a lot of doors to me to be able to travel. The thoughts of years ago that I'm going to see Angola before I leave this place, is actually starting to manifest with this job.

---

153 Although Michael has a life sentence, he maintains hope that he will someday leave the prison. His hope is echoed in the words of many of the men spoken to for this project.
In reality, Angola's inmate-produced media, while unique in theory, are not as unique in actual purpose. Like free-world media, they are tailored for a particular demographic audience and serve to inform, entertain and control. Likewise, they seek to minimize distance in a continually expanding global community. Were Angola not a penitentiary, but rather a free community like Manhattan, the existence of media would not be questioned. Conversely, it would be the absence of media that would spawn discussion. Imagine, momentarily, Manhattan sans media. Peculiar. Perhaps unimaginable. What makes inmate-produced media so interesting, and perhaps necessary, is the self-governance and power they afford inmates to control, at least to some degree, the conduct of men and the atmosphere of prison. I use the phrase "frighteningly necessary" not because of the autonomy and authority given to inmates but to illustrate the overall impact of media on a broader scale. If, as Jewkes writes, prisons represent "a microcosm of the wider society,"\textsuperscript{154} then we as a society should begin to question our own media to uncover who is controlling us.

\textsuperscript{154} Jewkes, "The Mesosphere of Culture," 132.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ANGOLITE

The Angolite staff – there are eight, though I only speak with six – carries on a journalistic history of excellence with its inmate-produced magazine that has been well established since the 1950s. Under the direction of inmate journalist and Editor Wilbert Rideau, the magazine won numerous national honors, including the George Polk Award in 1980. Since Rideau's release from prison in January 2005, The Angolite continues to prosper under the guidance of Kerry Myers, a former communications professional serving a life sentence. Though page-count of the 8.5-inch by 11-inch, professionally-printed publication varies, a typical edition runs approximately sixty-eight pages, with a heavy stock cover featuring staff photography and/or graphic design. Organizationally speaking, it resembles most magazines, with standard sections including an editorial page called "Wire to Wire"; mailbox section; news briefs; main feature tabbed "Inside Angola"; "Straight Talk," featuring criminal justice snippets pulled from mainstream media; and "Legal Spectrum," which addresses current legal issues. Other sections include "Club News," a "Sports Front" and "Religion in Prison". The final components, "Sounding Off" and "Expressions," invite all inmates to submit work – news-related as well as creative writing. Inmates submitting to these sections do not have to be official staff writers or trustys, thereby broadening participation with The Angolite.

The men at The Angolite are not there to screw up, feed their egos or cause problems. Surrounded by books and criminal justice journals, the staff is there to do its job – and it does it well. In 2007, the magazine was awarded the Death Penalty Information Center's Thurgood Marshall Journalism Award, placing the magazine in the
company of past winners like *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Having spent decades at the penitentiary, the men know the ropes of prison politics and are well-versed in speaking with free-world reporters. Like any good journalist, they choose their words carefully and answer only those questions that are asked. They are friendly and hospitable but maintain a professional distance. They are blatantly honest with what they say, especially when discussing the overarching problems with the Louisiana and nationwide penal system, but are more strategic in addressing the problems of their own administration or penitentiary. And although the majority have no journalism or communications experience, they are polished and articulate. Furthermore, they are some of the most passionate journalists with whom I ever have had the privilege of working.

*The Angolite* could easily be seen as a waste of time or a potentially dangerous weapon given to the inmates. Considering the amount of negative publicity given to prisons worldwide and the fact that prisons in the United States are bulging at their concrete seams, inmate-produced media is obviously not a high priority, an issue addressed more fully in Chapter Nine. However, I argue that especially considering the current state of the criminal justice system, now is the time to pay greater attention to such media, especially how they are utilized at Angola. *The Angolite*, which historically has stood out as an oddity among jailhouse journalism because of its First Amendment allowances, is more than a tool of resistance. By working at a job that has such direct ties to the 'outside' world, the men are able to have some semblance of normalcy in their lives, however skewed. In an environment where individuals are sometimes quite literally stripped of their basic rights, the magazine provides the staff with a sense of autonomy.
and self-worth, as well as a sense of purpose. The inmate-journalists, in addition to recording the events of Angola, also help shape the atmosphere of the penitentiary by illustrating and disseminating Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation. This makes the magazine and its staff necessary components to the short- and long-term operations of the prison.

**Achieving Normalcy**

In a prison where many of the inmates sleep in giant dormitory rooms with sixty other men, bathe in open shower stalls and share a television set with dozens more, privacy is often a sought-after prize. At the end of one of the Main Prison corridors, the men of *The Angolite* have that bit of solitude that every man at some point yearns for and needs to keep his sanity. The main office, divided into four rooms and a small entranceway, is air-conditioned. The men typically share an office with at least one other person, though one man has an office away from the others, but on the same hallway, in a space that doubles as *The Angolite*s archives. Each office has a door, but few windows. There are computers, desks, dozens of reference books, a dying plant or two and coffee – lots of coffee – like any good newsroom has. There is a microwave, stereo and television set, usually turned to CNN or some other news network during the day, but occasionally broadcasting a sporting event in the evening. It's a place where Kyle Hebert can work on his lesson plans for a class he is leading or Lane Nelson can practice his yoga. It is the little things that I, for one, take for granted but am reminded of when one of the men picks up his private roll of toilet paper from a bookshelf and heads to a hallway bathroom – with a door.
The Angolite staff is a diverse group, much like you would find in any newsroom. Some are college educated, while others learned the craft on the job. Most are white, again similar to most newsrooms, though noticeably disproportionate to the population the magazine serves. The men criticize CNN's saturated news coverage of Anna Nicole Smith's death and hypothesize on the stock market's future. They are also quick to point out that character – not skill – is what makes an inmate most attractive as a potential inmate journalist. As editor, Kerry Myers plays a direct role in the hiring of new Angolite employees, albeit the wardens must approve recommendations. He is less concerned about writing abilities; they are something he and the other staff members can teach. Instead, he stresses that an inmate's character and personality must blend seamlessly with the other staff members, considering the amount of time the men spend working together and that a certain level of trust must exist between them. One man's error has the potential of ruining what could be considered a very good thing at the penitentiary.

Other Angolite staffers echo Kerry's sentiments. Jeffrey Dale Hilburn, who was attending college and majoring in English literature before he was incarcerated fifteen years ago, used to work in the penitentiary library. The self-proclaimed bibliophile, who as a child would carry a book in a Ziploc bag as he worked in the rice fields, believes the library position is one of the best jobs at Angola. When he fought to have the library open forty hours per week, he believes some of his coworkers started sending anonymous letters claiming he was breaking rules. The hostile work environment led to him accepting a position at the magazine roughly four years ago.

Jeffrey Dale Hilburn: It just got to be such a thing where I was havin' to fight the wrong type of fights all the time. You have to worry about other inmates. I got
locked up twice out of (the library) from people writin' letters on me. And we know probably without a doubt they come from right there in the library, people I worked with. They wrote an anonymous letter alleging I did something. I was cleared, but I still spent forty days, right about forty days, in the dungeon both times. So I got tired of that. I shouldn't have to look over my shoulder to do my job. Back here, there are a lot of the same benefits the library had. I get to read a lot and learn a lot. I still have access to the library. … Nobody back here is going to say anything negative or harsh about another person. Everybody back here gets along. We might not agree on everything, but nobody else is going to cause dissension back here. We look out for each other. When one of us has a problem, the others help. … I don't know of another job where the people you work around are as reliable to be around. So that's a big plus.

The men are serious and incredibly knowledgeable about their jobs. But when they discuss the United States' prison system, particularly Louisiana's, the passion for their craft is obvious. They talk in journalistic jargon, speaking of codes of ethics, conflicts of interest and unbiased reportage. While the bi-monthly magazine has a definite advocacy agenda, it also fulfills the duties often relegated to a community newspaper, publishing penitentiary events, news notices and obituaries.

**John Corley:** (I)t's a journal for the inmate population, a record of events that's transpired, people's accomplishments… It's a…educational device, not only for the inmate population as far as the criminal justice happenings and what's going on around the country in criminal justice, but also, and probably most importantly it's a window for the outside to look in and see what's going on with the prison.
the positive things that happen in the prison. And the state of Louisiana criminal justice. Sometimes you have to read between the lines, the things that we write, to see what's exactly going on with Louisiana criminal justice, but we try to provide that window so people can see what's going on. Maybe, hopefully, effectuate some changes, some reform in the system.

Almost every man is quick to point out that a life means life in Louisiana, a fact that often leaves those who are rehabilitated depressed and sometimes hopeless. Though inmates may petition for a clemency hearing, no such hearing is guaranteed. And even if an inmate receives such a hearing and receives positive support by the prison board, there again is no guarantee that the governor will sign off on the sentence reduction; realistically, such acts are quite rare. Lane Nelson received a unanimous recommendation by the state's pardon board in 1993, but the then-governor denied him. In November 2007, he again received a unanimous recommendation by the board. It is unclear as of the distribution of this dissertation if his sentence reduction was approved at the gubernatorial level.

As editor of the award-winning Angolite, Kerry Myers wears a myriad of hats. Having served fifteen years of his life sentence, he is one of the few inmates I speak with who maintains his innocence, yet he does not use the magazine to advocate his particular case. That would fly against journalistic integrity, he explains. Staff members are given one chance to speak personally to Angolite readers – when they are first introduced as a staff member. After that, he does not allow personal agendas to filter into the magazine. Kerry passes on these values to new staff members as he serves as teacher and mentor, journalist and page designer, and the go-to person between the staff and the

---

155 Shere, Cain's Redemption.
administration. "We have very open communication, and they don't abuse that. That's unusual," says Deputy Warden of Operations Sheryl Ranatza, who has the final say of when *The Angolite* can go to the printer. *The Angolite* is billed as being uncensored, but some inmates are quick to say "least censored" is a more appropriate term. Using *The Angolite's* phone situated on his desk, Kerry can contact Warden Ranatza's office with ease. That any inmate may have access to a telephone – restricted or not – is another normalcy factor afforded to *The Angolite* staffers. Something as seemingly trivial as answering a ringing phone or reading a fresh newspaper adds to a free-world connection.156

Having spent much of the morning writing, Lane relaxes in his chair, legs up and crossed on his desk. He reads a newspaper and glances briefly at a sudoku. An old Dr. Pepper can sits in a corner of his desk and occasionally he picks it up to spit some Kayak tobacco juice. He and Kerry share one of the two larger offices at *The Angolite*. A former inmate counselor on Death Row, death penalty expert and *Angolite* staffer since 1993, Lane has interviewed multiple inmates prior to their execution. He is a Louisiana transplant, meaning he grew up elsewhere, but committed his crime in-state. Even if he had free-world experience or worked for a mainstream magazine, Lane's writing would be considered extraordinary. But prior to Angola, Lane had little to do with writing or the news, focusing instead on "surfin' and partyin'" in Southern California. His gravitation toward the news is a common phenomenon at Angola, though sports and the soap opera *The Young & The Restless* rank as some of the most popular television programs.

156 Though inmates may make collect calls from the prison, such telephones are carefully monitored and incoming calls to inmates are not allowed.
A few feet away, Kerry is busy on his computer. His desk is full, but neatly organized with folders and shelves. On the wall he has taped pictures of his children whom he sees on occasion but never as often as he would like. The two men discuss the morning news; today involves a CNN news report about a mother who allegedly killed her children. News, whether televised or printed, is a concrete link to society beyond Angola. It is a shared experience between inmate and warden, criminal and president, man and woman. News provides a common ground for phone calls home and allows inmates to have a free mind, if not a free body. The talk of current events continues for a few minutes until 10:03 a.m. when a guard yells for the count. Lane opens the door to Jeffrey Dale Hilburn and Kyle Hebert's office to make sure they heard the call, and the men file out of the office to be counted by security. "Count" takes place several times during the day and ensures all inmates are accounted for and where they are supposed to be. On a good day, count will clear quickly; on a bad day, the men might have to wait for more than an hour before they can leave the immediate area.

Despite the obvious prestige of the positions, Kerry and the others do not flaunt their Angola successes, though the benefits are somewhat obvious to the general population. *The Angolite* staffers, as well as the KLSP and LSP-TV workers top the penitentiary's salary scale,\textsuperscript{157} making twenty cents per hour or eight dollars per week. Increased access to the prison grounds is also apparent, as is name recognition by those in power. There are even rumors that laundry for *Angolite* staffers is more carefully done so that they may make good impressions on noteworthy visitors to the prison. Yet at least a modicum of modesty and humility is important when, at the end of the day, you return not to your own room, but a dormitory room that houses five dozen others. Maintaining a

\textsuperscript{157} Several other penitentiary job positions also carry a twenty cents per hour salary.
credible identity with the inmate population and the administration is important and necessary for an inmate-journalist. When all is said and done, *The Angolite* staff is still made up of inmates, who in the realm of societal norms constitute 'the Other'. No matter how many awards are won, how stellar the behavior or how prolific the insight, to the state, an inmate is always an inmate.

Generally speaking, inmates not working with the media do not see *The Angolite* journalists as overly superior or as placing themselves above the status of inmate. Most admit to reading the publication, at least to some degree, which is supported by the fact that the magazines are snatched up as soon as they are placed in the dormitories. Even those who criticize the publication, or have in the past, seem to pick up the magazine, even if only for curiosity's sake. The legal section is by far the most popular section for a number of the men, followed closely by sports and religion. However, most are quick to note that they appreciate the specificity of the publication to their particular community. Such specialization is not something even *The New York Times* could undertake. Whether it is liked or hated, *The Angolite* is read if for no other purpose than to serve as fodder for complaints. However, if one were to base the magazine's popularity on the speed at which it disappears from dormitories, *The Angolite* would top any media list.

**Inmate X:** Basically I read the articles on what's going on with the laws and I also read a lot of the stats that are put out about how Louisiana is … how they lock up more citizens per one hundred thousand than other states, and I find that very, very alarming. *The Angolite* kind of gives you the question that we are way, way, way behind the rest of the country. There are still some things concerning the laws and how the majority of the other states have a life sentence that might
be twenty-five (years) to life, but with good behavior you have the opportunity of getting out after you served so much time. There are some guys here who have been here thirty or forty or fifty years. In my opinion, the magazine is very informative. I think they do a good job.

**Inmate 6:** For a lot of years, I read it biasedly. Being of a different, just a different mindset, I was always looking for things that was real critical, and I always criticized *The Angolite* as being another one of those sycophant publications that always kowtowed to the administration. …Now I do read *The Angolite* and have been for several years, and it's really an excellent publication. Not me saying so because it's accredited nationwide, but because it really is good information and entertainment reading. The legal information is really good, but that no longer interests me. I'm not interested in the laws of man. The religious section I read primarily just because of the events. I like to read how they are reporting on the events, because as an inmate minister, I participate in a lot of these events and I like the *Sounding Off* section. I like the poems and the poetry because most of the guys that write in these things I've known for the better part of two decades, almost three decades.

**Inmate 1:** I read it because it keeps me updated on what's happening within the prison and dealing with the legislature. The new laws that are being passed that affect all of us who are in here. It just helps to keep us abreast if there are any changes in the hospital policies, they print that in there, and that helps us know what's going on.
It's good. It's really good. It's so informative and we have to have something that keeps us knowledgeable about our situation. And that does that. There's no other source of media that has that ability to deal with things inside the prison like *The Angolite* does.

That is not to say that all inmates embrace the magazine. Some insist it is a propaganda tool for the administration and a pseudo-pacifier for a select group of men who "sold out" to the state and now get to walk through a few more doors unsupervised. Deputy Warden (Programming) Richard Peabody cautions that the men working with the media cannot just travel the penitentiary grounds at whim. Though they have greater access, their travels, even inside the prison complex,\(^{158}\) must be orchestrated carefully.

No matter what the inmate employment position, guards and other free employees must be obeyed and the men must appear (in person) for the daily inmate counts. Failure to comply with any rule or regulation could mean not only a reprimand or write up, but loss of employment or cell restriction.

**Deputy Warden Peabody:** I think that we always have to remember that they are inmates, but we also have to remember that in order for them to have a good magazine, they're going to have to have a little bit more freedom, a little bit more leeway in what they do. I think the key is for them not to be considered by the inmate population or by the administration to be in too much one direction or the other. They have to be an inmate or they won't know what's going on. The inmates won't talk to them. If they're not somewhat able to communicate with the

---

\(^{158}\) In some cases, inmates working with the media are allowed to leave the prison grounds with an escort. Such instances will be addressed more fully with the LSP-TV employees.
administration then they're not effective either. So they really do kind of walk a middle line.

And, to survive emotionally, metaphorically, and perhaps even physically, an inmate must always remain an inmate to his peers. Raymond Bender has been at Angola for nearly twenty years and never once has lost sight of trying to leave – legally, he notes. As a former inmate counselor and reporter for The Angolite's "Legal Spectrum," he has immersed himself in law and trying to help himself and others. He recognizes the privileges, and sometimes jealousy, that come with working for the magazine, but says he maintains his reputation by being the same man at The Angolite as he was prior to his hire.

**Raymond Bender:** I'm just Raymond 24/7… People can have their opinions, but I think I'm a good person. I don't feel that I should allow my environment to change me in a negative way. I'm always going to try and better myself. I'm not going to stay in a rut. I see opportunity to elevate me to do better, I'm going to do that for myself. If I was in the free world, I'd do the same thing. If I could get a better job, I'm gonna do that. The same thing with this job here. A lot of guys, I'm not gonna say they ignorant, a lot of guys who think small, a lot of 'em might think, well you got a job at The Angolite. You think you're better. I'll ask them: Do I present myself, do I seem like I'm better than anyone else? They'll probably say no, you stayed the same. Don't get me wrong, it's a privilege to work here, I'm not taking anything away from that, but I'm not going to let the job I have, the position I have, change me from being the individual I am.
Jeffrey Dale Hilburn points out that the privileges *The Angolite* staffers receive are not that much different anymore from those given to some of the other higher-ranked job positions at the penitentiary. He does acknowledge, however, that there are certain levels of trust that exist between *The Angolite* staff and the administration, security and inmate population that do not exist elsewhere. The trust is never complete, but it exists nonetheless.

**Jeffrey Dale Hilburn:** We (*The Angolite* staff) walk a very thin line all the time. See, there are times when an inmate will come to me and talk to me about somethin', and I can mediate between him and another inmate or security or administration. The same goes for security and administration. There are things they say to us, off the record most of the time. I'm just going to make up an example. They may say, 'Look. We're havin' a problem with people not attendin' callouts. There are some things that we need people to come to. Is there someway ya'll can talk to them or somethin'?' And we can go talk to some people, some club heads and say, 'Look. We can get some of the pressure to ease up around here if you get your members to go to a few of these callouts.' You always have to be careful not to allow yourself to be used because some people will use you. You have to take everything with a grain of salt, and you have to know where your boundaries are.

Each *Angolite* staffer has a different relationship with the inmates, security and administration. Some interact better with the administration, while others can relate just as easily to the inmate population. "Kerry is probably the most academic out of all of us," Jeffrey continues. "He's the least comfortable down the walk in the general population,
because he'd never been around that type of person before he come to prison for the most part. … I'm a simple ol' country boy from way back in the swamps…to a degree."

All agree that doing something useful and contributing to society reminds them that their lives can have a bigger purpose. In addition to being 'uncensored,' *The Angolite* is also unique because of its international subscription base. Not only are the men writing for other Angola inmates, but their words extend to the free population, too. About eighteen hundred magazines are distributed at no cost throughout the prison, and roughly one thousand are mailed to subscribers who pay a twenty-dollar annual subscription fee that offsets printing costs. Inmates' family members, advocates and legal scholars are the main subscribers; other magazines negotiated a swap deal, providing their publications at no cost to *The Angolite* in exchange for the prison magazine. If expenditures outnumber profits, Angola's Inmate Welfare Fund intervenes. No public tax dollars support any of the three inmate-produced media, making them win-win situations, according to the administration.

One of the greatest problems facing *The Angolite* is time. Though the office contains multiple bookshelves filled with journals, newsletters, magazines, books and years of accumulated data, it is difficult for the men to obtain the most current data available because of the technology constraints imposed upon them. Yes, there is a telephone in the office, but the inmates cannot use it to call outside sources for information. There are also computers but no internet¹⁵⁹ to download crime statistics or e-mail someone for an interview. Instead, the men rely on the United States Postal Service for communicating, and friends beyond Angola to gather research for them. Once

¹⁵⁹ Because the internet remains difficult to monitor (even with filters), access for inmates is nonexistent in many prisons.
someone finds the information a staffer is looking for, it cannot be faxed to the office.
Instead, it must be mailed, further prolonging an already involved process. Kerry thought
at one point there was a chance for limited intranet access with tight restrictions to make
communicating with the wardens' offices easier. However, *The Angolite*'s supervisor,
Sheryl Ranatza, deputy warden of operations, said she does not see that happening during
her career. Digital cameras would also help improve the efficiency and cut down on costs
– currently *The Angolite* sends film out to be processed. Though Deputy Warden Ranatza
supports using digital cameras, security concerns must be further explored and debated
before anything can be purchased or implemented.

The magazine's approval and printing processes also create time problems for *The
Angolite*. Before anything can be sent to the printer, Deputy Warden Ranatza or someone
from her office must approve the magazine's content. Typically, there are not problems,
but because the magazine is not a top priority in the grand scheme of the penitentiary, it
can sometimes take several weeks for Kerry to receive the final go-ahead. It is not
uncommon for the bi-monthly magazine to be several months behind schedule, placing
*The Angolite* in an awkward position with subscribers. When major delays do occur,
Kerry and the staff members try to make up the lost time and correct the problems as
quickly as possible, sometimes tripling up on the months covered or mailing the
magazines more frequently. The problems are frustrating, but in reality, they are often
beyond the staff's control. And, they are not so significant that they make the job
unappealing.

In Kerry's case, the opportunity to transfer in 1996 from his job at the prison's
print shop to *The Angolite* required little thought. At the magazine, he could help the
inmate population while simultaneously educating the public about Angola. Indeed, he does not discount the extrinsic rewards of working with the magazine – privacy and some creature comforts – but insists the mental stimulation is far more important. He and the other staffers are straightforward in listing the intrinsic benefits being an *Angolite* reporter brings. Those rewards can sometimes mean much more than a door, or a fan, or a television for their office.

**Kerry Myers:** It keeps me sane. I feel like I contribute something. I don't want to be (at Angola); I continue to fight to not be here, but if I'm going to have any purpose at all, then this is what I feel is my voice. To have a voice? Look where I am? I'm in Angola. But I have a voice that's reaching…All these guys have a voice that's reaching potentially hundreds and thousands and maybe more, as it gets shared.

**Lane Nelson:** (It gives) purpose, purpose in an environment that is otherwise meaningless. I've got purpose to where I can do something and be somewhat proud of that. I can write an article and when it comes out be somewhat proud of it. That's the biggest thing.

**John Corley:** (I)t gives me a sense of accomplishment. That's what I like most about working with the Angolite. It's not dead time. It's not layin' in the bed and doing nothing time. It's not playing games, goofing off. I'm not getting any younger. I want to accomplish a few things even in this environment. I want to do something productive, and that may just be a personal interest in productivity. I wasn't a slouch in the world. I'm driven to accomplish, and when I do, it means a great deal to me.
Raymond Bender: For me it's a privilege to work for the Angolite. The Angolite is a well-renowned magazine, prison magazine. Being a part of this experience is being like…being in prison it's like one of the top jobs you can get. It's a big accomplishment for me. I think it also says a lot about the person I am…

A Sense of Agency

As previously mentioned, The Angolite is touted as being uncensored, something that a number of the inmates say is generally accurate, but others – those not directly involved with its production – vehemently dispute. Perhaps more realistically is that the inmates know where to draw the line between advocacy, investigation and suicide. "We do have to live here. I do like my job, and we don't get personal," Kerry says. Quite matter-of-factly, he challenges the autonomy of free-world journalists and what stories are edited because of heat from owners, publishers and advertisers. Advertising is not an issue for the prison magazine, but the state and warden do serve as owner and publisher. Furthermore, the veil of censorship surrounding issues of national security in the mainstream press reemerges at Angola in the form of local security issues. "We write objectively," Kerry continues. "We educate and inform and let the readers draw their own conclusions. Editorially we can criticize, and we do. We try not to get personal, and we know there is a line at some point that we won't cross."

For those who follow prison journalism or those living in Louisiana, The Angolite is well-known for being more of a watchdog than lapdog when it comes to reporting. Its nineteen-page coverage of a death by electric chair including photos of the man's electrocuted body is one of the magazine's most poignant examples of resistance and is said to have contributed to Louisiana's 1990 decision to stop executions by electrocution.
and opt instead for lethal injections.\footnote{160 Wendell Smith, "Cruel and Unusual? Prison Editors Help Pull the Plug on an Electric Chair," \textit{Columbia Journalism Review} 30 no. 3 (September/October 1991): 3.} When Ron Wikberg,\textit{ The Angolite}'s associate editor from 1987 to 1992 died, his legacy and journalistic abilities were touted in the September/October 1994 issue of the magazine.

A journalist with particular interest in the death penalty, the plight of longtermers and the quality of prison medical care, Ron helped change the system. His discovery of gory post-execution photos of Robert Wayne Williams debunked the claim that electrocution is 'clean, humane.' Shortly afterwards [sic], Louisiana exchanged its electric chair for lethal injection. He compiled most of what is known about the state's lifers, some of whom were freed as a result. While he was on his deathbed, a federal trial was underway on charges of inadequate medical care, much of the evidence uncovered by Ron before his release.\footnote{161 Wilbert Rideau, "Getting It Together," \textit{The Angolite} (September/October 1994): 2.}

'man.' In one instance, he describes the Angola life of James Dunn, who served as a sex slave before fighting back to reclaim his manhood and later helping other young men avoid the situations in which he had been placed.

Dunn first came to Angola in March 1960 at the tender age of nineteen, toting a three-year sentence for burglary. A month after his arrival, he received a call to go to the library, where an inmate 'shoved me into a dark room where his partner was waiting. They beat me up and raped me. That was to claim me,' Dunn explains. "Once it happened, that was it – unless you killed one of them, and I was short [i.e., had a short sentence] and wanted to go home. So I decided to make the best of it.' He cites an influencing factor in his decision: ' During my first week here, I saw fourteen guys rape one youngster 'cause he refused to submit. …they did everything to him – I mean, everything, and they wouldn't even use no grease.' Dunn ultimately helped create the Lafayette Juvenile and Young Adult Club of Angola that helped (financially) support the LJYA Program, which focused on juvenile offenders. He also spoke to Louisiana's student population, explaining his personal experiences in prison in the hopes that they would not head down a similar, criminal path.

The editorial freedom allotted to inmates like Wikberg and Rideau was – and is – decidedly rare as other prison advocates have found when their efforts to replicate controversial articles in prison publications were thwarted by the state. Deputy Warden (Security) Darrel Vannoy, a thirty-three-year Angola employee, admits there was a time

163 Ibid., 75.
164 Ibid., 77.
when the liberties afforded to The Angolite were shunned by staff members. However, the magazine has worked hard to achieve its current reputation, and the prison – any prison – is not perfect.

**Deputy Warden Vannoy:** (W)hat can you say about the truth? The truth's the truth, and we know we're not perfect. Security's not perfect. There's no perfect place anywhere. You know, (major companies) in Baton Rouge (have) problems and we do, too. But we never run from our problems. We always address them. If the Angolite writes something and I don't agree with it, I'll tell 'em. But if they're right, I'll try to look at that side of it and fix it. So I think there's some mutual respect on both sides there.

Still, an occasional inmate not affiliated with The Angolite or its production sees the administration's 'allowance' of the occasional controversial story to be part of an institutional illusion and Warden Cain's obsession with notoriety. "(T)hey feed you a lot of propaganda and whatever to build up the administration to be a lot of what it's really not. It's a tool of the administration…," argues one inmate. "(T)he more The Angolite is credited throughout the world and in the media and all, the more Burl Cain's name gets sung."

**Surveillance and Policing the Inmate**

Though Angola as a whole is maximum-security, the men are further divided into categories including three trusty levels, general population and the strictest of all levels, those on confined cell restriction (CCR) and of course, Death Row. You have got to be a trusty to work at The Angolite. As Class A Trustys, Kerry Myers and his staff are considered minimum-custody and therefore are monitored in a less restrictive manner.
than some of the others. With permission, Class A Trustys may leave the Main Prison perimeter without an armed guard escort. They can be left alone to speak with a free world woman and are afforded privileges that lower level-trusty inmates and "Big Stripes" are not.

Likewise, Class A Trustys are placed under stricter scrutiny, especially those who work with the media, because they are seen as role models to the rest of the prison community. They are the men who are most visible when politicos and other honored guests visit Angola. They have the ability to interview celebrities and politicians, photograph major events and have direct access to at least one of the penitentiary's deputy wardens. Warden Cain says that type of trust must be granted at some point if the prison's focus is to remain on rehabilitation and not mere punishment. "It's not blind trust," Cain explains. "There's a big difference."

**Warden Cain:** I don't have blind trust. I'm dancing with a bear; keep your eye on your partner at all times. It builds and builds and builds and you can build on that. Like relationships with your husband or wife, you're going to trust that she's not going to run around on you…She might, but you're going to trust she don't. And then when you do, you gotta do some little bit of forgiving, and I'm really a big proponent of forgiveness. You've got to forgive to be forgiven.

For *The Angolite* staffers, the added scrutiny is not a problem. Be they at the magazine or working in the fields, their behavior, they maintain, would not change. Their character is one of the few things that prison cannot take from them. Their journalistic efforts, however, do serve as possible initiatives for transformation in those inmates who have not engaged in moral self-reflection. For those inmates, *The Angolite* has the

---

166 Similar to the general prison population.
potential of being a technology of culture that can ultimately lead to the subjectification of segments of the inmate population. Once subjectified by the rules of the state, in this case, Warden Cain's idea of moral rehabilitation, the inmates may begin to engage in self-governance. However, this self-governance will not be supported by the administration unless there is a buy-in to the state's ideologies.

Certainly, there remains the question as to how much working with the inmate-produced media actually influences the individual man. Obviously, the character of each of the men had to exist initially before being placed into such a highly influential position. Yet every man stated without hesitation that he would remain the same character-wise even if he were to lose his current job. In this instance, the job, they argue, does not make the man. However, to assume that such high-profile positions do not impact behavior in any way seems naïve.

**Lane Nelson:** If we weren't working in *The Angolite*, we'd be the same people down on the walk. We wouldn't be getting into things, the predatorial games. We don't do it because of *The Angolite*. It's because of who we are that we're on *The Angolite*.

**Kerry Myers:** That's the answer. We're not who we are because of *The Angolite*, we're on *The Angolite* because of who we are. That's it. (Lane) said the perfect answer. ...Character is the most important thing, as much as anything else about being here. If I didn't think these guys had the integrity and the character, personal integrity and character that they have, I wouldn't, we wouldn't be around each other. You cannot work in these conditions under the scrutiny that we work. We work under intense scrutiny. Every security (guard) knows who we are. Every
administrator knows who we are, and every time we're doing something, we're scrutinized. And if you can't work under that scrutiny, then you don't need to be here.

Lane Nelson: And as far…the rodeo, we know that every second there's somebody watching us because we have such access. We have more access than everybody at the rodeo. But I know that the guy at the hobbycraft in the corner over there might be able to get away with a kiss to his girlfriend, but if my girlfriend comes around, I'm not going to kiss her, because I know someone's going to be watching me all the time. And that goes to The Angolite. I know that because of The Angolite, I'm more scrutinized.

Kerry Myers: We're held to a higher standard. We don't live in mortal fear of doing that, but that's because, I believe, and this may sound self-centered, but I believe that's because of who we are. We don't live in mortal fear, because we're the same people we would be. We're not pretending to do this.

Raymond Bender: I enjoy the freedom, but, the type of person I am, I'm really not going to change any because I'm not a violator to start with. It's not like I have to watch myself from doing anything. I know people are watching all the time, but it's not a big transformation for me because the warden is watching. I'm going to be me regardless. I'm not doing anything wrong to start with.

The inmates and employees of Angola respect the bi-monthly Angolite magazine, for the most part. The international prestige of the magazine indeed has contributed to its
lengthy existence at Angola. It is one of several programs that distinguish the prison.\footnote{Angola's annual prison rodeo and on-site, four-year college also make it unique, as does its prison hospice program. The inmate-run project has been described by the National Prison Hospice Program as a "model for all prison hospice programs."} Warden Cain downplays the significance of the free speech allotted to \textit{The Angolite} staffers, saying he expects nothing more than the truth from all the inmate-produced media. As editor, Kerry agrees for the most part. Although \textit{The Angolite} is approved through a deputy warden's office before going to press, he recalls only one time when there was a difference of opinion as to what should be printed. In that case, not surprisingly, the administration won.

It would not be illogical to assume, without seeing it, that \textit{The Angolite}, while produced by prisoners, is little more than a vehicle for the state's institutional propaganda. Similar publications at other penal institutions have been largely that. To argue that belief after viewing the publication, however, would be questionable. As the inmate's media of record for the penitentiary, \textit{The Angolite} is obligated to cover newsworthy events, as is any community newspaper. But the magazine goes far beyond reporting on events; it reports on issues – long-term problems and shorter ones – that go neglected or are misconstrued by mainstream media. By addressing issues they see as important to their community, the inmate journalists create the culture by which their readers abide.

Furthermore, by releasing information that many inmates would otherwise not be privy to and by summarizing information that might go misunderstood by others, \textit{The Angolite} staff is equipping other inmates with the knowledge to self govern, however limited it may be.

Raymond Bender's "Legal Spectrum" is a prime example. Raymond sits at his computer, clad in blue jeans, a Pittsburgh Steelers ball cap, and a T-shirt that reads "The
Freedom of Power" as he pours through mountains of legal paperwork. He has written the magazine's legal section for four years, though he has been full-time on staff for only a few months. He is the newest of The Angolite bunch and admits he still gets a little nervous covering some of the penitentiary's larger events. For him, studying law is a passion, and something he believes should be every inmate's top priority. But he also realizes that not every man at Angola has the educational background or know-how to research case law. Because of that, he considers it his own mission to research new and pertinent case law, translate it out of legalese and transmit it to the general population, a task that is often easier said than done.

Because there is no internet access for any of Angola's inmates, all information comes either from newspapers, CD-ROM databases, prison officials, or willing friends, relatives, advocates and acquaintances on the outside. The Angolite has several dedicated free-world helpers who mail information to the magazine office or gather research on an as-needed basis. However, even with assistance, a deep knowledge gap still exists. According to Bender, the Lexus Nexus CD-ROM is updated once every ninety days, making it difficult to stay on top of the most current case law. Often snippets of new legal information are contained in advocacy pieces or other journals, but Bender hesitates to rely on their accuracy, preferring instead to work from actual legal documents.

And even with the legal assistance, the critical editorials and in-depth features, the integrity of the magazine is still questioned. For some inmates, those who do not work with the inmate-produced media, The Angolite represents little more than propaganda and staff members represent sellouts. It is obvious that jealousy does exist. Those who do not work with the media can rattle off easily the rewards of working with the media; some
are accurate, others are not. In the oppositional cases, it is a situation where the inmate has not bought into the institutional (state) ideologies, even at the most basal juridical level. Under those circumstances, the man continues to live with a convict mentality, of "screw or be screwed." From that perspective, indeed, The Angolite is a tool of the state; one would be naïve to think otherwise. It is not a radical publication that calls for turmoil and revolt, though such issues are addressed.

Consider this: In 1990, Louisiana voted to replace the electric chair with a lethal injection of a chemical cocktail. One year later, administrators at Angola made what may be one of their poorest decisions ever. Inmate welders at Prison Enterprises, the commerce division of the Department of Corrections, were given the blueprints to build what they were told was a restraint table for mental patients. It did not take long before the men realized they were building a lethal injection table. "I'm a prisoner," one inmate told The Angolite. "Any one of us, any one of our family or children could receive the death penalty, could be on that gurney. I wouldn't feel good knowing that I had been the instrument of their death." The inmates refused to build the execution table and nearly three hundred men throughout the prison stopped working in protest. The Angolite chronicled the work stoppage, an obvious low point for the state. Then-Warden John Whitley is quoted as saying, "It was a bad decision. When Prison Enterprises told me they could handle the job, I assumed they had first checked with their inmate workers to see if they had any objections to doing it." Nearly seventeen years later, the magazine again marked the event in a six-page historical look back written by features writer John Corley.
The mere fact that the magazine exists within the prison is cause enough to acknowledge it is a cultural technology of control. It is not an independent magazine as some prison publications are, run by a free-world staff yet marketed to inmates and their families. Staff members recognize this, yet maintain the administrative objectives do not necessarily supersede their mission of advocacy. Neither does reporting on what inmates say is a total oversight by the mainstream press – the success stories. The Angolite provides a sense of hope to the prison population that translates to civility. That sense of hope is noticeably absent in most traditional media that prefer to follow the mantra, "If it bleeds it leads." Arguably, it is that sense of hope that prevents Angola from reverting to one of the bloodiest prisons in the United States. If inmates want to view the positive news as administrative half-truths, that is their prerogative, Angolite staffers state.

**Kerry Myers:** There's some PR that goes on. It's not our mission. It's the nature of any publication. Something happens you cover it. It's an event. But no, it's not a PR tool for the administration. I'm not saying that they probably would not like it (to be) in some cases (laughter) if that's what we did. But no, I mean if that's what they wanted we wouldn't do what we do. If that's all they wanted, we still wouldn't be able to do all the other things that we do. And so, no. It's the result sometimes of what goes on here. It's the natural progression sometimes. The result of what goes on because we cover the events that go on here, too. We're a chronicler of the events here. And so if that becomes PR, then it is what it is.

Ultimately, can The Angolite criticize or is the promise of an uncensored publication merely manipulative, administrative jargon?
**Kerry Myers:** …(T)here are security concerns, but we can criticize the system. We can criticize policy. It's not necessarily that it is our job to criticize because that's editorial and we uphold professional journalistic standards. We write objectively…We educate and inform and let the readers draw their own conclusions. Editorially we can criticize, and we do. We try not to get personal, and we know there is a line at some point that we won't cross.

That line, the men argue, is in line with standard journalistic ethics. It is worth noting that *The Angolite*, one of a triad of inmate-produced media at Angola, is even more of an oddity because it is news and not entertainment. KLSP radio station and LSP-TV appear more tightly controlled by the administration, an issue that will be addressed in later chapters. However, as Kerry points out, the magazine is obligated to cover prison happenings, and the administration obviously has a stake in planning and coordinating those events. The prison's rodeo is a prime example. It is the one constant that every *Angolite* staffer knows will be featured in the magazine.

Kyle Hebert, the magazine's religion writer and graduate of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at Angola says that despite his passion for the Lord, he knows he must adhere to mainstream journalistic standards and has to keep his own biases out of the stories he writes. Admitting that he is still learning the trade, Kyle works closely with Kerry and the other staffers when writing and editing his stories.

**Kyle Hebert:** And when I go and get in with these ministries, I already have a working relationship with them because they know me as a preacher, as a

---

168 The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) established a branch of its college at Angola in 1995. The Louisiana State Penitentiary is the only prison in the United States that offers inmates an on-site, college-level education. Accepted inmates can work toward an associates or bachelor's degree in Christian Ministry.
minister, but I just happen to have a camera. But I have to be very (un)biased. I have to go in with just the facts. I can't let my heart...when I'm with *The Angolite* I can't let my theology curve my morality. It's just the facts. I can't let my heart get in the story. Sometimes it's hard to do. It's a learning process. But I write just the facts, and a lot of times I have to pull myself back because I do so much study and I do so much with dealing with people that I want to get in the middle of it.

Beyond the writing craft, Kyle credits his work at *The Angolite* with helping him to sharpen his computer and interpersonal skills. Knowing that despite his incarcerated situation he is still in a better position than those serving life sentences, he uses the implicit influence he has over the inmate population to push himself further, hoping to one day continue combining religion and journalism in a free-world publication. "I'd do it from the perspective of the individual who has been behind bars, just never has read it from a book, but has lived it."

**Conclusion**

*The Angolite* magazine is not without its faults. Yes, it has more freedom than most every other prison publication in the United States, yet it is not without its critics, many of whom live within the confines of the actual penitentiary. Despite international acclaim for its advocacy on behalf of inmates' welfare and rights, some of Angola's men see the magazine as only a tool of the state, and in some instances, Warden Burl Cain himself. Certainly, propaganda leaches into *The Angolite*'s pages, yet I would argue any journalistic outlet would be hard-pressed to claim complete autonomy. The publication is, by all accounts, a tool of resistance as well as a dispositif of control that provides its creators with a certain degree of power and influence over the inmate population. In this
scenario, it would appear as if the state is willingly relinquishing shreds of power to the inmates, and realistically, such an argument would not be entirely erroneous. Warden Cain acknowledges that the magazine, in addition to the other inmate-produced media, is necessary to keep as many communication venues available as possible for disseminating necessary information.

For the men working with the magazine, there is a sense of purpose that comes from working in a position that carries with it a degree of respect and influence that would not necessarily be attainable with some of the other prison employment opportunities. Considering that free speech is a right that must often be abandoned upon entering prison, that an inmate might work in an arena that encompasses not only freedom of speech but also freedom of press, provides a connection to the free world that is ever so important to those serving life sentences. It makes the hope that is self-admittedly manufactured by the inmates and the inmate-media workers seem at times a bit less contrived, especially when those beyond the penitentiary acknowledge the work. Realistically, it is the free person who must actuate the change for which the inmate journalists advocate. Without a doubt, Angola's inmate population is the target audience of The Angolite, yet the importance of the free-world population to the publication and its creators cannot be ignored.
CHAPTER FIVE
CREATING CULTURE

It is easy to become lost in time at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. I would never insult the men by pretending to understand what it is like to be incarcerated there, to wake up every day to the same walls and sounds and smells. To even try would be wrong and patronizing. My time at Angola can be measured in hours, weeks and even months. Their time is better understood in terms of years and even decades, though some can tell you to the hour how long they have been locked up on The Farm. Yet even though my time at Angola was voluntary and I left the penitentiary on a daily basis and drove myself to my private, air-conditioned apartment roughly twenty-five miles away, time managed to stand still. Days ran together and it did not take long before I had forgotten exactly how long I had been in Louisiana. Eventually, I too, fell into a schedule. Every day a penitentiary employee escorted me from my vehicle parked at the prison entrance to the Main Prison complex where I signed in with a guard. Every day I provided the Classification Department\textsuperscript{169} with a general itinerary of my day. Everyday I waited at gates to be buzzed through to various areas of the prison. And every day I signed out of the prison and was escorted again by an employee to my vehicle at the prison's entrance.

Every so often, however, something happens at the penitentiary to disrupt the monotony. There are occasional concerts, lecturers, speakers – often religious-based – and club activities that serve to add diversity to the banality. There are also monthly televised boxing matches and weekly movies that draw large audiences to the television rooms. But even more highly anticipated are the events that happen only a few times per

\textsuperscript{169} Members of the Angola Classification Department served as general escorts during my time at the prison, typically only escorting me to and from the Main Prison complex, but occasionally giving me tours of the larger penitentiary.
year. Not unlike commencement activities in the free world, graduation from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is a grand event, filled with all the pomp and circumstance one might expect following years of studying and test taking. The penitentiary welcomes graduates’ families to attend, and the Main Prison Chapel all but overflows with supporters. This is not the only time Angola opens its gate to the public. For one weekend in the spring and four Sundays in October, people can pay ten dollars to witness the Angola Prison Rodeo – The Wildest Show in the South.\textsuperscript{170} Visitors feast on a selection of southern foods, purchase items from any of the dozens of inmate-craftsmen, and watch inmates compete in a variety of rodeo events.

Because of the number of inmates housed at Angola, not every man may attend the special activities. Therefore, the inmate-produced media play vital roles in fostering a sense of community among everyone and not simply a select few. This process is indicative of James Carey's ritual view of communication, addressed in detail in Chapter Nine. In "A Cultural Approach to Communication," Carey writes, "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs."\textsuperscript{171} Viewing communication in this light allows the idea of moral rehabilitation (and the benefits to those who subscribe to it) to be shared not only throughout the prison, but also by anyone who comes in contact with the media. Essentially, Warden Cain's philosophies are not only promoted, but also touted as successful, especially considering free-world media also attend these events. Such liberal media access is an effective public relations tool for the correctional system and, to some

\textsuperscript{170} For additional information, see \url{www.angolarodeo.com}.
degree, a reward for the inmates that allows them to display publicly that they are changed men.

**Graduation**

It is only my second day visiting the penitentiary, but as I drive along Highway 66, there appears to be considerably more traffic heading toward Angola rather than to town. I pull off to the right and into what eventually becomes my parking spot at the Prison Museum and glance across the street. It's 7:53 a.m. and there are already a few cars situated in the visitors' parking lot. Normally, Tuesdays are not visiting days, but today is different. An attractive middle-aged woman in a suit stretches as she exits her Chevy and looks toward the sky. She leans momentarily against her vehicle before glancing at her watch and retreating back into the car. She'll wait several hours before she is transported by bus to the Main Prison and then escorted to the Main Prison Chapel. Today is graduation day at Angola. Forty-four inmates are scheduled to receive associate's or bachelor's degrees from the New Orleans Theological Seminary's Angola Extension Center.

My tour guide from the prison's Classification Department warned me a day earlier that I should arrive early for my first official day of research at the penitentiary. He anticipated a lot of family would be arriving after 8 a.m., and if I could bypass that confusion, I would be lucky. I use my cell phone to call for my own escort to the Main Prison, and just less than thirty minutes later, I arrive at the inmate-built Main Prison chapel and am met by a flurry of activity. Inmates from the radio and television stations are almost entirely set up for the ceremony; one man appears to check camera angles as another secures a cord running along the floor with a piece of thick tape. A KLSP deejay
and soundman also set up an audio board amidst the chapel pews. The television station will record the ceremony but the radio station will also broadcast it throughout the prison complex. The men are quiet as they work, and have a distinct air of professionalism about them. So much so, that I am unaware that all are inmates until I am told so about an hour later.

The media workers are not the only ones working hard. More than forty men enter the chapel wearing clean blue jeans and tucked-in T-shirts or dress button down shirts and carrying black graduation gowns. Most very carefully lay the robes across their assigned pews and a few joke with each other as they try on their mortarboards. Having attended numerous graduations as a beginning journalist, I find there is very little different about this particular one. There are no handcuffs, no shackles, and no black-and-white striped uniforms. There are no armed guards and no lewd language. Instead, there is a brief rehearsal to show the graduates what to expect and do during commencement. The normalcy of everything is interrupted only when at 10 a.m. the inmates have to leave the chapel and line up for the daily count.

Maurice Rabalais, LSP-TV general manager and IT technical support specialist for the penitentiary, invites me in to the station's makeshift control room at the front of the prison chapel and introduces me to his crew. Though they are focused on production preparation, each says hello and shakes my hand. I am immediately taken aback by the apparent ages of the men. Most appear to be in their thirties, and being in that same age-range, I start to consider myself in their situation, but stop after a few seconds when the concept becomes too raw. The scenario becomes something I repeat dozens of times during – and after – my time at the penitentiary. The men are incredibly welcoming and
are eager for me to see them in action. David, the station's chief editor, encourages me to slip on a pair of headphones to hear how the crewmembers communicate with one another. I do, and the men seem pleased I am willing to step into their workspace.

Despite the relative calm in the control room, there is an underlying sense of nervousness mixed with tension, at least between David and Jonathan. David is graduating and Jonathan must man the editing board, a task he has never had to do. Rounding out the crew are Michael and Tyler on side cameras and Alex on the main camera set up on a platform at the rear center of the chapel. The men joke that Alex does not like being in the spotlight, a trait exemplified when he asks Chris to assume his job midway through the ceremony. Chris declines, and teases Alex about his affinity for wearing untucked T-shirts. "We are the media," Chris explains. "We have to look respectable." And they do, all clean shaven, freshly bathed and in neat and clean shirts and jeans, though Alex's gray T-shirt is untucked. Wearing regular clothes, and not stereotypic jumpsuits, is another way inmates are afforded a sense of dignity and normalcy.

Looking into the chapel, one can see a packed house with more than five hundred people, including hundreds of family members. David spends most of the morning with the television crew even though he is graduating. Part of his presence stems from honest dedication to the station and producing a quality product; another part stems from his concern that Jonathan might not have enough training on the board – or worse, that he does. Other graduates spend a few extra minutes with family and friends who have come to watch the ceremony. This is precious time considering visitation is largely a weekend – Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday – activity. Eventually, an inmate leads David's
mother and father into the small room at the front of the chapel. The family exchanges hugs with David and handshakes with the others before they return to the audience and David, to work.

Shortly before 11 a.m., the forty-three graduates file to their seats, marking the start of graduation. The group is one less because David remains with the television crew. Applause rings though the chapel and *Angolite* journalists, all wearing black *Angolite* T-shirts, snap photos with their cameras. Eventually, each graduate will have his graduation picture taken by *The Angolite*. The magazine was asked to shoot individual photos last year and continued the service because of what it means to the men. David continues to coach Jonathan in the control room. When a trio of inmates begins to sing, the two rush to find the men on the monitors. It is one of the only times the ceremony seems to be ahead of the crew. Mr. Rabalais, with a pile of his non-television, accreditation work to complete, checks periodically on his employees but primarily allows them to do what they need to do. The crew does not take advantage of his faith or trust and continues with a sense of professionalism that could rival any "street" crew.

Trust is just one of the benefits of working with the inmate-produced media. Food is another, more extrinsic benefit. By 12:15 p.m., hunger has set in with some of the men. Chris half-heartedly remarks that he is concerned there might not be enough food at the graduation reception because he has heard that only 450 sandwiches were prepared. The quip may sound petty, but any food beyond standard prison fare is a luxury for the men. *Angolite* Editor Kerry Myers has a saying: "I don't eat for taste, I eat for sustenance."

Still, the men continue work, stopping only occasionally to check the time or the status of the ceremony.
With less than thirty minutes left in the program, David has little choice but to relinquish his control over the board and join his classmates in the chapel. "How do you put on this dress?" he asks Chris as the black gown becomes caught on his head and shoulders. "I ain't never worn a dress before." "We've got a lady here," Chris responds, motioning toward me without missing a beat. A classification officer helps David and another inmate questions why he is not wearing his glasses. "I want to look pretty for the camera," David states, immediately drawing laughter from his cohorts for choosing the word "pretty." "I mean attractive," he clarifies. He leaves the makeshift control room and joins the rest of the graduates. Jonathan handles things seamlessly and continues to switch from camera to camera as the graduates are each called to the pulpit/stage to receive their diplomas, a book, and the Bible.

Under ordinary conditions, graduation ceremonies may not seem like a hot news item or major event. But to the men at Angola, graduation is a way to showcase to the public how they, and the prison's culture, have changed. The opportunity to interact with the public is a reward for good behavior. Graduating with a degree instills not only a sense of pride in the men and their families, but helps perpetuate (manufactured) hope inside the penitentiary. The men talk about ministering on the streets someday, but the majority has life sentences to serve. Pressed about this dichotomy, one of the men remarks that he clings to whatever sliver of hope exists because that is what gets him through each new day. Other inmates echo a similar sentiment. "Maybe I can learn enough in here that maybe I can use these broadcasting skills outside the walls of Angola," says KLSP deejay Donald Spencer. "During my incarceration, one of my goals is to learn as much as I can while I'm incarcerated." Does Donald have a life sentence?
"Yes ma'am. I was found guilty of second-degree murder. That's a mandatory life sentence, but that's what man says, not what God says."

Graduation and other prison programs also illustrate how Angola's media are used as surveillance tools, even in the hands of fellow inmates. Would it be possible for an inmate to accept contraband from a free person during such an event? Absolutely. Could an inmate use the occasion as a site for creating problems? Certainly. Yet these are the men who have bought fully into the goals of Cain's moral rehabilitation. These are educated individuals whose position as a Bible College graduate or inmate minister places them among the upper echelon on the inmate pay scale. Though the men would argue that it is their personal character, not the actual rules of the prison, that causes them to behave according to societal norms, one cannot dismiss the fact that there is an additional scrutinizing factor placed on them and that scrutiny is administered via other inmates. Added to the standard prison security are three video cameras and at least two film cameras constantly turned on the inmate crowd. Even in a relatively confined venue like the Main Prison chapel, inmates are unaware of exactly who is watching them and when. Thus, their conduct remains in check as they are ultimately controlled by the possibility of being caught by either a free person or fellow inmate.

The Rodeo

My October return trip to the Louisiana State Penitentiary had two purposes: to clarify points of research established from my first visit and to attend what has been dubbed, "The Wildest Show in the South." Angola's inmate rodeo occurs every Sunday in October and one weekend in the spring, typically April. The spectacle draws thousands of (free world) visitors to the penitentiary annually, exemplifying what one scholar
considers "contemporary pop culture's fascination with criminality." In addition to the rodeo, visitors can wander around the penitentiary's seventy-five hundred-seat, inmate-built arena, devour just about any southern delicacy imaginable from po-boys to jambalaya, and browse through an arts and crafts area that features everything from earrings, to paintings, to wooden rockers and benches. The items are all designed and made by inmates, who affectionately call their products "hobbycrafts." The arena replaces another stadium that held considerably fewer people.

Media outlets from across the globe descend on Angola to watch the inmates compete for bragging rights and prize money in a host of events including Convict Poker, Wild Cow Milking and Bull Riding. The inmates have no real training, which is supposed to increase the humor, although the event is not without its criticisms and critiques.

Melissa Schrift writes,

There is an implicit homoeroticism in Buddy Pickup that is difficult to ignore, and likely explains the event's popularity. One man clumsily mounts a horse behind another man, wraps his arms tightly around his partner's waist, their jerky movements to the finish line mimicking sexual thrusts. The name of the event, Buddy Pickup, and the notion of 'barebacking' (a colloquialism referring to unprotected sex) only add to the double entendre.

Schrift confirmed her suspicions with one of her guides at the rodeo who responded, "It's definitely not in your head. That's what it's all about, why it's so funny." Unfortunately, the public typically does not come to the rodeo to learn about the penitentiary or the men incarcerated there, Angolite journalist Jeffrey Dale Hilburn states. Inmates must have an

---

173 Ibid., 341.
exemplary disciplinary record to attend the rodeo, but the public does not come to see
disciplinary records; the public comes for the action.

**Jeffrey Dale Hilburn:** They come to see the guy get hit by the bull, or to buy that
jewelry box for ten dollars. They don't come to find out about the guy that made
that jewelry box, who's sending that money home to his kids, who goes out there
and works on the grass crew or whatever for eight hours a day and then he comes
in and uses that free time 'til he's about ready to fall asleep on his feet because his
wife is out of work right now and they're tryin' to keep their kid in school and
their kid in college, so he sends them money home. He goes to the kitchen three
times a day instead of … goin' to the store. And he buys state clothes 'cause he
don't wanna buy a thirty dollar pair of Levis and a thirty dollar pair of shoes. And
then he goes out there and stands at that thing and sells them jewelry boxes. They
don't know the story behind that ten dollars, why he needs it or why that other guy
is out there fightin' that bull to get that five hundred dollar chit.

Gates to the rodeo open at 9 a.m., though the actual rodeo does not begin until 2
p.m. Nevertheless, by 8:30 a.m., a bumper-to-bumper string of vehicles is parked along
Route 66 and a large "Rodeo Sold Out" sign is posted at the roadway's intersection with
Interstate 61. This is the event of events for Angola, an opportunity for the public and the
press to see just how okay the prison is. Everyone works at rodeo, from employees, to
inmates, to administration; no one is exempt. A barrage of media streams through the
Media Gate escorted by penitentiary guides. Some are local news outlets; others come
from national magazines. Some are independent freelancers or artists; and still others
traveled from destinations throughout the world – usually Europe – to attend. Proceeds
from the ten dollar per person ticket sales first cover rodeo expenses, with the remainder placed into the Inmate Welfare Fund that provides for items including educational and recreational supplies.

Angolite reporters and photographers are in the mix of things, interviewing guests as well as competitors. Though advocacy is the hallmark of the prison magazine, the journalists know that they are also the media of record for the penitentiary. The inmates and administration expect thorough coverage and many photos. For The Angolite staff, the rodeo is nothing new. Several of the men have been working with the magazine for so long, that they joke that there are only so many ways to approach the event. To make things easier, they rotate coverage duties and alternate who will write the main story. Considering the frequency of the rodeo, there is plenty of work to go around. That work, according to Kerry, is done without added pay. Often, inmates who work the rodeo are entitled to rodeo pay, about fifteen dollars for the weekend. The Angolite staffers, who also design the rodeo program, are not included in that bunch, purportedly because it is part of their job.

As second nature as the rodeo is to The Angolite staff, it is that new, in one sense, to LSP-TV. No doubt, the crew has attended – and even participated in – the rodeo before, but now they are behind cameras, documenting the event for posterity's sake. In the past, a professional studio made a documentary on the rodeo that is sold in the prison's museum. Mr. Rabalais hopes that eventually his crew will be proficient enough that their video coverage can be sold instead. I arrive at the complex shortly after 8 a.m., but the television crew has already been there for at least an hour. As with the graduation ceremony, the men must run wires, check monitors and test audio before the

\footnote{Visit the Louisiana State Penitentiary Museum at \url{www.angolamuseum.org}.}
crowd arrives. The men also have to prepare their work areas. Again, the men create a makeshift studio, this time in a corner behind the VIP seating section. The VIP section, situated directly above the chutes, is where Warden Cain and his guests watch the rodeo.

The men work fast but accurately and complain only about the lack of adequate space for their equipment. David hangs tarps and boards to block an open space behind the equipment. The donated equipment is too expensive to ruin, and though Mr. Rabalais handles most of the repairs himself, potentially too expensive to fix. The tarps and wood will hold off any rain should it decide to storm, which it does about halfway through one of the rodeo Sundays. Mr. Rabalais hopes at some point to build a permanent booth in the same spot. A permanent location would allow him to leave some equipment at the rodeo grounds and not have to transport it back and forth from the Main Prison. He gets one step closer to that goal when someone tells him they have a door with a window and lock that he can use. Once the general equipment is organized, the camera operators begin readying their cameras. Tyler and Michael will film the rodeo from prefixed staging sights around the rodeo arena. Alex, who has a natural talent for video and an unflappable ability to maintain a steady shoulder while shooting, will wander the arena to pull in more interesting shots and angles.

Alex has been with LSP-TV since its inception in 2006, and has an innate ability for the work. As an inmate minister, he works with newly arrived inmates, but unquestionably, he could work alongside any professional videographer and hold his own. "He's a rock," Mr. Rabalais says, describing his skills. David too, has a natural ability for editing, especially considering his past computer experience is extremely limited. His problem, which both he and Mr. Rabalais recognize, is his stubbornness and
perfectionism. As David makes some last minute changes to the editing equipment, Mr. Rabalais compliments him, saying he has enough talent to work for NBC. David shrugs off the praise, keeping his eyes on the equipment. Mr. Rabalais tells him to take the compliment. "What does it matter?" David says, stopping from his work and looking at the tarp that is slowly starting to sag. "That'll never happen anyway." Mr. Rabalais, perhaps realizing the sting of what was supposed to be encouragement, turns away and busies himself with work. There is no more discussion on the subject. Patrik Jonsson, of the Christian Science Monitor, describes the rodeo as the epitome of Angola's manufactured hope, a term I hear used by several of the men. The aforementioned dialogue illustrates what happens when the manufacturing of that hope is recognized.

Alex's first television experience came when he volunteered to be a part of the crew and was thrown into recording the April 2006 rodeo with minimal experience.

**Alex:** All the inmate ministers had a meetin' with Warden Cain, so I was askin' around what the meeting was about. I heard he was going to ask for some volunteers for the TV station, every trusty. … I typed a letter up anticipating he was going to ask. So I sat in the front row and as soon as he asked, as soon as the television station came up, I said here. He said, 'Warden Vannoy, we have our first cameraman right here.' So that was the Friday before the April rodeo, the Thursday or Friday before. But he didn't say this rodeo was going to be filmed. He was saying we're workin' on it, in a couple of weeks. So I also paint in the hobbyshop, so I'm setting up my work at the rodeo and (a warden) came around lookin' for me. 'Look, Warden Cain wants you to film the rodeo.' … It's been

---

hands on, OJT – on the job training – since. That was with donated equipment from a station out of Lafayette.

Like most of the television crew, Alex is serving a life sentence and has gained trusty status at the penitentiary. Working at the television station and specifically at the rodeo allows him to be productive despite his incarceration. The recognition he receives by the administration and free-world people helps put a name to his Department of Corrections (DOC) number and affords a sense of dignity and self-respect. Without a name, Alex is little more than a unit, just one of 5,108 men at the penitentiary. With a Class A Trusty status and a video camera in hand, however, he is more than a body and even more than a name. He is a person with a job and with influence over the other inmates. Earning trust, gaining respect, and doing quality work now, he feels, will prepare him for something greater in the future.

Alex: I'm in prison. I can cry over it for the rest of my life or ... If what the Bible says is true, then this is nothin'. If you can measure on a ruler, if life is eternal and you can put a start and an end on a ruler, then life on earth would just be a millimeter to what's to come. And I believe that there is a heaven, so this is nothin'. Just a snap of the fingers. ... Look, you're in prison. So what? Have that I-don't-care attitude. Don't give up. Don't just roll over and die.

As a crowd of people floods the penitentiary arena on rodeo day, it is almost difficult to discern who is who, but uniformed and plain-clothes guards are stationed throughout the area. Alex and David grab a camera and microphone and head into the crowds to interview patrons. They blend easily with the other media that are doing virtually the same thing. Alex picks out a few people to speak with and David approaches
them for an interview. Despite being in prison for more than a decade, the pair dispels stereotypes of inmates lacking social skills. David interacts well with the crowd and keeps the interviews light and lively; Alex makes sure to film a cross-section of the visitors, including men and women, children and adults. I hear several people ask each other "were those inmates?" once their interviews are complete. It is a compliment to both the men and the penitentiary. The two serve as examples of what moral rehabilitation is about.

Chris, LSP-TV's primary on-air personality, has received similar compliments in the past. Prior to his incarceration, he worked as a radio deejay and has the broadcast pipes to prove it. His stellar voice landed him the prestigious position of being a substitute announcer for the Angola rodeos for roughly four years. According to Chris, he is the only inmate that holds such a position.

Chris: (Y)ou have Mike Mathus who is the main announcer and he is known all over the United States. He's like the voice of rodeo, real big name. He makes a lot of money doing what he does, so it's unique to be able to work with him and around him. And then you have Robbie Thomas. You always have two announcers at the rodeos. You have the guys on the horse who is the main announcer, and then you have the back announcer or the announcer in the VIP section, and he's the one that actually opens the radio up. And he'll give the times and scores and different things. He also does the advertisements and the sponsors for the rodeo, and so they go back and forth, each one of 'em. … Usually every year, one or two of the rodeos, Mike Mathus can't make it 'cause he is pre-
obligated to other obligations and then I will step up and take one of those positions.

The opportunity to work alongside free-world professionals is not something Chris takes lightly. He does not have a life sentence and hopes to use LSP-TV as a way to keep his announcing skills current and perhaps to forge a relationship with someone who could possibly offer up a job upon his release. Even those with life sentences crave the chance to "meet someone who may know someone who may know someone" to help them get a clemency hearing or a new attorney to plead their case, or a letter of reference for a sentence reduction.

The rodeo itself is a phenomenal event and every bit the spectacle that one might imagine. Whether a fan or not, it is almost impossible not to become caught up in the roar of the crowd or the drama created by the announcers. Yet for The Angolite and television crew, the rodeo is just another event. They may watch the rodeo, but only from behind the lens of a camera or for note-taking purposes. And just like any other journalist, they remain as detached from the event as they can. They do not cheer for their buddies or heckle their foes, and they do not sit in the stands or overly fraternize with the guests. For most of them, the rodeo is not the spectacle that it is for outsiders, and why should it be? If an inmate has spent ten years at Angola, it is likely he will have witnessed five dozen rodeos, for even those who cannot attend the event in person can hear it over KLSP radio, read it in The Angolite, or now can see it on LSP-TV's Channel 21.

The Angola rodeo began in 1965 as entertainment for the inmates but has clearly morphed into something much greater. In 1967, the penitentiary welcomed the public on a limited basis and by 1970, a small arena had been constructed. As the rodeo gained in
popularity, the arena continued to grow out of necessity. Eventually, the administration ordered an entirely new arena be built, and in 2000, the current arena was christened. With Angola's gates open to not only the free world, but outside media, one would assume the prison has little to hide. From a media relations standpoint, it is a strategic move. If the prison did have skeletons, surely it would not invite thousands of people to travel its grounds and interact with its inmates. As a scholar, one could argue the rodeo epitomizes a number of things, from manufactured hope to the commodification of prisoners, to an alteration and reversal of Bentham's panopticon. It is the latter argument that has a direct correlation to the media, inmate-produced or not. By inviting free-world media to the rodeo, not only is the prison community being watched, but the visions are being disseminated so that others may witness the conduct of 'deviants.'

Not all inmates choose to – or are allowed to – attend the rodeo. Those with disciplinary infractions or those who have yet to divorce from the "criminal mentality" remain at their respective prison camps. Yet even those with limited access at the rodeo, those men who are kept behind locked fences, know they are being watched by someone. That the *someone* may or may not be a prison guard is inconsequential. The mere fact that they are being watched is enough to serve as a reminder of proper conduct, or as Foucault might say, docility. If inmates choose to breach that docility, they immediately will be reprimanded and punished.

The idea of media's relationship to the panopticon becomes more complicated when inmates are producing the media. When an *Angolite* or LSP-TV staffer is the individual behind the camera, the theory of Bentham's panopticon is reversed, placing inmates as the source by which others' conduct is guided and as a source for monitoring
the law (or state) itself.\textsuperscript{176} Thus, the inmates themselves become integral players in governing the prison. This role intensifies at an event like the rodeo where the men involved with Angola's media serve not only as models for other prisoners, but as the governing eyes watching the public. From behind their cameras, they become surveillance on the society, whose members alter their conduct almost immediately upon seeing any media.

Though theories that intersect surveillance and governance with a southern rodeo indeed provide an eclectic look at a popular topic,\textsuperscript{177} Angola's men see the event from a much more practical standpoint. The annual event serves as a chance to make money, either through selling hobbycraft or competing, and as a potentially persuasive pulpit for convincing Louisiana politicians to change the state's prison system.

\textbf{Jonathan:} Since Warden Cain has come here, a lot of progress has been made. He's done a lot of things. He's a forward thinker. He sees potential and jumps on it and tries to make things happen. The rodeo, the rodeo arena. We had that arena, which was here for forever. He built a new arena, safer, he expanded it, bigger. It draws more people, advertising. Even with all of that, some of the guards are all upset. It just shouldn't be. It's a prison. But his goal is to show this was the bloodiest prison, this is a maximum security prison; however, there aren't a bunch of animals up here. You can walk among them. Nobody's running off. They're selling their hobbycraft, making food for ya, taking pictures, playing with your

\textsuperscript{176} When legal problems arise with the penitentiary and/or its employees, they are not unnoticed by \textit{The Angolite}, although they are not typically reported, according to staff members, until entire investigations are complete. This helps avoid rumor and speculation. For example, in the September/October 1980 issue of \textit{The Angolite}, the staff reported on the arrest of a security officer who was found in possession of several bags of marijuana.

\textsuperscript{177} Research on aspects of surveillance is a hot topic in a post-September 11, 2001, world, especially considering technological advancements and concerns over privacy infractions.
kids. Everybody's having a good time. So, what does this do? It lets the world see that this can be done. Guys can change. So legislators, what are you going to do? Are you going to keep all these harsh sentences, these life sentences. You got all these guys ready to create a bottleneck here of guys ready to go. It's up to lawmakers now to do something about it. If it keeps us in the limelight like that, the forefront, all these productive Angola people, somebody's going to ask the question, so why are they still there? What are you doing here? Why won't ya'll let 'em go. … You're lockin' all these people up down there and you're keepin' 'em forever. Why?

Why Angola?

A magazine, radio station and television station run by inmates; a four-year, on-site college; and an annual rodeo that draws tens of thousands of visitors all behind the gate of a maximum-security state prison. Why at Angola? Why the deep south? Why in an area where some residents still fly the Confederate flag and believe the North was wrong in the War Between the States? First, one cannot overlook that the majority of Angola's men are lifers. These are not men with eighteen-month sentences who serve their time only to return to prison three weeks after being released. These are men who are in prison for the long haul. For thousands of Angola's men, the penitentiary is their permanent address. Therefore, it could be argued that rehabilitative methods, whatever they may be, have a chance to work on the men. The revolving door that exists in many prisons is noticeably missing at Angola, which has instead a locked door with no key, resulting in an ironic and cruel twist of fate for the men. It is ironic because Angola's rehabilitative methods do appear to work, though the vast majority can only show their
successes to the public from inside the prison complex because of Louisiana's life-means-life laws.

Yet one could equally argue that a prison filled with lifers is a very dangerous place. With little to lose, why not act like an animal? Why not greet each day prepared to fight? These were questions I asked repeatedly during my stay – to myself and to anyone else who would listen. I learned that manufactured hope means a lot and purpose, even more. *The Angolite*, radio and television stations, as well as many of the other inmate employment opportunities, give the men purpose and a chance to "be a man" and "make a difference."

**Kerry Myers:** (Working at *The Angolite*) is what I want…to me here, this is the thing…it lets me use what I was trained for, it keeps me sane, it keeps me involved in the current in here and in the world. It challenges me on a daily basis in a whole bunch of ways, from editing and writing. It gives me an appreciation for the skills some of these guys have, which amazes me. And I know how good they are, and it still amazes me every time I edit something they do. I wouldn't want to do anything else here, period. I just want to do this someplace else.

**Jonathan:** …Alex mentioned putting a face with the number. This particular job, not just this one, but *The Angolite* along with the radio station, you have to be of a certain character because you're around a lot of the upper echelon of the prison – from Warden Cain on down. So you don't want to come over here with the prison mindset. It's not to elevate myself in any way, but it's true. The people you come in contact with, you have to carry yourself a certain way. When you're recognized as a person who carries himself 'as a person' it's a good thing. As you well know,
inmates in prison have a certain stigma attached to them, people expect you to behave in a certain manner, and when they recognize that you don't, they start extending privileges to you, and it's a very good feeling. It humanizes you again, 'cause prison is a dehumanizing embarrassment. It humanizes you and makes you feel as if you have some type of purpose.

**Robin Polk:** It's experience that I've never had, and I see how a radio station operates. I take all of this in, 'cause hopefully one day I'll be able to get out, and I'll have experience, not a degree or anything, but I'll have hands-on experience. If someone talks to me on technical terms, I'll know what they're talkin' about, same thing with music. I never had in my life touched a computer … so now I got a little experience. I have an understandin' but I never took a course in my life.

Though Warden Cain no doubt has his faults – he is not God, nor does he pretend to be – my purpose at the Louisiana State Penitentiary was not necessarily to uncover them. My goal was to feature the men of Angola and learn how the media are not only helping them, but helping them to help others. I did, however, want to learn why it works at Angola, and why if it is working, it is not happening elsewhere.

**Chris:** Well, I'm gonna tell you why it's here and nowhere else, and it's because of one person. And this is not flattery; I wouldn't care if he were standing here or he wasn't, cause this is the truth. It's because of Warden Cain. The guy has a vision. And he has vision. He can see an opportunity and he's got the guts to be able to make it happen. He's got the people working for him that he can say, look. I think this is a good idea, and now they think that it's a good idea, and so they will make somethin' happen that's nowhere else. One of the reasons is that Angola
has such a platform. It is world renowned. It's not just Louisiana known, it's known all over the world. There are literally people who come from Finland, Norway, Germany and they attend these rodeos that we have and we've been on ESPN and a lot of television stations or shows, and so he has a great platform…

Angola also has its faults, and the administration recognizes that. Learning about – and from – those faults is part of the reason *The Angolite* is beneficial to the institution as a whole. At times, the magazine is controversial and does print stories with which some people may disagree. But in other instances, a staff writer may alert the administration to something it was unaware of. "If the Angolite writes something and I don't agree with it, I'll tell 'em," Darrel Vannoy, deputy warden of security, said. "But if they're right, I'll try to look at that side of it and fix it. So I think there's some mutual respect on both sides there." Warden Cain shares a similar vision and sees things like the rodeo and media as helping inmates to be held accountable for their actions. If an inmate misbehaves, his privileges will be taken away. If *The Angolite* staff prints lies or innuendo, there are repercussions. "What's important is, and it's part of rehabilitation, is to be accountable," Cain says. "And that's something the press needs to do themselves. … (T)hey know the integrity that we reflect and that is the rehabilitation. It's morality, and we don't mind the truth. That's why you can get in."

**Conclusion**

Opening the penitentiary for such events as graduation ceremonies and the annual prison rodeo allows the public to see for itself that many of the men at Angola are being rehabilitated and tax dollars are being put to good use. Regarding the rodeo, Dennis Shere, author of *Cain's Redemption*, writes:
Angola's rodeo is the most ambitious effort of all to show society that in many respects inmates harbor the same desires to win respect and achieve success as anyone else. At the same time, the rodeo allows many of the prison's inmates to see that the barrier separating them from society is not impenetrable. Though they may never again live as free people, they can at least connect with the outside world a few times a year.¹⁷⁸

Whether the visitors realize it or not, their presence at the penitentiary plays a direct role in the success of Angola's men, allowing them to take part in a sort of community government. According to Suzan Ilcan and Tanya Basok, "...community government involves establishing relations between the values of communities and the responsibility individual citizens have to these values."¹⁷⁹ This concept exists at a micro-level within Angola and its own citizen-inmates as well as at the macro-level beyond the penitentiary, involving outside agencies and the public at-large. The result is a focus on responsibilization, where governance and control responsibilities undergo a neo-liberal shift from an emphasis on the state to an emphasis on the self,¹⁸⁰ illustrating governmentality in the truest sense.

This move toward responsibilization, which will be addressed more fully in Chapter Eight, is not exclusive to Angola, nor is it new to the realm of criminal justice and penology. David Garland lists the concept as one of the strategies utilized by British penal systems to combat high crime rates and limitations of criminal justice

organizations. He writes that responsibilization "involves the central government seeking to act upon crime not in a direct fashion through state agencies...but instead by acting indirectly, seeking to activate action on the part of non-state agencies and organizations."181 The concept has also been used successfully in areas outside of penology, particularly with those volunteer groups with social justice issues as a priority.182

Cain recognizes that he alone cannot create a morally rehabilitated prisoner. Thus, he calls upon the expertise from myriad of groups to invest in the men as human beings, not only with money, but with their own knowledge and strengths. Even the average person who attends the annual rodeo has the potential of being as important to the maintenance of the prison as an entity like the Bible College is. Whereas the Bible College assists in the self-reflection process for the inmates and provides the means (or at least one way) to achieving moral rehabilitation, the average citizen's visit to the penitentiary serves as an indication to the men that their behavior changes and rehabilitation process are not going unnoticed. In fact, Angola officials quite literally place the men on display in spectacular fashion – and publicize widely that they are doing so – to prove that the men have earned the trust of the penitentiary administration and staff. This is most evident at the rodeo, but equally present during public tours of the penitentiary where selected inmates are called upon not only to speak specifically on the facets of prison life, but also to answer openly questions the visitors might have.

---

182 Ilcan and Basok, "Community Government," 129-144.
CHAPTER SIX

KLSP 91.7 FM: THE INCARCERATION STATION

Visitors traveling the twenty-mile stretch of state Route 66 that leads to Angola's front gate can actually hear the sprawling prison before they see it. The 100-watt KSLP-91.7 FM, touted as the only FCC-licensed radio station to operate from within a prison, reaches several miles beyond the penitentiary grounds, offering guests and some scattered nearby residents a taste of Southern gospel and preaching. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that KLSP's audience is the inmates. While other stations' formats may be soft rock or country, Angola's in-house station is all rehabilitation all the time. The overwhelming majority of music airtime is spent on gospel and other Christian music, as well as preaching. However, there are special segments, scattered throughout the week, that allow for jazz, blues, and other religious programming, including time on Fridays for the Muslim population. And though KLSP is popular among all the inmates, it is those inmates confined to the cellblocks that the administration is particular interested in.

According to Warden Cain, inmates in the cellblocks, as opposed to dormitories, do not always have the same opportunity to attend religious services. Furthermore, considering Angola has fourteen hundred cells, guests preaching in the cellblocks cannot feasibly reach every man. By broadcasting information, particularly religious material, Cain's ideals for moral rehabilitation can be reinforced to those in even the most isolated areas of the prison, including Death Row, where personal contact is limited. At the most basal level, the broadcasts are entertaining and provide a mediated form of human communication – however limited – to many men. On a deeper, subconscious level, the
messages simultaneously serve as a potential impetus for change for those men engaging in moral self-reflection, a critical first step on the pathway to subjectification.

That the individuals who are delivering the messages are prisoners cannot go without discussion. Certainly, (free) prison employees or an outside entity could maintain KLSP. However, I argue that inmate deejays are an absolute necessity for creating an inmate buy-in to the idea of rehabilitative messages through the radio and for fostering a sense of community. "(I)t's good to hear the voice of my peers, to see them in that light," said one inmate not involved with any of Angola's media. "They are professionals."

Professionalism creates something for others to aspire to, but it also helps establish a strong sense of community at the prison. Inmate deejays regularly give 'shout outs' to dorm mates or other men who may write in to the station, thereby creating a sense of ownership among the inmate population. Sirvoris "Shaq" Sutton, who has been featured in The New York Times because of KLSP, says pulling information from everyday prison life helps the deejays better connect with their target audience. The more the deejays connect, the more feedback they receive from the inmates.

Sirvoris "Shaq" Sutton: I get mail from all around this Farm. Guys write in and say, 'Shaq, I appreciate that man. Thank you so much. Would you play such-and-such for me? I really love your show.' Some guys in lockdown areas write and say, 'Man I don't know how I would make it through lockdown without you, man. Thank you. Thank you.' And so you begin to understand your value, especially in terms of this job and what this job is really all about. It's about uplifting people and keeping the morale and understanding. Warden Cain has a saying that he likes

---

to say about Angola and what has happened here. The change at Angola, he calls it moral rehabilitation, because if you treat people like people they're more apt to act like real people.

The deejays represent 'one of their own' at the penitentiary. They are inmates who worked in the fields, lived in the cellblocks, and now have subjectified themselves. As a result, they serve as carriers of the institutional values of the penitentiary. "It's some of us who are doing it," adds another inmate not affiliated with the media. The forty-two-year-old gospel music lover has been at Angola for eighteen years "If they can do that, then we can do it, too. That's a great feeling that you can accomplish something like that in a maximum-security prison. I don't think you're going to find many prisons, maximum-security prisons, that allow these types of things." By accepting the philosophies of Cain's moral rehabilitation, inmate deejays have the ability to govern not only themselves, but fellow prisoners, too. This allows institutional surveillance to be more efficient and security, more focused.

In reality, inmates governing inmates has been a longstanding tradition at Angola; however, in the past, such policing was done through rifles and not reverence. Warden Cain too, recognizes the impact the men have on one another.

**Warden Cain:** They're influencing one another. And one might say, I'm going to be a disc jockey someday. I wanna work at the radio station. I'm gonna do this; I'm gonna do that; I'm gonna be a trusty. I wanna do good. You gotta branch out to improve and change your evil ways. And they grabbed it. Some didn't, but most did. So the ones that did, I mean, that's good. I can use my security more effectively on the ones who didn't. I don't have to worry about these others too
much, just keep 'em straight. This made it a piece of cake. It was so simple. I don't know why it took so long for us to figure it out.

Warden Cain could simply utilize disciplinary (and punishment) measures for controlling the inmates, yet his statements indicate a definite concern for the long-term security of the penitentiary. He recognizes that not all men respond to the same behavioral control mechanisms. Therefore, he instead looks to the population as a whole and affords the men the freedom to govern themselves and one another. Of course, those who do not respond to such self-regulation are subjected to more disciplinary (and again, punishment) measures, including cell restrictions and solitary confinement.

The governing power afforded to some inmates is not lost on those select men who see their roles as purposeful, within the context of the prison, and practical, in the hope that they may someday leave Angola and hold a similar job on the street.

**Keith "K-Fresh" Alexander:** I think that the opportunity is great to be able to have an influence into other people's lives. As a minister, I have to realize that the things I do, it's not about me. It's about the experiences I have accumulated and utilize those experiences to help others. So how can I do that? Provide a service to other guys. … To the other guys, I think what it does for a lot of guys is makes them realize that this is not a place that is just thrown back in time. It has some amenities; it has some good points to it. It has some things you can look at and say there's opportunity there if you want it. I can work in the field for the rest of my time here or I can get a better job and maybe one day work at the radio station.
Carlwyn Turner: I think it helps out a lot because it gives the guys, the population, a drive, really. In my case, it gave me a drive to want to become (a deejay). So as they sit back and hear guys who are also in the same situation as they are, it creates an interest. It inspires, of course you always have the negative side.

Robin Polk: The music and this here have helped me cause I learned patience, dedication and social skills. … If I have to be here for the rest of my life, guess what? That's where I'll be, and … I'm content, not satisfied. I long, hunger, to be free, but if I have to be here, my mind is going to be the same, all the time. I can go out there and function in society, and I believe I could help others, too. That's the way I feel.

There is also a level of normalcy created by the radio station and Angola's other inmate-produced media. That normalcy, I argue, plays an integral role in maintaining civility and security at the prison. Instead of treating the men like animals in cages and thereby forcing them to respond like caged savages, Angola's administration provides its inmates with opportunities to better themselves. Some of the inmates, like those working with the inmate-produced media or those involved with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, have taken advantage of those opportunities and have reaped both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits such as: office space, which translates into highly coveted privacy; trust, which can provide for leaving the penitentiary complex without handcuffs or shackles; and access, which equates to the right to interact regularly with prison administration as well as politicians and other high-ranking penitentiary guests. Although there remains a definite hierarchy between the inmates and the administration, the
wardens must afford those inmates who have earned it a certain level of trust, if for no other reason than to judge the sincerity of the inmates' shift from immoral or amoral behavior to a morally based one.

**Warden Cain:** We want to save victims. Our name is corrections. We want to correct. We care about rehabilitation here. We're not warehousing inmates. Now some, I can't change. Some are just mean. I just gotta leave them in the cells until they see the light. … If I can trust them, they've earned it. That's the part of rehabilitation. I can rehabilitate, but if I don't ever trust you and give you little tests, and say okay fly now, then it's a farce. Like a kid – you have to finally let him take the car and go out on a date. You gotta trust he's not going to speed. You've got to trust that you've trained him to go out and do good. He's rehabilitated. In that case, he's trained. In this case, we've changed their life.

They're rehabilitated. They want to do good. Like the alcoholic, he's said I'm not going to drink anymore, so let's trust him. They've decided they're going to change. Let's give them a chance. If they don't, we can reign 'em in. And if they do the bad stuff, it's not going to wreck this prison. We're going to reign it right back around. Our security, what you see here is that we're not oppressive.

Even with Warden Cain's full backing, there are still those who do not support the inmate-produced media or its messages. Some – certainly not all – penitentiary employees see the media as luxuries the men should not have and the freedoms as something not warranted. The idea of autonomy flies against the conservative ideologies of hard time for prisoners, though the dissension is subtle. Less restrained are the inmates' complaints that focus primarily on the variety of programming. Because music is
screened and censored before going to the radio station, song selection is limited as is music genre. For example, traditional rap, as opposed to Christian rap, is all but non-existent at KLSP, forcing inmates to turn to outside radio stations. Radio, like television, serves as an escape mechanism for the men, and because of this, some inmates purposefully avoid KLSP because it *is* inmate produced. Hearing fellow inmates as deejays only serves to reinforce the realization that one is in prison.

Though inmates are willing to criticize quietly the radio and television stations, *The Angolite* is largely without reproach – or the Christian underpinning. The religiosity of the broadcast outlets concerns a portion of the inmates whether they are religious or not. However, because Christianity and Angola's institutional ideologies are seen, at least to inmates, as one in the same, one could argue that dissension is more prevalent than it appears because the men are reluctant to publicly renounce or resist that which ultimately controls them.

**Inmate 3:** (The radio station) ain't my speed, what I like to listen to. I like a lot of old songs. I listen to a little rap, not the hard rap. They have clean rap. You ain't gonna hear rap on there. … My personal thing … I feel like if you allow these guys who are spinning the records to be themselves, they're good people. I know 'em. I think they can play better music, but they're only going to play what the administration let 'em play. I think it's messed up. … I think they should let them express who they really are. Don't be trying to monitor them.

Of course, there are those inmates who have not at all bought into the institutional ideologies, or at minimum do not wish to appear as if they have. Appearance and reputation are more important in prison than in the free world, especially to those
individuals wishing to maintain the hardcore convict imagery. Resistance and rebellion equate to an (artificial) sense of power, but are one of the few things over which inmates can have control. Just as a bully finds it 'cool' to belittle the school principal, one fifty-nine-year-old inmate and three-time visitor to Angola takes every opportunity to verbally attack Warden Cain and any of the 'so-called luxuries' or freedoms available to the inmates. Yet there is considerable thought behind the tirade, and some arguments made, particularly religious indoctrination, have been previously made by outside groups. Ultimately, one cannot argue with the man. Indeed, the religious programming of the radio and television stations is purposeful.

Inmate B: (KLSP is) a total waste of money. What does it do? I mean, they got Burl Cain's propaganda on there, like with the television station, where they have propaganda. Have you looked at the TV station, Channel 21? All it is is pro-administration. They want to try to bring everything into a Christian format, but I believe in the Constitution. I am a Marine. I fought for the constitution, the flag and this country. I believe in the separation of church and state, though I am a Christian. I do believe the two should be separated. Don't try to impose it on my government. They're just trying to promote religion here. You know? And he does it to control the prison.

Religion and Radio

It's mid-June at Angola, Louisiana, which means one thing: it's hot. With the temperature upwards of ninety degrees and with the humidity pushing the temperature toward one hundred degrees, nothing happens too quickly. Industrial fans circulate stale

---

184 KLSP, like the other inmate-produced media at Angola, is not taxpayer-funded and relies primarily on monetary and in-kind donations. The Angolite is largely self-sufficient because of its $20 subscription fee.
dormitory air and inmates keep to a saunter as they move from place to place. Beads of sweat dot the foreheads of those guards who must monitor the gates on the outside walk as their dark uniforms stick to their perspiring bodies. At the radio station, "Goldie," an on-again-off again KLSP disc jockey since 1989 and Angola resident for thirty-four years, pauses briefly from gathering albums to address his radio audience.

**Goldie:** How many of you out there today are lifting up your hands? It's twenty minutes to the hour of 3. KLSP 91.7-FM, the station that kicks behind the bricks. Goldie got the Holy Ghost Gospel Train. The Holy Ghost and me are chuggin' it on down the tracks, but stay tuned. We got a whole lot of good programming comin'. So doncha go nowhere.

Dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, Goldie is cool – literally and metaphorically – despite the blazing sun. At fifty-five years old, he is an old-school deejay, preferring to spin records and put on a show that includes his own messages and lingo instead of adhering to a computerized play list. He boasts that he is the only KLSP deejay currently licensed by the FCC and takes pride in sending inmates "back in the day" when singers like Sam Cooke were king. Goldie knows firsthand the perseverance it takes to become a deejay – it took three years after he initially applied before he joined the ranks. And, he knows that the privileges afforded to him can be taken away at any point, as they were in 2002 when he "got into a little somethin'," which he declined to address, that forced him to leave the radio station for a time. The job has its obvious benefits – cool air, privacy, and a television set – set at the moment to Martha Stewart's talk show. Still, there are pressures that are sometimes difficult for others to recognize.
Goldie: It's an easy job. It is a job that carries with it a certain level of high trust, okay? Trust by the administration. As you can see, we're virtually unchaperoned, unsupervised, so there has to be a level of trust. So what happens is you get time to yourself. You can write, you can study. We have a few conveniences, and it takes you away from the normal, mundane, monotony of the penitentiary. You know, it fills out. When you're doing deejay work, whatever you're selling across the radio, it is beneficial in that, if I'm doin' something fun…it can take (inmates) back. If they're listening to the radio station, and having fun, they're identifying with, they're less likely they'll get into something. It's beneficial to everybody.

Like several other deejays, Goldie is a graduate of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, an aspect of his life that carries over into his work at the radio station. The seminary is just one of many smaller institutions or institutionally sponsored programs that exist within the penitentiary and work synergistically to modify, control and maintain behavior. Other programs like the Malachi Dads, which was established to better relationships between children and their incarcerated fathers; vocational/technical education offered by the Louisiana Technical College; Dale Carnegie courses; Students of Islam; and the Louisiana Juvenile and Young Adult Program, which focuses on helping troubled youth, also aid in altering behavior. By doing so, the programs provide the tools and set the framework that allow inmates to govern themselves and one another. This stands in stark contrast to more traditional panoptic visions for controlling inmates, where prisoners lack the autonomy to participate truly in their own governance through subjectification.
Instead of relying on one dispositif of security, as is the case with Bentham's panopticon, the series of interrelated institutions and programs afford the inmates a veritable menu of options from which they may educate themselves to become morally rehabilitated. Thus, if one man does not desire to graduate from the NOBTS, that does not mean he cannot effectively engage in self-governance. His subjectification and moral rehabilitation may instead come through working with the American Red Cross or through the penitentiary's hospice program, considered "the model for all prison hospice programs" by the National Prison Hospice Association.

Unlike at *The Angolite*, where even recent NOBTS graduate Kyle Hebert must separate his pontificating from his writing to ensure unbiased reporting, religion plays a major role at KLSP. "When it first started (in 1986) … the emphasis wasn't as much on religion," said Deputy Warden Richard Peabody. "That was part of the program, but not as much. Over the years it's gone more toward being a religious radio station." The deejays do not dispute the station has a major religious component to it, but they maintain that the reasons their audience listens vary from person to person.

**Goldie:** It's a means of entertainment. It's a means of having something that they can identify with as being theirs. It's not mine, it's not the other brothers' who work here. Warden Cain is over everything, but to the prisoners, this is *their* station. This is something they can identify with. For example, they write letters, they have favorite deejays, they write a letter saying would you all play this song? To hear their name called over the radio, they say man, you called my name.

**Keith Alexander:** Guys in the cellblocks write letters that say, 'I enjoy your program, please play this for me next week when you come back on. You done a

---

185 *The Angola Story.*

157
good job.' … I have two letters that I have gotten last month, one last month and the other before that. One guy said, 'I was ready to commit suicide one night and this one song you played for me that made me change my mind about taking my life.' I was like, 'Wow.' Another guy said, 'I was a staunch homosexual for twenty years. Through listening to your music every night, I was motivated to change my life.' I know it's not me. It's the power of God movin' through. It's gospel music, so it's actually the word of God being spoken in a lyrical form through the radio, through the air and into people's lives. God is changing lives. He's using me to change the lives of these men across Angola. This guy changed his life. He was a homosexual. This guy was trying to kill himself. These are letters that I may have never gotten. These are two letters that I know exist that actually (prove) this was an effective tool by way of radio that helped change a person's life.

Sirvoris Sutton: (T)his job for me is a job of passion and compassion because what happens is, around the holiday season and things of that nature, what you find is the suicide rate goes (whistles) way up. Christmas, Thanksgiving, guys get to missin' family; they get to missin' wives and children and what have you, and I can relate to all of which because I'm a father. I have three teenage daughters. And so, I do understand, being in the same situation.

Perhaps more so than with any other of Angola's media, KLSP is the most obvious example of the impact religion has had on the penitentiary. Though Warden Cain states it is not religion per se that he preaches, but rather morality, the sound of gospel music permeating the prison cannot be ignored. Deputy Warden Richard Peabody is leery to consider the radio station life changing, but concedes that it does influence the men for
the better. "And, it reminds them that we're all here together," he said. "This is their voice; this is their magazine; this is their radio station. So, it helps them buy into the sense of community." That, coupled with respect for community, is what has allowed Angola to report a steady decrease in inmate violence over the past five years.

Few of Angola's inmates actually want to be in prison (though an occasional man says he has become too institutionalized to be "let go"). However, they recognize that although there are definite problems with the Louisiana penal system and Angola is no Disneyworld, a comparison made by one visiting author, if they have to be in prison, they would prefer it to be Angola. Opportunities exist at Angola that other institutions would not even consider, an assertion supported by a warden whose relative works at a prison in the northeast United States. Thus, the majority of Angola's inmates spend time not only monitoring themselves, but also policing each other's behavior. What makes the community policing unique is that it is done among the inmates, largely without bringing in security or administration. In addition to policing each other, the men work on improving one another, be it through the inmate-produced media, the inmate ministry, or simply talking to and educating a fellow inmate; no one knows the inmate population better than the inmates themselves do. The aforementioned techniques, if successful, allow the men to develop into more morally responsible individuals, capable of not only self-governance, but also participating in the process of governing others.

Inmates, who have subjectified themselves and proven themselves to the administration, lead by example. Though there is a buy-in by upper-level employees into Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation, the administration is not naïve to the potential backlash any of the liberties could solicit. Therefore, it only takes one (potentially)
wrongful act or disruptive individual to force the administration to tighten its institutional freedom, further limiting the autonomy of the inmates. Members of the inmate-produced television station, are acutely aware of this considering they are the newest media at Angola and, under the custody of their (free person) supervisor, may leave the prison complex and travel to film various events. Because freedoms are not haphazardly distributed, inmates work to maintain the ones they are given and to achieve those they have not reached. Likewise, inmates recognize that the chance of being absolved of a life sentence is slight, so it is in their best interest to adhere to institutional norms in the hope that additional privileges are granted.

All incoming prisoners begin their work duty at Angola in the fields, making only pennies an hour. Once the administration sees a man is adjusting to institutional life, the inmate may apply for a work order change, perhaps to work in the kitchen or in the metal fabrication department. It takes years before an inmate can achieve Trusty A status – the highest inmate status at Angola. As addressed in Chapter Three, a Class A Trusty can travel around the complex with very little supervision, although permission must first be given. KLSP deejay Robin Polk values his classification as a Class A Trusty and does not take for granted that his privileges are just that, privileges, and not rights to which he is entitled in prison. Likewise, he understands that those privileges, and the respect that sometimes comes with them, can – and will – be taken away from him if he does not continue to follow rules and procedures. His co-workers also do not downplay the significance of their opportunity and in some cases see the position as a (spiritual) calling to enhance the significance of their lives and others.
Robin Polk: (Working at the radio station) is a privilege, somethin' you have to work towards. They just don't give you trusty. You've got to earn it. It's got it's benefits. I guess after you've been a trusty for a while, you may get thinkin' it's the same old thing, but it's not, cause if it's taken away from you, you really fear that day. I left the field in 85 and I've never been back since. So, if I was ever to have to go back there for whatever reason, I'm not going to do anything, but it would be kind of a blow. You get to go to the rodeo and sell your own hobbycraft, mingle. I say mingle, but you're in the arena, outside the arena, selling your hobbycraft, some free people walkin' around, talkin' to you, treatin' you like a human being. You have to earn that type of respect with free people. You just don't make trusty. They have to know you for a while, You've got to be here for a while, and they trust you. It's like being in this radio station. The radio station, they don't have security in here. Security comes back and checks on us. I have to go up every hour and check in. That's my responsibility. So I can't just sit back here and not check in. But it's still a privilege, because they don't govern me. They don't question nothing, and if I were to say we need something back here for the radio station, they don't take it with a grain of salt, they take it seriously. And usually, they get it.

Sirvoris Sutton: Every year I put together a five-year prospectus of what I'm going to do. I'm always thinkin' ahead. I'm always thinking free. … And so, really, I don't need, me personally, I'm not just saying this in terms of the system because I understand this system is in place for a reason, and I don't have a problem with the system and followin' rules and guidelines, but I am my own
security. … Anything that I see getting involved in that's counter-productive, I'm goin' the other way. It's going to take away from the plans I made in terms of being free.

**Donald Spencer:** I look at it as being a tool in God's hands. I believe in my heart that God uses us to speak his Word, to get a word out to the population that they might be saved; that they might live a better life; that they may do better. As I said, I read Scripture to them, and I pray before I read and I ask God to touch their heart as the word goes across the air while they sit their in their cell, maybe anticipatin' hanging themself, committing suicide or whatever it might be. I take my job real serious and I take my work for the Lord real serious and I'm always aware that somebody's listening. Somebody wants to hear a word from the Lord. The Lord wants to use me to tell somebody somethin' – not just through song – not just through a sermon. … My position here, I believe God put me here for that purpose, that I might help somebody. Maybe I might give 'em some information as they leave. Maybe they parole in a couple of days. Maybe they gettin' out in a few weeks. We can provide information to them where they can get in touch with other people, or other institutions where they can find themselves to help once they outside the gates. So I feel what we do is very important, and I'm comfortable with it. I would rather do this than be out in that hot sun operating those heavy equipments.

**Institutional Pride/Fostering Community**

In actuality, KLSP is not much different from many other radio stations. In addition to music, there is commentary and plenty of news. Prior to the television
station's creation in 2006, KLSP was the only way to reach the masses immediately at Angola. Remembering that the penitentiary is roughly the size of Manhattan, it seems illogical to think the prison would not have some form of instantaneous mass media, if for no other reason than security purposes. Yet the Angola media transcend security goals.

Inmate C, who says he was considered a "human animal" by Warden Cain before finding God and graduating from the New Orleans Baptist Seminary, admits he first admonished the inmate-produced media. Now, he sees their value for rehabilitation and necessity.

**Inmate C:** (I) love the radio station. Oh man, do I ever. You see, they play a lot of gospel music and that's my thing. I love gospel music. I used to love blues.

Blues were it for me. I can't even listen to blues anymore. They play the old down home, down-south gospel music, and it's a daily thing we have on upstairs (in the Bible College). … I remember when the radio station first started. That was another thing. We could never find anything positive to say about it. It was always something negative, because what happens is, as it's always with a criminal, us against them. Never ever is it any other things. It's always us against them.

Inherently, we have what I have come to coin as a welfare mentality. It's 'you have it. I don't, therefore you should give it to me.' …

(I)f you were to walk around in your hometown, you would see a whole community that functions in and of itself. Angola, understand, the whole idea behind Angola now, there used to be years ago people in Angola who were only doing three, or four, or five years and they were going home. Right now, at least 90 percent of the people here are going to die here. You see, what's happened here is not so much that the philosophy is to keep 'em comfortable and happy. Placate
'em until they die. It's give them something to do. Give them something
constructive to do. These things, the radio station was here long before Warden
Cain. The Angolite was here long before a lot of people around here now were
even born. … It's just been a growing process.

In addition to supplementing programs run through NOBTS and the chaplain's
office, KLSP aids the administration in communicating information to the inmate
community, especially when that information must be transmitted quickly. During the
1997 flooding at Angola, Warden Cain offered nightly interviews for the inmate
population to keep them apprised of the situation and to avoid hysteria. The prison
ultimately evacuated three thousand inmates without problem. Officials implemented a
similar communications strategy in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast.
With thousands of men forced to stand by idly while the storm placed their relatives' lives
in jeopardy and destroyed their families' homes, Warden Cain again used the radio to
thwart potential mayhem.

**Warden Cain:** They all wanted to do something there. I said y'all just be good
and don't cause me a problem, and I'm going to go down there and try to help and
save your families. And I stayed in New Orleans and … we brought two thousand
refugee inmates up here from Orleans Parish Prison, slept on the floor. My
inmates went and stayed in the gym while six hundred inmates – women – stayed
at Camp F, in their beds. I said, "You're gonna have a woman in your bed tonight,
boys, but you're not gonna be there." They laughed and went on over to the gym.

Even with the occasional interviews from the administration or news
notifications, inmates remain faithful to KLSP for the music and preaching. That is the
greatest difference between the prison's magazine and the radio and television stations. The magazine, according to Editor Kerry Myers, is journalism; the radio and television stations are more for entertainment. Still, the religious programming, a reinforcement of Warden Burl Cain's moral rehabilitation, is lost neither on its inmate nor freeperson audience.

Inmates exercise in the yard or lie back in their dorms attached to their Walkmans in much the same way college students affix themselves to their MP3 players and iPods. Headphones serve as a temporary escape mechanism for inmates destined not to leave Angola and a means of aloneness from the 5,107 other incarcerated men. Ironically, the headphones, and ultimately KLSP itself, serve simultaneously as a means of camaraderie and togetherness for the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men in either restrictive/solitary confinement or who no longer receive visitors from beyond Angola. There is no rule mandating KLSP as the exclusive radio station for inmates' listening pleasure, though many choose it over an outside source. Warden Cain sees the station's popularity as simple: The men like to hear one another talk.

**Warden Cain:** They like to know it's here. They say real proud it's the Incarceration Station, 'Kickin' Behind the Bricks', the only one in the nation. These disc jockeys really get into it, and then they got some rap Christian music. They play this, they play that, they focus on the family. I never thought that Moody Bible Institute playing *Focus on the Family* out in the real world, all this advice, that they'd be interested. They like it. They love it. They have kids. When they interact with their own families, they're more effective because they just didn't stop their life and stalemate themselves when they came to prison. They
encountered growth. They continued to grow through the media, *The Angolite* helped them; they do their poems and all. You have the radio station and all these programs, and then the TV, so they really don't lose touch with the world…

(W)hen you listen to our radio station and you hear all these programs that are self-help programs and all and moral programs, then they catch it. So they progress and they grow.

**Goldie:** (I)t's a means of having something that they can identify with as being theirs. It's not mine, it's not the other brothers' who work here. Warden Cain is over everything, but to the prisoners, this is their station. This is something they can identify with. For example, they write letters; they have favorite deejays. They write a letter saying would you all play this song? To hear their name called over the radio they say, "Man, you called my name!"

For other inmates, the radio station and its deejays are something they aspire to.

Carlwyn "The Gospel Boy" Turner tried repeatedly to join KLSP based largely on his respect for the station. "After hearing the guys as they would speak over the radio, it really caught my attention and attracted me," Turner said. "So, after numerous attempts, finally I'm here. I never lost the interest or desire to become (a deejay) … Eventually, I have plans of incorporating ministry, so with that in mind I cover the entire format."

Donald Spencer listened to KLSP out of practicality when he was confined to the cellblocks. With the block television far from his cell, his head would "get kind of tight looking at it an angle." So, like countless other Angola men, he would put on his headphones and lie back in his cell.
Donald Spencer: Actually, I heard one of the deejays say that he had preached his first sermon outside the prison gates. So when I got out of the cellblocks, all I wanted to do was meet this Reverend AJ and join church. I met (him), and I joined the church, and I'm still in that church today. That's been about thirteen years. And as a matter of fact, he was one of the deejays here that I was listening to. I've always been inspired by him. He's an elder in our fellowship. I get a chance to talk to him all the time, and when the job came open at the radio station, it was him that informed me and I applied for it. The Rev. AJ was instrumental in my being here today because I listened to him over the radio when I was in the cellblock.

Angola's transformation from the bloodiest prison in the nation to its current state owes itself not to one particular idea or entity, but to a myriad of intertwining factors that include the inmate-produced media. As major cultural components of the penitentiary, *The Angolite* and KLSP influence their audiences in much the same way as FOX News and the latest Calvin Klein campaign influence their particular demographics. Yet because the editors and producers of Angola's media have been subjectified through the ideologies of their particular institution, the messages conveyed by said media are much more controlled, both directly and indirectly, by the state. Thus, even in the midst of the prison, there is a certain sense of community, though looking out first for oneself remains a top priority. Seventy-three-year-old Inmate 2 has served roughly forty-two years at Angola and verifies the legitimacy of the prison's former moniker.

Inmate 2: I do think the prison has changed so much over the years… It was just a common occurrence here, you expected it every day that somebody was getting
stabbed, somebody was losing their life … every day. Young men who were coming to prison, that didn't have nobody in prison that they know…they were being raped every day, so it was just a common occurrence that took place at that particular time.

**Responsibilities and Expectations**

There is no window on the heavy door leading into KLSP radio station. The quarters are not spacious and the setup is reminiscent of a college radio studio, tucked in an out-of-the-way corner that few know even exists. But the location, situated in the Main Prison but outside of the main prison gate, suits the six deejays just fine. After walking down the Main Prison walk and through two locked gates, the radio employees continue along a narrow hallway, through an exterior door and into the bright Louisiana sun. For security purposes, inmates cannot reach the radio station from inside the Main Prison. Instead, they must walk outside of the complex, less than ten feet, and to another door. Any sense of freedom is fleeting, however. A high fence, a certain reminder that this is prison, surrounds the small yard outside of KLSP.

Still, the two-room studio, filled with donated equipment – nothing is taxpayer-funded – is a sanctuary for the six disc jockeys. Goldie admits that the job is not physically demanding, but says that not everyone can handle it because of the high degree of trust that must exist between the administration and the particular inmate. Surrounded by expensive equipment, hundreds of vinyl records and limited freedom, he does not take his situation for granted. "As you can see, we're virtually unchaperoned, unsupervised, so there has to be a level of trust. So what happens is, you get time to
yourself. You can write; you can study. We have a few conveniences, and it takes you away from the normal, mundane, monotony of the penitentiary."

The opening bang of the station's door serves as jolting reminder that 'virtually unchaperoned' is a poignant phrase in Goldie's response. Security is never far away, and guards make periodic checks of the radio station to make sure everything is okay. The inmates never know when a tour or guard may enter the station, so it is best not to tempt fate, but rather to always act responsibly. Like The Angolite journalists, the KLSP staffers know they, and their character, always are under strict scrutiny. Character is the first and foremost requirement in the job description, though Deputy Warden Richard Peabody is quick to state the inmates must also be good speakers and in touch with the inmate population. Those men who meet the job description and are chosen for the position have not only a quality employment opportunity, but the acknowledgement that their positive behavior is not unnoticed by the administration.

**Donald Spencer:** …(O)ur record backs us up. You know, we don't have a hundred write-ups, violence and all this type of stuff. We're basically, I guess you could call, the model prisoners. We just try to do the right thing. All I ever wanted was just to be left alone. Let me do my time, and let me benefit myself. And along the way, if I can help others, no problem, but I'm not chaotic. I'm the gentle type, the mild type. I have my friends, most of them study my Bible, sittin' on my bed. We're not in the wild life. There's another side of prison beside this, and that other side, I'm not involved in.

**Carlwyn Turner:** (Y)ou really have to prove yourself that you're worthy of this type of job. You have to strive for that. Show good character. You have to refrain
from disciplinary actions, bad behavior. … There are some who believe that we
don't change, so we deserve to be, maybe, in the fields, doin' the hard stuff.

There's change.

**Keith Alexander:** I know that I am (under scrutiny) because of the liberty we
have here at the radio station. We don't have security over us. We're very much
self-governed. Even though I'm a trusty, all trustys are not afforded that privilege,
so it's an honor. I know that I'm scrutinized, and I like it like that because I know
I'm doing the right thing. The more I'm watched, the more good things they'll see.
It's a testimony that a guy in prison can turn his life around, do the right thing
consistently, not be putting on a show.

Potentially surprising to some and certainly not fitting into the stereotypical
portrayal of the guard/prisoner relationship, Darrel Vannoy, deputy warden of security,
supports the inmate-produced media and the (limited) autonomy afforded to select
inmates. Having worked at the prison for more than three decades, he remembers the
violence that permeated Angola. Governing through violence is not an effective means
for running a penitentiary and is a problem that he sees in many penal systems throughout
the country. As one of the individuals responsible for recommending and approving
inmates for media-related jobs, Vannoy evaluates each man's character and integrity,
ultimately deciding whether the individual is trustworthy and prepared to take on such a
demanding position.

**Warden Vannoy:** (I)'ve seen (Angola) evolve to a peaceful place, and I credit
that a lot to our inmates. I've got inmates who've been here as long as I have. They
came here when they were eighteen and they're my age and I've known them
basically all my adult life. You know, when you know them that well, I know the ones I can trust and the ones I can't. So, I'm fortunate in that way. … (I)n prison, it's just like in society, you have good inmates, you have bad inmates. You have inmates you can trust more than others. I look for an inmate that is responsible, that carries himself well, that hasn't been in trouble, hasn't broken our rules, has abided by the rules for a long time. And, you know, takes pride in what he does. And I can say most of these inmates here, they have a job and they take pride in their job. It's kind of like you'd be interviewing someone on the street for a position. You just put them through that process.

Conclusion

As Warden Cain is quick to point out, in Southern culture, "morality is basically in religion." Therefore, that Angola's KLSP radio station is steeped in religion is not entirely surprising. Besides spinning music, inmate deejays spread the word of God through their own preaching, their pulpit consisting of an audio board and microphone. Though prison officials planned to use the radio station for, among other things, a way to communicate with the entire prison community at one time, mainly for emergencies, the station and its programming serve a variety of equally worthy purposes. Beyond the practical use of the station, KLSP fulfills another main institutional goal of perpetuating moral rehabilitation. The deejays take their positions seriously. Undoubtedly, playing music all day is enjoyable, but to the men, there is more than simply music to their jobs. According to deejay Keith Alexander, "I'm very careful about what I say over the radio or what I play, because people are gonna receive this, and whatever you receive inside of
you, you're going to act out accordingly. I'm kind of like a guardian angel when it comes to my program and the gospel of Jesus."

Considering some of the KLSP employees are graduates of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the ideologies of that institution also are conveyed over the radio, allowing the ideals of moral rehabilitation to extend to those who are not privy to the Bible College's teachings. The inmate deejays, with little immediate institutional supervision, are charged with being cultural vessels by which morally rehabilitative messages are conveyed to control the conduct of others. And while the men aid in controlling the inmate population, they must simultaneously govern themselves and not abuse the additional freedoms given to them in exchange for the added scrutiny under which they are placed.

Unlike the television station, which is discussed in the next chapter, the KLSP radio station is not mandated to be played in the dormitories. Inmates have their own personal radios and headsets and can choose to listen to the station of their choice. Although several men criticized KLSP for being too religious and not "hard" enough – very little rock or rap are played in-house, largely due to the language utilized by the artists – the Incarceration Station remains popular throughout Angola. Hearing fellow inmates on the radio fosters a sense of pride and community among the men who sometimes wait eagerly to hear their name mentioned in a dedication or shout out. And for those men working at the station, a different sort of pride is cultivated. In their cases, working as an inmate deejay not only equips them with skills they might someday utilize

---

186 Penitentiary televisions are set to LSP-TV's Channel 21 for several hours a day for educational programming.
beyond Angola, but it acknowledges that the administration recognizes them as trustworthy and capable of conducting themselves according to the administration's expectations.
CHAPTER SEVEN

LSP-TV

It is only minutes after 8 a.m., but Maurice Rabalais has been in his office for several hours. As an IT technical support specialist for the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Rabalais' office in the penitentiary's hospital is cold, windowless and filled with a plethora of old computer parts, feet of cable, and piles of books and manuals. There's a sense of organized chaos from within; the office exemplifies its owner, who, clad in blue jeans, T-shirt and a baseball cap, regularly spends ten-hour days – often even longer – working on reports, solving computer programs, and drinking bottle after bottle of diet Dr. Pepper. Like many of the men at Angola, Rabalais is a lifer, but in a slightly different sense. He grew up on the B-line at Angola, a free-world community behind the gate of the penitentiary. Several hundred employees and their families live on the eighteen thousand acres of prison land. In exchange for housing, many serve as first responders of sorts should something happen at the prison. Rabalais followed in the footsteps of his parents and has worked at the prison since the 1990s. He and his family also live on the prison's grounds.

Rabalais' work has always been hectic, but on Holy Thursday of 2006, matters intensified tenfold. When Angola's administration decided it was going to start up formally an inmate-produced television station, Rabalais was named as the station's general manager. In little more than a year, LSP-Productions went from having nothing to having a small broadcasting room, four cameras, expensive editing software, and a six-man crew eager to use new technology and to show what it could do. With little more than on-the-job training and a dedication to learning, the men, Rabalais included,
muddled their way through a rodeo or two, as well as a few other events and countless religious services, to get to a point where they are proud of the products they produce and could potentially produce in the future. From Rabalais' position, the growth has been scary. "This has all grown at an exponential pace, and it scares me. I'm afraid we'll outgrow ourselves…but I love my job, I really do," he states, hinting that his fear might actually be masking excitement.

Unlike The Angolite or KLSP radio, the television crew works daily with its supervisor, making the relationship between Rabalais and his staff important. Editing software is kept on a computer in Rabalais' office, which means he must be present if anyone wants to work. Because his IT job takes him out of the office throughout the day, the men become frequently frustrated as they are quickly ushered out of one room and into their tiny broadcasting room. Rabalais recognizes their irritation but tries to make the men realize that the IT work must come first. The crew hears what he is saying, but that does not ease the men's impatience. This makes for some tense working conditions, but nothing that lasts much longer than a few hours. Ultimately, any problems are solved by the following: Rabalais equals the boss; they are the inmates.

Just as the magazine and radio station employees cite character as the most important quality when choosing a new staff member, character is equally important at the television staff, if not more. In addition to filming on-site activities like religious services and club activities, LSP-Productions also covers off-site events, including inmate boxing, which takes place throughout the state at various prisons. This means that approximately once a month, Rabalais travels with his crew of six men out of Angola and around Louisiana with a cellular phone as his only real weapon. The monthly connections
to reality are a blessing and a curse to the men, who must ultimately return to the penitentiary after tasting a morsel of freedom. Each deals with the experience differently, but all are appreciative. "It's easy to leave, but, I usually try to sleep on the way back," explains Alex, LSP-Productions longest employee. "I like leavin', but when it comes time to come back, it's a little hard. So I try to sleep, really."

To those on the outside, it may seem as if the administration is tempting fate. After all, five of the six men are serving life sentences. Rabalais works very closely with security and insists on handpicking his crew. All the men who work for him must be Class A Trustys and have no in-prison background problems. He wants to be sure that when they leave the prison, all of the inmates, as well as he, come back. Therefore, staff members and their behaviors are constantly scrutinized as to whether they are appropriate for the position. If there is a problem, the staff member will be immediately removed from the crew. Not every inmate is – or will ever be – of the proper character and mindset for such a position. That is why some inmates spend years picking cotton and squash from the farm while others excel at more intellectually stimulating positions. Warden Cain places faith and trust in the classification system and the inmates working with LSP Productions.

**Warden Cain:** The inmates that are going to (leave the prison) are going to meet the security standard of being a Trusty. Whatever environment he's going to he's gonna be at that level. Some can't leave the prison. They're working inside. They're not trustys, but they still can do their work inside the prison and then some go out that are the trustys. So we just stay with our custody classes, and everything's peaches but the can.
Chain gangs and the spectacle associated with them, no longer exist at Angola, but similar imagery is strikingly apparent. Those visiting the penitentiary, both as inmates and free people, can witness men toiling in the fields with basic farm equipment as the blazing Louisiana sun beats on their bodies. Every inmate entering Angola must 'do time' in the fields before he is categorized and placed within the penitentiary's classification system. Guards on horseback carry rifles and patrol the Farm perimeters as the men work. The haunting sight reminds visitors of what can happen if they disobey and choose to break the law. Inmates are reminded of where they will return should they choose not to opt for a morally rehabilitated lifestyle.

Simultaneously, in other areas of the prison, Class A Trustys study in the prison's Bible College or prepare to travel from the penitentiary to work or lecture in the community. These men serve as the prison's success stories, of what can happen when things go right and moral rehabilitation flows smoothly like the nearby Mississippi River. They are role models for inmates who have not yet reached that status level, and enemies of those men who begrudge their success. Visitors are surprised that "these men" are "criminals" and pleased to see actual rehabilitation taking place. They are bothered only – if ever – when they realize that these rehabilitated souls will likely never leave the penitentiary permanently.

Rabalais is one of the prison's employees who has bought into Cain's progressive rehabilitation measures, so much so, that one could argue he has also bought into the station – literally. The closed circuit cable station off which LSP-TV, Channel 21 runs, costs one dollar per year to lease. The prison is paid up for five years, the five dollars coming from Rabalais' pocket. The camera equipment was donated by a local station, but
many of the monitors, tapes, DVD players and other materials came from Rabalais' home or through his own money, at least initially. Other employees have also donated materials, wanting the station to succeed. For Rabalais, seeing LSP-Productions succeed is only part of it. He wants his crew members to become educated and recognize their potential. So, he plays to their strengths, using Chris as on-air talent because of his voice; Alex as the main camera operator because of his vision and natural abilities; David as the chief editor because of his creativity; and Jonathan, Michael and Tyler on cameras, although everyone is being cross-trained. "If something happens, somewhere along the way and they get out, I want them to be marketable. I want them to be able to say, 'I edited on Final Cut Pro, I used such and such a camera, I did this…'."

The Staff

Of the three media at Angola, LSP-Productions has some of the youngest staff, with the age range spanning from David at twenty-nine to Tyler at fifty-five. The two have spent twelve and twenty-two years respectively at Angola. Rounding out the crew – with their ages and time in prison – is: Chris, forty-two and twelve years at Angola; Jonathan, thirty-eight and nine years; Michael, thirty-four and twelve years; and Alex, thirty-three and ten years. Chris is the only one of the men without a life sentence and is eligible for parole around 2015. From a personal standpoint, they are by far the most difficult to work with because of our closeness in age. After spending any amount of time with them, I (selfishly) turn thoughts to myself if I were in their situation. Just more than a decade ago, I was enjoying the independence of having graduated from college and the

---

\textsuperscript{187} Quality working relationships are necessary in any office, and that fact does not change in prison. Shortly after my second visit to Angola, David, LSP-Productions' chief editor, was suspended from work by General Manager Maurice Rabalais and later fired. David has since moved on to another position in the penitentiary and continues occasionally to write a column for \textit{The Angolite}.\textsuperscript{187}
excitement of being a news reporter. What if I traveled the path their life took? Could I have established myself with the same trustworthy character knowing that I, in reality, had little to lose by acting otherwise?

Though each has earned Class A Trusty status and has an interest in technology, their similarities stop there. Rabalais has six different personalities with which he must work to perfect the ideal crew. As much as security scrutinizes the inmates in their positions, Rabalais too, is judged as the first person to take on such an endeavor. *The Angolite* and the radio station have been around so long at the penitentiary, that their innovation is rarely addressed internally; they have become like second nature. LSP-Productions however, is upping the ante and has the potential of taking the inmate-produced media to a new level. Thus, all of the men are acutely aware that they are part of uncharted waters and take their responsibilities seriously. For some, it is a way of regaining a fraction of the visible integrity they had before entering prison. Jonathan, who also serves as an inmate lawyer, is book smart and has "a lot of technical savvy" according to Rabalais.

**Jonathan:** It's not an act for us … There are some, as in any institution who really belong in the institution, but there are a lot of other people here for whatever reason got caught up with the wrong crowd or made one mistake in their lives, like me. … They weren't wild animals out there. They were productive citizens. But something happened that changed their lives. So for me, it's encouraging to be recognized like that. I don't know.

Jonathan's choice of the word "animals" is an interesting one and one that comes up repeatedly by inmates. I, too, consider the term, particularly when walking through
Death Row, awkwardly observing the men in their cages. I'm asked not to say anything as we pass through one of the halls and told to stay close to the wall. This is one of the only times I feel uncomfortable at the penitentiary, not because I am fearful, but because it seems wrong to 'tour' Death Row as if it were a zoo, to view it as a spectacle. Besides the obvious comparison of inmates to caged animals, the contrast to animals is equally important and most apparent in the 'higher status' jobs at Angola. An animal cannot write a story; an animal cannot operate a camera or deliver a sermon. An animal also cannot attend school or work in an office. But, an animal can work in a field. He can even help dig a ditch and transport goods. Thus, some of the same contrasts between animals and men exist between general inmates and trustys.

Chris also recognizes the prospects associated with the television station and does not shy away from taking on additional responsibilities. There are few positions in prison where an inmate can make a positive – as opposed to a negative or neutral – impact on the population. Chris sees the television station as allowing him to do that as well as hone his talents.

**Chris:** It certainly puts you under more scrutiny. Your life is certainly put under more of a microscope because now you're a personality in a way. A TV personality in a way. Even though you're in prison, your people are still lookin' at you and if you're doin' anything that's not right, then your enemies and your foes will rush to make that known.

Does that make things more stressful?

**Chris:** Not for me. At one time it would have been because I was crooked. Well, I was. I would smoke weed. You know, I'm not ashamed of it. I used to smoke
weed, I used to do a lot of things because I had a life sentence and I didn't know how to deal with it. You know. I had smoked weed and used pills and had a drug problem, which is the reason I got in prison, because of drugs, and I let that control a majority of my life. Finally I made the decision not to do that anymore, so I don't have any fear anymore. My enemies, if they do say something about me, they'll be making it up.

Chris and Tyler are the non-political members of the staff. While both appreciate and enjoy their positions, they are not out to be revolutionaries. Tyler is what some consider an "ol' time convict." He has served so many years in prison that he has passed what Warden Cain considers "criminal menopause" which usually occurs when a man hits forty. At that point, Cain explains, men often mellow and lose their desire to be aggressive. Tyler's only purposes now are to serve his time and God. Though he lacks the technical savvy of some of his younger coworkers, he is dedicated to whatever job he is given and never complains. Chris, also past criminal menopause, keeps his eyes on bettering himself and preparing for his release from Angola.

Michael is the newest addition to the television station and is still adjusting to the expectations and fame that come with it. Initially apprehensive about dealing with inmates' reactions "down the walk," he stays focused on what the position could offer him in the future. As a graduate of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Michael speaks with and ministers to the inmate population regularly, but is less forward with talking to strangers than most of the crew. Eventually, he warms up to discussing life at Angola and speaks with an infectious smile.
Michael: I was nervous and, you know, sometime in this environment when an individual actually moves up the ladder and away from the norm, there's small flak that's given from the guys. I wanna say at the normal level of the institution, every now and then there's some guys that'll crack jokes, and in my mind I'm thinkin' about my friends who's gonna come here, all the associates and the guys that I know. I was nervous a little bit. I was thinkin' in my mind, 'what are they goin' to say and so forth and so on.' But again, the only way that I succumb and actually had found some relief was thinking about my future. So, it was nerve-wracking at first, very nerve-wracking.

It is not uncommon to find Michael and Jonathan together when the two are at the television station, just as David and Alex are typically found in a pair. Though the men appear to work efficiently together, there is a definite relationship split along racial lines, either consciously or unconsciously drawn. Michael and Jonathan are black, while David and Alex are white. (Tyler and Chris are black and white, respectively). Inmates throughout Angola are quick to say that racism exists, though it does not typically manifest itself in overt violence. If there is racism at the television station, the men conceal it. As part of the maturation process that comes with rehabilitation, individuals learn to put aside differences to work for the common good of the group. Inmates in general, base relationships more on proxemics and convenience than actual friendships. "Most of us are here because we failed at relationships," one inmate explains.

The status of inmate transcends all other comparable characteristics, weaving a common thread that connects each of the 5,108 men at Angola. Trusty or not, just being at Angola creates a shared experience for all involved. So, when Michael details his
uneasiness about balancing his new position with living among the sixty-three other men in his dormitory, the others all identify.

**Alex:** (I)t's hard to understand what we do and what we're supposed to do. The majority of the population, not the majority, some of the population, thinks that just because we work here we can put anything on anytime and just throw a movie on.

**David:** Originally, (the television station) was new and exciting. When I got told about it, I was caught up in the excitement of it. I decided I want to be part of something that's just starting. It's not established. No one came before me doin' it, so I'm going to be, I guess, one of the forefathers. (inaudible) Creating something new comes with great responsibility. So, I had to ask myself, are you ready for what this entails? This entails that you're gonna have to govern yourself and you may have to govern others, and in prison that is something that's isn't looked upon well. It's not looked upon well when you tell somebody no you can't do that. It's not a (free) person telling you, look don't do that. You know? … You're still an inmate.

**Televising Rehabilitation**

Richard Peabody, deputy warden of programming, downplays the spectacle of an inmate-produced television station. Considering the professional respect for *The Angolite* by journalists and the success of KLSP radio station, advancing to a televised level was the next logical step in the progression of communication. "I guess the only thing that really surprises me is that it took this long to get that far," Peabody explained. "We've talked about it over the years and it's finally beginning to happen. We were fortunate
enough to have a gentleman who made a donation of equipment and made it possible, because we do not use state money for any of this." A lack of state dependence presents a precarious dichotomy for Angola's media. Taxpayers have little about which to complain when inmates are producing at no cost to the public. However, the media are completely dependent upon donations and the Inmate Welfare Fund. Should that money wane, the media's fate remains shaky at best.

Yet the media, while providing progressive, intellectually challenging work environments for the inmates, serve as other cultural technologies by which the administration can disseminate its ideals. Indeed, the popularity of television has soared throughout the United States since it was first introduced at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute in 1934. Prison is no different, making the television station a predictable next step for Warden Cain's vision. The television crew shoots a number of religious services during the week, but it is also responsible for nightly entertainment, which typically includes movies and sports. Staff members and their supervisor screen all of the movies to ensure they are appropriate for the general inmate population. Most of the films come from donations. There was a time when more risqué, "adult" movies were shown at Angola. Now, Warden Cain limits the film ratings and LSP-Productions is even tougher. "We've actually placed more rules and restrictions on ourselves then what anyone else has," David says. "We censor movies that are allowed in the prison." Sexual themes and language are the two most often scrutinized areas, but ultimately the staff chooses movies based on gut reactions.

Some of the inmates realize the television crew has a say in what movies are shown, but others believe the choices come directly from the administration. For those
who realize their dorm mates play a role in movie selection, if it bothers them, they do
not make it known. Instead, they either discuss how they look forward to the
uninterrupted, commercial-free movie nights or complain generally about the "children's
movies" that are shown. The latter complaint is reiterated in part when addressing the
types of magazines allowed at Angola, specifically pornographic ones. "I'm not so much
for the Playboy, but they took that away from the inmate population," said Inmate C.
"They said it creates a hostile work environment for the females who work in here…A
picture of a nude woman, a beautiful woman in a magazine is a hostile work
environment?"

From mid-morning to mid-afternoon, Angola's television sets are all turned to
Channel 21's education programming, virtually all of which is prepackaged from an
outside vendor. Depending on the subject matter, the programming is hit-and-miss with
the inmates, who much prefer the sports and movies. Topics run the gamut, from basic
literacy skills to tax preparation to buying a house. The biggest complaint is that the
programming does not meet the needs of the majority of the population who has only a
hope of leaving Angola and little more. Real estate advice means little when your "house"
is one of sixty-four cots in a room. However, there is a definite need for basic literacy
programs. According to The Angolite staff, an in-house survey of more than four
thousand inmates conducted around 2005 revealed that 70 percent of the population reads
below a sixth grade reading level.

**Inmate F:** Basically, I don't watch it. When I came here, before I got here, I had a
few accomplishments. I graduated from high school and I got two years of
college. So, (the educational programming) doesn't benefit me. But there are guys
who are illiterate. I see from time to time there's guys in there watching the literacy program. … I think guys try to look at it as why do I need to get my GED? I've got a life sentence and I'm not going home. … My thinking is, if I can achieve some of these diplomas and then, let's just say five, ten, twenty years down the road the law does change and they screen my jacket and I was accomplished in a lot of things. They may say this guy's been doing something positive since he's been here.

Of course, this is prison, and reputations are important. Admitting to being illiterate shows a weakness, and watching educational programming is not necessarily cool. So while inmates may pretend not to pay attention to the learning programs, it is difficult not to when they play steadily throughout the penitentiary. Furthermore, in some prison circles, education and true moral rehabilitation are indications of "selling out" to the administration, something a convict, as opposed to an inmate, would never do.

**Inmate B:** There's not convicts here. They're inmates here. There's a difference between an inmate and a convict. I don't suck ass of the administration. I don't care nothing about 'em. I do whatever's got to be done. It's me against them. They're the enemy; I'm their enemy. … They'll hold your hand when he gives the lethal injection, talking about how you goin' to see your maker and all that other stuff. I don't need no friends like that. My friends do something to help me, not hurt me. I'm a convict. And there's a difference. … There's no respect in prison no more. They respect to police but they don't respect one another.

Inmates like the aforementioned are not common, at least in their willingness to criticize so blatantly the reformation of Angola. Perhaps biased because of their own
work with the media, Jonathan and Michael remain certain that even those inmates who may not be learning something new from the educational programming are still excited by the possibilities that the inmate-produced television station holds.

Jonathan: (S)ome guys don't like it because it's mandatory during the day now, but there's some good information on it. I thought it was going to be corny when we started it, but when I looked at it, there are some things on banking and financing, how to buy a car. These are the things guys, especially those guys who are fortunate enough to be going home, need to know. So I'm happy with that. There are people who will be going back home. And then there are those who are trying, pardons and clemency. If they are approved by the governor to go, then they have this information, so that's good. Plus the inmates, whether they want to admit it or not, I can tell from the general attitude, they're excited that this stuff is coming here from Angola. They love it. Some don't want to admit it. It's not somebody else, it's us. We get a lot of feedback. … It's really something for them to call their own.

Michael: To some, it is (influential). To some it has an impact, to others it doesn't. But for those of us who are tryin' to educate ourselves, it does impact. I can say for myself, CLN (educational) Channel we broadcast every morning, some of the things they say on there is real simple. For those of us who actually watch it, sometimes think, man, this isn't for me. But then there are things that they share that we don't know, that actually encourages and gives us a better understanding of what's being taught. And by them doing that, it educates us even more, so it is helpful, and it is impacting some.
**Inmate A:** I think we should have some motivational speeches. I think that we should share some general knowledge, because I know that information is power. I think that we should try to educate the population. We have a GED program, and other programs, but I believe we should have something very intentional. We should share, even an interesting fact every day. I would love to teach English grammar on the television station, but especially the motivational speeches, because sometime men are despondent, and very down, and to have someone whom they respect speaking positively, I think that could be very helpful, very, very influential.

Sitting in the LSP broadcast room, which more closely resembles an amply sized closet, the television staff has its piece of solitude from the rest of the prison. A purple and gold Louisiana State University banner hangs on one wall, and a painting by Chris on the other. Television equipment, a few filing cabinets, two desks, a computer and coffee pot occupy the rest of the space. There is room for little else, although there is a door that provides the elusive privacy all inmates crave. From early in the morning until late at night, someone must stay in the room to make sure the programming is properly going out over the air. The work is far from physically taxing and requires only one set of eyes – a good thing considering the room's tiny size. One thing about the LSP-TV office is that unlike at *The Angolite* where hours go by and I am left with the staff, at the television station, the door must remain open. This could be an indication of the trust levels afforded to *The Angolite*, considering its longevity. As multiple wardens have stated, the success of *The Angolite* and its staff members served as the likely impetus for the other media.
When the crew isn't out filming an event, they are either learning more about the equipment, preparing additional materials for the station, or editing works in progress. One May morning, sitting in a nearby room, Chris leans back on a desk chair and repeatedly reads a promotional script, sometimes stopping mid-syllable if something does not sound just right. His technique indicates he is a perfectionist and professional with his work. Once he completes the spot, he and Alex discuss future commercial spots. Jonathan types up another script for a religious promotion and then the four men, including Michael, discuss creative possibilities. They decide that it would be more effective if the actual ministers read the promotional spots for their own services. This, they decide, will give the spot more validity and poignancy. It will also bring other inmates into the project.

The brainstorming session is interrupted only when Chris says he wants to watch CNN to hear about the Democratic presidential debates. The men cannot vote, but are interested in the following year's presidential election. The four discuss English as the official language of the United States, something Alex supports. Chris interjects that he is frustrated because no candidate ever provides a concrete answer to major-issue questions. The seriousness of the conversation is broken when Paris Hilton's entry into prison is shown on television; a pop culture discussion ensues, and Alex, wearing an LSU ball cap and trademark untucked T-shirt, steps outside to smoke a rolled Bugler cigarette. The presidential candidates, Paris Hilton, Anna Nicole Smith and other hot-button issues are just as important in prison as out. They too, provide a degree of normalcy in the lives of the men, a link to the outside world, and a topic of conversation, other than their current state, to share with friends and family through letters or on visiting day.
On another day, David is fixed to the editing station in Rabalais' office and wearing a hooded sweatshirt to ward off the necessary air conditioning in the computer-saturated office. He is working on a tribute to a former inmate who died a few months prior. Richard Lee Liggett, better known as "Grasshopper," was a coffin maker at Angola, and a popular man among the other inmates. LSP-Productions began filming the tribute while Grasshopper was alive, with his family providing pictures and commentary. David stares intently at his computer screen, readily answering questions, but never losing his gaze. "He was close to a lot of inmates," David explains. "I'm trying to do a good job, as much as my ignorance will allow." Rabalais encourages David, whom he considers the one most dedicated and determined to learn something new. Unfortunately, with knowledge comes fear, and David is reluctant to share his knowledge with others so as not to be replaced. So far, he has spent hours on the tribute and is still not satisfied. "You do it by learning," Rabalais said. "He had the initiative to do it. I could do it, but I don't have the creativity to make it fluffy. An inmate with me supervising, he can do it from the heart."

More so than even religion, educational programming is the key component of LSP-Productions. But there is more to rehabilitation than education and religion. There is hope and respect for the entire population. Grasshopper's tribute was not something that the administration required, but it is something that will appeal directly to the inmates. It highlights one of their own, even after his death. Moreover, considering the popularity of the inmate, the tribute provides a form of catharsis for the grieving men. The television crew yearns to produce more of this type of creative work. Alex hopes to start a televised Bible discussion called *Grace Baptist*, featuring two ministers in a question-and-answer
format. By my October return, the series is already up and running. Jonathan has visions of creating his own Spotlight program, with each segment devoted to a particular person or cause. The finished tribute to Grasshopper is quite good, beginning with Sarah McLachlan's Angel playing in the background and ending with Wayne Cochran's Last Kiss played behind photos of the deceased inmate and his family, as well as a video of him and Warden Cain. True to character, David thought it could have been better.

**Freedom and scrutiny**

Inmate sporting events are one of the most enjoyable facets of normalcy in the lives of Angola's men. Considering the size of the inmate population, from a logistical and security standpoint, not every inmate can participate. Thus, the importance of televising the events is simple. Sporting events, particularly inmate boxing, also afford the LSP-Productions crew one of the more coveted benefits to working with the media – freedom, however brief and fleeting. In most cases, freedom involves traveling to various camps throughout the prison complex; however, the television crew is allowed to travel outside the prison complex with Rabalais to film events like boxing and training programs.

**Tyler:** The benefit here is getting out, like going to different camps, riding around in the van, getting out and walking. I seen more of the area, personally, than seeing it on films. Camps I've never been, 'cause I've always been in Main Prison. You get to travel a bit, and that's good, you know? Going to other prisons … That's great. You get a chance to observe the scenery outside. You got a lot of expansion with the highways. Homes are more modern; it's different. The only
view you get (in prison) is watchin' it on TV. Being out there and to get the feel of the limited freedom, it's real good to go back out in society.

David: Freedom is a catch-22. We can leave and go on a shoot and go out of prison. You're not restricted. It's nice, but … I still am where I am, and that's my own fault. I guess I have some freedoms maybe in movement, but I also sacrifice personal time. I'm over here so much, I'll go down to my dorm and they say, 'Man, you still live on this yard? I thought you got shipped.'

Why sacrifice personal freedoms? Cause I'm interested. Because doing the editing, I like what I do. I like being able to take clips that guys get for me and build something and then sit back and wow, that's awesome. It's good, you know, just let it sit a day or two and man, then say, 'Man, we coulda done this.' I'm happy, but I'm never satisfied. How could I have done that better? Could the sound be better? Could the video be a higher quality grade? It's a fault of mine. I'm never satisfied.

There is little question that the LSP-TV crew is an extraordinary group. Though one could argue their individual subjectification – or anyone else's – is a ruse and their buy-in to rehabilitation a mirage, Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation, if it is to work, must be examined more from an epistemological standpoint rather than an ontological one with a concrete right and wrong. Trust is an abstract concept that is based on the Angola administration's belief in the degree to which the inmates have reflected morally on themselves and their souls. A strong belief in this subjectification manifests itself in liberties afforded to specifically chosen, worthy men.
Once a parallel exists between state ideologies and the men's behavior, another step in the rehabilitation process must occur, educating the public. Because of their frequent interactions with visitors, tour groups, politicos and other prisons' administrators and employees, the men working with the inmate-produced media become almost a face for the changes at Angola. This places additional pressure and scrutiny on the men who, in many instances, are called upon, directly or otherwise, to be the first impression of the penitentiary's inmate population for outsiders. Some have managed this transformation seamlessly, creating an awkward situation for some prison employees. At a recent boxing match beyond Angola, the television crew set up its equipment and then waited for the event to begin. Chris stood in line waiting to use the prison's inmate restroom when a guard approached him and told him he was in the incorrect line. Chris assured him that he was indeed, in the proper line, but the guard insisted he should go to the "freeperson" line. The guard was shocked to learn Chris was an inmate. Rabalis was pleased by the encounter, stating, "I want people to look at them and not comment on them as a good inmate crew, but that they're a professional television production crew." However, Chris' status as an inmate must be recognized for security purposes. That is why each man wears his inmate identification card and an LSP-Productions T-shirt to every assignment.

**Chris:** *(I)*f you're lookin' at it from a free-world standpoint, I think it's real important that people see and other inmates realize that by doing something like this, we're not all crackheads, we're not all robbers and rapists and people who are lookin' to corrupt society, but that we're just simple human beings, just like anybody else who's made a decision. I refrain from saying a mistake, because of course it was a mistake, but it was a decision and every decision, whether good or
bad, has consequences that come with it. And the longer you're here, and the older you get, you begin to grow up. You begin to realize that without some basic set of morals that you're destined to repeat your failures in your life. And you don't want to make those same choices that you made. And so by makin' better choices, you get better results. It's not brain surgery. It's somethin' that these guys can see and so to me, the television station, or the radio, or *The Angolite* are positive ways to show that we do make better choices and decisions.

When evangelist Kenneth Copeland visited Angola, his crew called upon the television station, including Alex, Jonathan and Tyler, to assist in the production. The event is etched into Alex's brain because for the first time his abilities were recognized by an outside entity. The experience also provided him with contacts for a similar position should his life sentence ever be commuted.

**Alex:** (I)t's probably the best experience that you can do. I mean, I don't mind getting my hands dirty, but technology is out there, working with computers, working with the cables, you can learn a lot. You can take what you learn here and easily, everyone we come in contact with, there's jobs out there with this industry. Myself and (Jonathan) and I think (Tyler), when Kenneth Copeland came here, we were workin' with probably, top of the line cameras. So when Kenneth Copeland came here and they needed a cameraman, they were able to request one of us.

And what was that like for the thirty-three-year-old?

**Alex:** Like goin' from a scooter to a Harley. You go there, and being able to stand with that equipment, not really knowin' all the little knobs, but having some sort
of sense about what actually takes place with the camera and how does it work, and their guys, Kenneth Copeland's production team said, 'Man look. You all did excellent. I thought I was going to have to baby you through it, but you all did good.' So that kind of speaks for the whole team, that each person knows each other's position to where if somebody does come, that we can do it. We have the understandin' of what goes on more than just the power button.

Praise, support, and confidence from beyond Angola add to the intrinsic value of the men's work at the television station. The overarching sense of accomplishment encourages the inmates to continue to succeed at whatever task they are given, a quality that ultimately trickles down to the rest of the population through governance.

**Michael:** It's most definitely an encouragement, 'cause that's one of the things I try to minister to the guys and tell the guys down the walk. …once they see an individual who's actually livin' the lifestyle, they want the same thing. So we lead by example. That's one of the things I always try to tell the guys. Character gets you everywhere. When everything else fails, you still have that character. So, if they actually see the things that I'm goin' to do, and I open myself up and tell them, it gives them hope as well. As I give them hope, I'm hoping that they're walkin' with the expectation of getting out and betterin' themselves while they're here so that later on their future looks brighter.

It actually makes me feel good, and it lets me know that being in this situation, being in this environment as an individual who has a life sentence, and you have a vision or sometime thinking they not going to manifest later on, being in that position and having those things happen, it gives hope. It gives hope that if I just
keep speaking these words, maybe someday along the line, I really will get out.
So, being able to speak those words, and being able to see those words manifest
before your eyes is like a ray of hope. This is what I need to keep doin' so
hopefully maybe one of these days I'll be able to get out.

Behavior is also maintained through productivity and the realization that what
they are doing matters, not to some person or business they will never meet, but to their
own community. The general inmate population respects and listens to – not just hears –
the word of a fellow inmate more so than the word of a guard. Thus, the presence of the
inmate-produced media is "essential and critical" to maintaining order in the massive
penitentiary, according to Cain. "(W)e're spread out, eighteen thousand acres with each
different camp like different cities around. … If we didn't have those three vehicles
(magazine and television and radio stations), then all you have to depend on is some free
person coming around talking."

**Deputy Warden Vannoy:** I think it gives him a sense of being, a sense of
purpose. He's doing something productive. Everyone likes to do something
productive. A lot of these guys when they came here, they were young, a lot of
them on the television station, they've been here a long time; *The Angolite's* the
same way. And, you know, it gives them self-respect. It gives them self-esteem. It
makes them proud of what they're doing and it reflects in the job that they do.
You know it's obvious that they are proud of what they do, and they do a good job
of it.

With freedom comes not only scrutiny, but also ignorance by those who are
resistant to change. Though *The Angolite* serves as an obvious exemplar of a tool of
resistance as a means of advocacy for penal reformation, LSP-Productions has a similar purpose despite its largely non-secular messages. LSP-Productions takes inmates, those men whom society has all but washed its hands of, and shows that men can be rehabilitated and can be productive citizens. They can walk among free people and not rape or pillage or try to escape, as traditional stereotypes would have one to believe. By allowing the men to do this, Angola, but more specifically the television station, exemplifies that conservative initiatives like the three strikes and you're out policy, already shown in California to not be any more effective than other more limited laws, and the nationwide status quo of lock 'em up and throw away the key, are counter-productive.

Chris: We have cameras and we could use those cameras for harm. We'll just let your imagination run wild, okay? Same thing for recording equipment; same for writing materials; same for The Angolite. They have photographers, computers, telephones and all the things they have could be abused real easily. Private offices can be used. They have whores in prison, where homosexuality goes on, and if you have a place that's private, and you're not trustworthy, that can be abused.

Michael: I constantly keep myself aware that I'm being watched, and any small slip-up can cost me. So I try to scrutinize myself, watch myself and make sure that I don't do anything that would take notice to their attention, that actually, you know, may cause me to take three or four steps back. So I try to scrutinize myself. I don't want to put myself...where they watchin' to see if this is going on or that is goin' on.

Tyler: I work in ministry here, too. When you sit and observe, even watching another station and you see ministry going on, it plays a positive role in my life. I've learned a lot from it. If I was to look at something, I used to just be lookin' at the picture. Now I look at the angles from which things are shot to understand the camera better. I'm workin' on being released, and if I do get out, I'm goin' to work for some ministry. We had Kenneth Copeland here. You get to meet those people. A lot of times you meet those people and connect with those people and they like the work you do, they'll tell you, come see us. We'll get you started. So it's great to have.

The benefits of the television station, as well as the other inmate-produced media, are not exclusive to those who work directly with them. The authenticity to the messages conveyed indeed influences much of the inmate population, whether as a control mechanism using a camera lens as surveillance or through the deliverance of ideologies that encourage introspection, self-reflection, and ultimately, self-governance. David sees his role as trying to support the positive aspects of the prison, because there are without question negative components that could supersede morally rehabilitative means at any time. "I think if you're in school and the bully wants the power and control, if everybody else makes him the minority, then guess what? He'll change too," he explains. "And I think that's what many aspects now at Angola are doing. We're making the bully the minority. You change or else you don't have a place here. And I like that."

Conclusion

As media have evolved elsewhere in the world, so too, have they evolved at Angola. LSP-Productions and Channel 21, the penitentiary's inmate-produced television
station, are simply a natural progression in inmate-produced media at the prison, as stated by Warden Cain and others. If hearing church services, preachers and visiting lecturers works to reinforce tenets of moral rehabilitation, then imagine what seeing them could do. Imagine what seeing fellow inmates receive their diplomas does for fostering community and pride within the penitentiary. At less then two years old, the station has already surpassed the expectations of General Manager Maurice Rabalais, and staff members continually brainstorm for ways to involve more of the prison population. The crew half-jokes that a prison-based reality show would be interesting; one man considers spotlighting the talents of the inmates through *Angola Idol*.

The men also talk about the likelihood of their work being seen beyond the prison. *The Angolite* has the largest out-of-penitentiary audience, and despite its low wattage, KLSP radio extends a few miles beyond the penitentiary. Channel 21, however, is closed circuit, which means its audience is confined to the prison complex, at least at the present time. Yet that does not mean that the public never sees the crew's work. The production members sometimes pinch-hit on free-world television crews, and in May 2008, an MSNBC Lock Up episode on Angola credited the production crew at the end of the documentary. Working alongside outside groups boosts the confidence of the men and encourages them to keep educating themselves. It also gives the other inmates something to which they may wish to aspire.

Partly because of its relative newness and partly because of the mandatory educational programming played daily on Channel 21, reviews by other inmates are mixed regarding the station. Some would prefer to watch soap operas or sports all day, and others consider the educational programming pointless because of its lack of
applicability to its audience. However, the concept of inmate-produced television and the freedoms given to those inmates working with said media, do interest the general population. Again, similar to having an award-winning magazine or the only FCC-licensed radio station, having an in-house television station is a source of pride to Angola's inmates. And, like hearing their names mentioned on the radio, seeing themselves on television, be it during a church service or at the annual rodeo, is a thrill.

There is considerable responsibility placed on the shoulders of the LSP-TV staff, and that responsibility does not go unrecognized. The men are all too aware of their potential influence over Angola's population and that at any point, for any minor infraction, their privileges can – and will be – revoked. They are the first group of men to participate in this type of project anywhere in the country, but this does not drive their behavior. Instead, their behavior drives their determination to succeed, and they must maintain a balance between professional and inmate. After all, even though they may leave the prison complex, travel with relative ease throughout the penitentiary, and play a role in the maintenance of order in the prison, they are still inmates who, at the end of the day, must return to the dormitories they share with more than five dozen other men. On the days they are involved intensely in production or post-production activities, or traveling to other prisons, they are able to escape metaphorically from their current lot. As Jonathan explains, "For those few hours that we were there (filming boxing), I didn't feel like I was an inmate…I was there, no guards were over my shoulder, we was just doing our thing and it came out well…(T)his TV station, all this, is just a huge, huge, opportunity."
CHAPTER EIGHT
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Picture a prison, any prison. What comprises the image, and what occurs inside? High fences topped with razor wire coils, castle-like walls, and uniformed guards toting weapons may come to mind. Once inside, are you searched, strip searched, cavity searched, perhaps? Are you placed in a solitary cell, or do you have a cellmate? Does he rape you? Does the guard? Do you sleep with a knife under your pillow? Do you trade sex for drugs? Do you hold a job? Do you have phone privileges? Can you have visitors? Can you hug your child? Can you screw your girlfriend? Has society been protected? Have you been made to pay? No matter what type of penal institution, from the town jail to the federal supermax, control is the issue in prison. The institution that is the prison controls even the most mundane of tasks, from eating to bathing to sleeping. There are few guaranteed rights in prison; there is even less autonomy and agency. As an inmate, you are there to be punished for your crime, and, if the correctional institution lives up to its name, you also will be rehabilitated and released back into society. There, you will likely not be able to find a good job because you are after all, an ex-con. After some time, you will probably find yourself returning to prison, this time a bit savvier in the politics of the penitentiary. And thus, the circle continues.

The previous paragraph illustrates a variety of assumptions and presumptions individuals tend to make about prisons and the conduct and control of those incarcerated in them. Some are accurate; some are exaggerated, but all hold a sense of validity. To explain in detail how a prison operates from an administrative standpoint is beyond the scope of this project, primarily because operational techniques vary from institution to
institution. However, there exists a hierarchy of power in a penitentiary that begins (at the local level) with the warden and extends downward to include deputy wardens, assistant wardens, guards, correctional officers and other employees who hold power over the inmates. As addressed earlier in this project, there is also a hierarchy of sorts among inmates. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, this classification starts at the top with trustys, who have the most privileges, and extends to Death Row inmates who have only basic rights. Considering these two groups, the state and the inmates, exist in every prison, in which group does the actual power of controlling the prison lie?

Thomas O. Murton, author of book, The Dilemma of Prison Reform, describes the real power as resting with the inmate population, calling prison control a fiction:

(T)he inmates and guards assume roles that allow guards to act 'as if' they are actually in control of the prison. In the final analysis, the amount of authority exercised by guards is no more than the amount granted by the inmates. The inmates allow the guards to remain ostensibly in control as long as the inmate power structure is allowed to function sub rosa. It is advantageous to both groups that the fiction be maintained.¹⁸⁹

Though Murton wrote the preceding statements more than thirty years ago, his sentiments are echoed both by Angola's inmates and by Warden Burl Cain. Considering the sheer number of men incarcerated at Angola, Cain recognizes that groups of inmates could band together and create a major disruption. However, he states emphatically that he will regain control of the situation, and once he does, there will be hell to pay. I too, agree that logistically, Angola's inmate population could "take over" areas of the prison, albeit for a

limited time. However, I argue that having inmates in control and governing positions does not always represent a negative situation.

Angola's inmates, particularly those who are trustys and who hold prestigious job positions, exhibit considerable influence over other inmates, particularly due to the moral rehabilitation that exists at the penitentiary. Although this influence does not affect every inmate, it does set standards to which the other men can aspire. By inmates helping other inmates, an example of pastoral power, to become morally rehabilitated, the trustys also help the men learn how to govern and police themselves through the freedoms they are allotted. This process is achieved on a broader scale through the inmate-produced media at Angola. Each medium helps maintain the self-governance among its producers and encourages it among its audience. By encouraging self-governance directly and indirectly, the Angola administration becomes an example of the shift away from – but not elimination of – sovereign and disciplinary power and move toward governmentality.

This shift is important to those individuals who still see rehabilitation as a goal of the United States correctional system but who realize that efforts to rehabilitate are failing. This project follows the assumption that rehabilitation is, or rather should be, the goal of prison, although climbing incarceration rates and mandatory sentencing guidelines may dictate otherwise. Pointing to funding cuts and the "tough-on-crime attitude by the public and elected officials," Seiter and Kadela write, "(T)he current model of prison operations and prisoner reentry does not focus on inmate rehabilitation and preparation for release, but on punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation to prevent

future crimes."\textsuperscript{191} Kolstad also notes the failure of the criminal justice system to rehabilitate and compares current prisons to the mental hospitals that have largely disappeared in the Western world.\textsuperscript{192}

Determining the true purpose of the prison is a largely unattainable task. Similar to the belief that no one power structure operates in exclusivity, I would argue that realistically, there is no single purpose or goal of a penitentiary. The crime crackdown of the 1980s coupled with increases in incarceration for even minor legal infractions is indicative of Althusser's discussion that prisons serve as repressive state apparatuses and their purpose is to separate the ruling class from the criminal.\textsuperscript{193} To say that the removal of the 'criminal element' from (free) society is not a purpose of the prison and larger criminal justice system is naïve. Some would argue imprisonment has become a business, referring to the prison-industrial complex. Eric Schlosser writes,

\begin{quote}
The prison-industrial complex is not a conspiracy, guiding the nation's criminal-justice policy behind closed doors. It is a confluence of special interests that has given prison construction in the United States a seemingly unstoppable momentum. It is composed of politicians, both liberal and conservative, who have used the fear of crime to gain votes; the impoverished rural areas where prisons have become a cornerstone of economic development; private companies that regard the roughly $35 billion spent each year on corrections not as a burden on
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{191} Seiter and Kadela, "Prisoner Reentry," 363.  
\textsuperscript{192} Kolstad, "Imprisonment as Rehabilitation," 323-335.  
American taxpayers but as a lucrative market; and government officials whose fiefdoms have expanded along with the inmate population.\textsuperscript{194}

Alleging that a prison's only purpose is to rehabilitate is equally naïve, although the idea has a more positive connotation. However, there is often more to rehabilitative methods than is first apparent. In addition to self-help type initiatives, with rehabilitation comes education and learning a trade, normalization factors, so that the inmate may reenter society as a productive citizen. Thus, the prison has a multitude of free (or cheap) labor from which it can pull, a fact not lost on the inmate workers.

**Inmate E6:** I work at Prison Enterprises, making license plates. The good thing about that job is it (inaudible) you get a little time off. This year, we did about...so far, 1,485,000 tags. That's just for Louisiana. So imagine, how much do you pay for your license plate when you go to the DMV? At least twenty dollars? Probably forty or fifty dollars. Just multiply forty dollars by 1,485,000. Know what I get paid? Seven cents an hour and they take half of it out.

Angola is unique because so few members of its inmate population will ever leave the penitentiary. Therefore, one may question the purpose of rehabilitating a person who more than likely will never reenter society. There are various responses to refute this argument, though only two will be addressed here. First, there is the (manufactured) hope held by Angola's men. Clemencies, though rare, do happen, and there is always a possibility that state legislators could reform the life-means-life mandatory sentence to a range of years that includes life. Second, as Warden Cain says, Angola is its own community, and the inmates play a direct role in how it runs. Even if a man is to be in prison for the rest of his life, it does not preclude him from making the best of his

situation and bettering the community around him. Nor does it prevent him from making himself a better person and redefining himself so that his crime does not solely define him. At Angola, the inmate-produced media serve as some of the key cultural technologies for advocating and exemplifying moral rehabilitation and self-governance.

It is inarguable that the triad of inmate-produced media at the Louisiana State Penitentiary offers certain benefits, both extrinsic and intrinsic, to those men who have been awarded and rewarded with an appointment to one of the staffs. What for some may be more difficult to discern is that the impact of said media reaches beyond those select individuals who serve as media producers to the more than five thousand inmates (and potentially thousands of free people)\(^\text{195}\) who are, albeit at varying degrees, media consumers. Certainly, no one could argue logically that we, as a society, are not affected by media. To play devil's advocate would eschew the power, and purpose, of advertising and mock the importance of a free and deregulated press. This same mindset is indicative of the climate that exists within the 5,108-inmate prison at Angola and among those men producing the media. Indeed, prisoners may be influenced by the in-house, KLSP evangelical radio station that urges listeners to repent and do the Lord's work if they ultimately are to be saved (removed) from their current station in life; their behavior may be modified through the *Grace Baptist* Bible studies televised on LSP-TV Channel 21; or they may be inspired through the success stories as printed in the internationally acclaimed *Angolite* magazine. It is the hope of *The Angolite* staff that the magazine, particularly when dealing with prison reform, also impacts those beyond the penitentiary.

---

\(^{195}\) The potential for the media to reach "thousands of free people" stems largely from *The Angolite*'s readership beyond Angola.
The inmate-produced media, in addition to encouraging and exemplifying
governmentality, foster a sense of community that cannot be as easily found in other
media. Though the men listen and watch free-world radio and television stations, they say
they cannot see themselves – physically or metaphorically – in the broadcasts. Likewise,
newspapers do not cover "their community" in the same fashion as they cover other
similarly-sized towns, nor do they address issues of pertinence to the inmate audience. If
one argues that media are framed hegemonically, thereby typically supporting the status
quo and the Marxist view of social order, then one should be able to see why *The
Angolite*, as an advocacy publication or tool of resistance, is so important to the inmates.
In the free world, "(t)he capitalist class not only controls the production of mass culture
in order to accumulate wealth, it also, by dominating the belief system(s) of the working
class, reproduces its rule."197 The previous statements should not discount the validity of
media produced beyond Angola, however. Such cultural devices provide a very necessary
link to the outside world and escapism that allows the men for a few minutes – or pages –
to leave the penitentiary.

This chapter begins with a look at Foucault's societal governance triangle that
includes the power relationship between sovereignty, discipline and governmentality and
continues to address briefly the genealogy of the prison system as described in *Discipline
& Punish*. From there, dispositifs of security are detailed and situated within the
Louisiana State Penitentiary. I then utilize Mitchell Dean's four aspects of self-
governance, based on Foucault's lectures, to illustrate how the mode of self-governance is

---

196 David L. Sallach, "Class Domination and Ideological Hegemony," *The Sociological Quarterly* 15
197 Mark Gottdiener, "Hegemony and Mass Culture: A Semiotic Approach," *The American Journal of
Sociology* 90 no. 5 (March 1985): 982.
implemented at Angola. Finally, (self)governance, control and inmate-produced media are examined beyond the inmate-media staffs and the penitentiary itself.

**Foucault's Triangle of Societal Governance**

Though situated in the (traditionally) conservative South of the United States, Angola's rehabilitative measures, or technologies of governance, more closely resemble the neo-liberal ideals of (self)governance, or governmentality, addressed by Foucault rather than techniques of repression and coercion often associated with southern prison systems. Warden Burl Cain's moral rehabilitation, as delivered and maintained through the inmate-produced media, creates a new formation of prison governance that completes Foucault's triangle of societal governance, beginning with sovereignty, extending to discipline and concluding with government (governmentality). The formation of a triangle, as opposed to a linear diagram, is crucial because the problematics overlap to varying degrees depending on the circumstances. The decentralization of governance does not mean an end for the sovereign juridical principles or disciplinary measures that historically have guided prison(er) control. Rather both problematics contribute directly to the success of governmentality within the prison system. "(I)n reality one has a triangle, sovereignty – discipline – government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security." In examining the "sides" of Foucault's triangle, sovereignty begins with a sovereign, or agent of power, who has the ability – and right – over life – to kill or not

---


199 Ibid.

kill; to punish. Foucault refers to this form of power as a "subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects." Disciplinary power, however, "concerns the exercise of power over and through the individual, the body and its forces and capacities, and the composition of aggregates of human individuals." Those representing the sovereign authority, as in the panopticon and its gaze of invisibility, may exercise disciplinary power with the hope of creating docile bodies. The final side of the triangle represents government(ality) or the art of government, which encompasses a variety of dispositifs of security. Foucault notes that La Mothe Le Vayer acknowledges three types of government that apply to specific disciplines. This research utilizes the definition of self-governance and its direct relationship to morality.

Consider, for example, the correlation between moral rehabilitation and religion. Removing atheists and agnostics from the equation, one can assume that some sort of deity presides over religion. Therefore, moral rehabilitation and the faith that there is a supreme being that guides one's soul and creates a moral law are indicative of pastoral care. As Foucault posits in a March 8, 1978 lecture:

(G)od's pastoral government of the world meant that the world was subject to an economy of salvation, that is to say, that it was made in order for man to earn his salvation. . . . (A) world subject to pastoral government, as in the pastorate, was a world in which there was an entire system of truth: truth taught, on the one hand,

---

202 Id., The History of Sexuality, 136.
203 Dean, "Basic Concepts and Themes," 19.
204 Foucault, Discipline and Punish.
205 Foucault, "Governmentality," 87-104.
and truth hidden and extracted on the other. That is to say, in a world subject to pastoral government there were forms of teaching.\textsuperscript{206}

This teaching and search for the truth plays directly into Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation and use of pastoral power. Throughout the penitentiary, there exist numerous pastoral and security dispositifs that work synergistically to implement governmentality. Just as Foucault outlines the social history of the prison in \textit{Discipline \& Punish}, his 1977-1978 \textit{Security, Territory, Population} lectures at the Collège de France provide an historical overview and explication of governmentality that include both sovereign and disciplinary rule. Without elements of the latter two, it is unlikely that the prior could exist.

1. In the case of Angola, the \textit{inmate-produced media} serve a dual role as technologies of control (by the state) and (self)governance (by the inmates). If one is able to agree that the inmate-produced media do serve as tools of (self)governance, not only influencing how the inmate-producers conduct themselves, but how the inmate-consumers govern themselves, then it can be concluded that said media act as apparatuses, or dispositifs, of security in addition to their rudimentary level of cultural technologies. In this case, culture, as addressed by Bennett, may be seen as,

\begin{quote}
    a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which the forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – in part via the extension through the social body of the forms, techniques, and regiments of aesthetic and intellectual culture.\textsuperscript{207}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{207} Bennett, "Putting Policy into Cultural Studies," 26.
The administrative component of the penitentiary understands that because the messages conveyed through the inmate-produced media are coming from other inmates, they will be more readily received and acted upon than if communicated through a warden or one of his subordinates.

2. The *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* and its graduates represent obvious leaders in pastoral governance. In addition to providing an education, the Bible College helps its students grow spiritually. Upon graduation, the men encourage their fellow inmates to apply to the program.\footnote{The Angola Story, Compiled by the Office of the Deputy Warden/Operations. Last revised March 2006.} Although the men graduate as inmate ministers, preaching is not their only profession and sometimes, it amounts to only a small fraction of actual work detail. NOBTS graduates work on all three of the inmate-produced media and incorporate their education directly into their work. Hence, Kyle Hebert covers most religious events at the penitentiary; Alex and David work on a Bible study program for the television station; and inmates can be sure to hear some radio preaching and gospel music from KLSP radio's "Goldie" and Donald Spencer. Admittance into the program is not guaranteed, and men must go through an application process that includes obtaining recommendation from the administration and a review of the inmate's "jacket" or prison file. As a student in the Bible College, an inmate is not required to hold another job, making the overall status of the position quite high and coveted for those interested in formally making religion a component of their life.

3. From a broad perspective, those inmates working with the inmate-produced media wield considerable influence over the prison population because of the mass appeal of their work product. However, this responsibility is not theirs alone. Angola's *Trusty System* affords those inmates who are deemed (trust)worthy to receive additional
freedoms and privileges. They sleep in special trusty dormitories, have greater mobility throughout the prison, and are called upon to speak with groups both on and off the penitentiary grounds. The trustys occupy a status level at Angola that is above that of the average inmate, but certainly below a free person. They have served a substantial amount of time, usually more than eight years, and are committed to moral rehabilitation, but not necessarily as outspoken about religion as some of the NOBTS graduates. Because of the access these particular inmates have to people in power, both in and out of the Angola prison system, the access they have to the entire prison population, and the access they have to the free world, they are held to the highest of standards and remain under the strictest of scrutiny by the state.

4. Inmate ministers, inmate legal counselors, media production workers and Bible College students are some of the best jobs at Angola, from a status and economic standpoint; all pay about twenty cents per hour. However, the division of labor is sharp. Every man who enters the penitentiary must bide his time working in Angola's fields, picking cotton and harvesting crops until he loses the "criminal mentality" (if he ever had one) and is recommended for a work transfer. Considering the heat that envelops Louisiana, working in the fields for a few pennies per hour is one of the least favorite jobs of the population. And although the men in the fields are nowhere near the trusty level, they lead by example of how not to be. At any time, any inmate, including a trusty, may have his classification rank dropped and be sent back into the fields. Thus, the division of labor can be viewed as a disciplinary component to prison life,
Dean, in Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society, lists four factors necessary for the self-governing process. For the first aspect, one must consider precisely what the entity is that is to be governed. In the case of an Angola inmate, it is not simply the man, but more specifically the soul, that is governed, a point that Foucault makes in Discipline & Punish when he describes the soul as "the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body." Continuing with Dean's four aspects for self-governance, one must examine how the entity is governed. Based on the results of my ethnographic research, as described in earlier chapters, I argue that the inmate-produced media at Angola – The Angolite magazine, LSP-TV Productions and KLSP radio – are more than mere entertainment, but rather dispositifs of security that play an integral role in the day-to-day (control) operations of the penitentiary, thus completing Foucault's triangle for societal (prison) governance. The inmate-produced media, particularly the radio and television stations, act as vessels for conveying the ethical and moral belief systems necessary for self-reflection and subjectification, Dean's third step. Finally, one must examine "the ends or goal sought, what we hope to become or the world we hope to create…" For the Angola population, the end result is a morally rehabilitated individual who maintains a sense of agency while being incarcerated and is able to successfully govern himself.

At Angola, the inmate-produced media serve as ideal vessels for carrying out the principles of governmentality while simultaneously serving as an exemplar of it. There is a degree of authenticity that exists for the three media, albeit at varying degrees, that says to the inmate population that the messages are more than institutional rhetoric. While

---

209 See Dean, "Basic Concepts and Themes," 17.
210 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 30.
211 Dean, "Basic Concepts and Themes," 17.
some of the messages are framed hegemonically by the state, particularly those from the radio and television stations, that they are being conveyed through other inmates creates an aura of legitimacy surrounding them, making it okay for an inmate to consider or obey without being seen as a sellout. Critical theorists support that hegemony and ideology are inseparable and that hegemonic framing goes beyond mere propaganda.  

If hegemony is the larger effort of the powerful to win the consent of their 'subordinates,' then ideological hegemony involves the cultural forms, the meanings, the rituals, and the representations that produce consent to the status quo and individuals' particular places within it. … A reconceptualized critical research endorses a much more subtle, ambiguous, and situationally specific form of domination that refuses the propaganda model's assumption that people are passive, easily manipulated victims.

In the case of the prison system, such cultural forms include any media, but especially those created by inmates. Not only conveying but also imposing one's beliefs on society ensures that one's ideologies will continue expanding among the masses. If subcultural ideologies are allowed to be conveyed and discussed, which is the case at Angola, particularly with *The Angolite* as a tool of resistance, one can consider a form of governmentality to be successful.

Generally speaking, ideologies are often taken for granted because they manifest themselves as commonsensical notions. In the minds of those who believe in them, there

---

213 Ibid., 309-310.
is no need to consider alternative positions because such viewpoints would make little sense. Irvine writes, "(S)ome of the most important and interesting aspects of ideology lie behind the scenes, in assumptions that are taken for granted – that are never explicitly in any format that would permit them also to be explicitly denied."

Because of this, it is important to view over a period of time how languages are used in multiple contexts. Surely, inmate-produced media convey the hegemonic state ideologies. However, because of moral rehabilitation and the creation of docile bodies, in at least some cases, the ideologies of the state are indicative of those belonging to the inmate-media producers, bringing analysis to a much more micro-level.

As the number of incarcerated individuals continues to rise throughout the United States and the allocated funds for prisons decrease, it is likely that Foucault's notion of governmentality, exemplified through, among other things, the inmate-produced media at Angola, could become a more successful and economically prudent way to manage inmates, particularly those inmates who are incarcerated for lengthy prison sentences. 

*Discipline & Punish*, while providing a detailed perspective on the social history of the prison system, stops short of completing the triangle of governance exemplified in Foucault's 1977-1978 lectures. This ethnographic account illustrates that form of self-governance and situates it in terms of culture, in this case, inmate-produced media. Ironically, because of the moral rehabilitation that is such a part of Angola, an ultimate form of sovereign power – that of God or a god – is also very much visible. That rehabilitation, according to Cain, is inextricable from the prison. "The only rehabilitation

---


is moral," he states. "We can teach you to read and write and skills and (a) trade. We made a smarter criminal if we didn't put a moral component with it. It's like your own life. We're moral people. If you're not moral, we're in trouble. We're all in trouble."

A Brief History

Even prior to the birth of the penal system in Western civilization, the notion of power has lain primarily under the auspices of the state. As mentioned earlier, Foucault examines this history of *Discipline & Punish*, circa 18th century France though applicable to the remainder of the Western world, beginning with the spectacle of torture, progressing to punishment and concluding with the notion of a more discipline-centered institution. As is part of the argument of this section, none of the aforementioned waves is necessarily exclusive of one another; the existence of one does not mean the absence of another. For the Louisiana State Penitentiary, correlations between *Discipline & Punish* can be made immediately with the idea of a spectacle of torture. Indeed, Angola is a spectacle unto itself, with its thousands of acres of land that house thousands of men for thousands of days. The spectacular continues to manifest itself in the inmate farm workers who march stoically and systematically to and from the prison as if they are slaves.

Inside the Death House, in the electrocution room, the lethal injection table sits alone in a room, as if it is being spotlighted. From a large window, members of the press and a victim's family may watch the death process unfold. According to Foucault, public torture and execution, which in the earliest of years involved the guillotine, drawing and quartering and hangings, functioned to "reveal the truth; and in this respect it continued,

---

218 Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*. 
in the public eye, the work of the juridical torture conducted in private.\textsuperscript{219} This purpose should sound peculiar considering such punishment is not usually addressed as a function of prison. However, there is something prestigious yet macabre about the spectacle of execution; the reason the penitentiary displays its old electric chair in the prison museum, perhaps? And not to be forgotten is the annual prison rodeo that draws thousands of visitors to the penitentiary to watch the men compete for money and bragging rights.

Though the creation of the prison system removed some sense of sovereignty from penalization, the possession of power remained with those associated with the state, including the police, the prison guards and other prison associates. The power relationship shifted toward discipline and introduced a more advanced form of power than that typically associated with punishment. This power allowed the state to break individuals and transform them into docile bodies that could then be molded into a new economic entity\textsuperscript{220} that conformed to a specific mold and could better benefit society. The creation of docile bodies is not unique to the prison system and could be found in other state apparatuses, including the military and certain education systems.

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{220} Foucault, \textit{Discipline & Punish}.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 138.
From the stance of the disciplinarian, the construction of docile bodies strips the prisoner of his threat potential.

1. Discipline is introduced to inmates by a routine schedule. If inmates want breakfast and a shower before they begin their work day, they must rise early enough to accomplish both tasks. Although some men holding prison jobs have more flexibility with scheduling, those with line or field jobs are not as lucky. If they are not with their line when it is time to leave for the fields, they will be disciplined. Even those trustys with more flexible schedules must let some free person of authority know where they are at all times. Foucault notes these timetables and schedules and categorizes them as a pedagogical\textsuperscript{222} component of life in a prison. Goffman would agree, as routinized behavior is a major characteristic of the total institution.\textsuperscript{223} It is ironic that these particular Angola men, most of whom have all the time in the world, must be held to such temporal demands.

2. The daily count also represents a major disciplinary technique used at Angola. Every day and throughout the day, the men must present themselves to be counted by the guards. During the count period, the men are confined to whatever location they are in at the moment, a fate that does not sound problematic except that count must clear for the inmates to move to another area of the prison. From a broader perspective, count also reminds the men that they are a product or commodity of the penitentiary. In his explanation of the benefits surrounding his work with LSP-TV, Alex states that he earns respect and becomes more than the series of digits in his DOC number. People, important

\textsuperscript{222} Foucault, \textit{Discipline & Punish}.

people, are able to put a name to his face. During count, however, he is once again reduced to number.

3. The same division of labor mentioned earlier as (tangentially) being a component of pastoral power is likely better placed in the realm of discipline. In the fields, inmates new to Angola learn the rules and regulations of the penitentiary as well as the punishments enacted should the rules not be followed. The harsh, physical labor is used to discipline the inmates' minds and bodies to the (administration's) ways of the prison. Should an inmate forget the rules of the penitentiary, he may find himself back in the farm lines or worse – on some sort of cell restriction. KLSP radio deejay Robin Polk admits that returning to field after being out for more than two decades would be a definite "blow." Although he does not believe his conduct will ever take him back there, the possibility remains.

Without a doubt, there are men at Angola who are not rehabilitated, who for whatever reason choose to spend their time in a constant power struggle with the state. However, many of Angola's inmates are no longer interested (primarily) in physical resistance, but in serving their time in the easiest way possible by following the rules and becoming productive, obedient, if not morally rehabilitated men. Yet even once made into a docile body, an inmate still maintains a degree of power that is reorganized and redirected into something constructive, as defined by the state. Often, this power is channeled into a prison job.

At Angola, the men producing the inmate-produced media are selected specifically by the administration; not everyone is afforded the opportunity, including those who may have the intellectual prowess. Instead, character is one of the main
determinants and is judged by the administration as well as the inmates. That not every inmate receives a chance to work on the media, or in other top inmate positions, is embraced by those already on staff who do not want to see their benefits diluted or erased because of a potentially problematic individual. Chris, who works for LSP-Productions, does not deny that individuals may work the system and misrepresent themselves as changed men when in reality, the docility is not there. However, that front cannot last long.

**Chris:** …there are a lot of people here that need to be here. I'm not trying to judge 'em one way or another. Your character and your actions speak for themselves. After a period of time, you're around someone, and I'm going to get to know you. I'm going to get to know what's inside of you. … Your true character is goin' to come out eventually. You can't hide a sickness because a sickness will show itself over a period of time. That's why I think that Warden Cain gives us these opportunities, because he knows there are a lot of people here who are not sick, they just made a choice years ago, especially as a young man. And he sees that; he wants to give you an opportunity to better yourself and prepare yourself to get out in society.

In an interview with J.J. Brochier, Foucault\(^\text{224}\) details why criminals are a necessity in the realm of political economy. In doing so, he also illustrates how governmentality is very much a cycle that impacts a myriad of individuals in one swoop. The scenario addresses a period of time at the end of the eighteenth century when people envisioned a crime-free society. The reality is that society *needs* crime as a way of

---

policing itself. Foucault asks how a free society would accept forceful control – interventions, limitations and armed soldiers of the state – if there were no criminals. He continues on to address governmentality and questions what would happen if, "there weren't articles every day in the newspapers telling us how numerous and dangerous our criminals are?"  

This scenario may be considered indicative of the state "governing at a distance." Culture is seen as helping the individual to allow not only him or herself to be governed, but to self govern him or herself. In this case, culture exists not only itself, but as an instrument of governmental policy. Such is the case with the inmate-produced media at Angola, particularly, but not exclusive of, the television and radio stations that focus primarily on religion and education. Warden Cain's values of moral rehabilitation are disseminated without him ever having to say a word. Because the inmate-media producers are hand-picked, Cain trusts that they will convey proper messages.

*The Angolite*, much more of a tool of resistance, is tolerated in part because of the credibility it has earned during its existence and because its journalists, who are also chosen by the administration, are not out to "commit suicide" with the magazine. The journalists' jobs are to report the news and convey issues of importance to the inmate population in a truthful – not necessarily positive – light. There is an absolute essence of responsibilization in that job description. According to Ilcan and Basok, "(I)t can be said that the task of government today is no longer engaged in traditional planning but is more involved in enabling, inspiring, and assisting citizens to take responsibility for social problems in their communities and formulating appropriate orientations and

---

225 Ibid., 47.
rationalities for their actions."\(^{228}\) The Angolite aspires to this call to action not only by perpetuating the ideals of moral rehabilitation, if by no other means than reporting on the regular activities within the prison, but also by pointing out the problematics within the Louisiana criminal justice system in the hopes of inspiring reform.

It should be noted that responsibilization is not exclusive to The Angolite and can be found in the radio and television stations. Religious, ritualistic communication that is broadcast to the inmate population encourages the men to look inward for guidance. Examining one's soul and defining what comprises it are the first steps toward subjectification and moral rehabilitation. This introspective approach puts responsibility on the individual and his community, as inmates are encouraged to work with one another to keep rehabilitation an ongoing activity. Although this may appear as if putting the onus on the inmate allows the state to shirk its responsibilities, David Garland says this is not the case. "The idea of a responsibilization strategy implies that the state is taking on an ambitious new role, not merely 'passing the buck', 'getting off the hook' or 'taking a back seat.' It is experimenting with ways of acting at a distance…"\(^{229}\) Ordinarily, this would involve private agencies; however, it is my contention that responsibilization can take place in an inmate population, with inmate groups acting as the private entities – those that are not associated directly with the state. That is not to discount outside agencies assisting with the rehabilitative process, largely because the inmate-produced media have audiences beyond that of inmates.

\(^{228}\) Ican and Basok, "Community Government," 132.
\(^{229}\) Garland, "The Limits of the Sovereign State," 454.
Although governmentality in the form of self-governance\textsuperscript{230} is not directly addressed in Foucault's *Discipline & Punish*, it is the next likely progression in this pseudo-timeline/genealogy of the institutionalized penal system. This self-governance may be guided by a myriad of techniques that may or may not be controlled by the state itself, including forms of culture. Furthermore, the potential exists for individuals – in this case prisoners – to be transformed first into docile bodies and later allowed to engage in self-governance and to hold a pastoral power that mirrors the relationship of a shepherd watching over his flock.\textsuperscript{231} Transporting that scenario to Angola, inmates working with the inmate-produced media\textsuperscript{232} become the shepherds who guide their sheep (their audiences) via their respective medium. The welfare of the flock is of the utmost importance. Because of the massive reach of the media within the prison, the inmate-producers have the largest flocks and therefore, the most power.

Transformation into a docile body may equate to subjectification, allowing said individual to remain controlled yet still productive.\textsuperscript{233} However, it is possible that the historic power positions may reverse, and in fact they do at Angola, placing control in the hands of the oppressed, thus illustrating how government, seen "as the 'conduct of conduct' is interwoven with the history of dissenting 'counter-conducts'."\textsuperscript{234} Though Foucault does not specify in what form this conduct is to manifest itself, I would argue


\textsuperscript{232} This is particularly true of those working with the television and radio stations because of the media's immediacy.

\textsuperscript{233} Milchman and Rosenberg, "Michel Foucault: Crises and Problemizations," 335-351.

that *The Angolite*, as a tool of resistance, has the potential of changing the conduct of the very power than (ultimately) governs is. Truthfully, the effect is more important than the means. That effect is pivotal because it allows governmentality to exist through the combination of sovereignty governance, discipline, and self-policing, with emphasis placed on the latter element.

**Technologies of Governance/Dispositifs of Security**

Self-governance may seem an unlikely component to a prison system and is clearly absent in any depth from Foucault's *Discipline & Punish*. Even in his 1977-1978 lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault focuses his discussion on governmentality and his triangle for societal governance at the state level rather than detailing its specific applicability within the penal system. Goffman\(^{235}\) sees such 'total institutions' as establishments that are designed to impart and impose state ideologies on the inmate, with the inmates' lifestyle and ideologies being at perpetual odds with the institutional life. “Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors.”\(^{236}\) As a means of social control, rules are carefully constructed and strictly enforced, limiting – if not eliminating – any potential for self-governance. In many cases, this is the penal system portrayed in Foucault's social history of the prison system, based largely on a carefully constructed, disciplinary institution that maintains a connection to sovereignty. However, while Goffman's concept of the total institution may work to control an inmate population, it is naïve to believe that it will rehabilitate the individual –

\(^{235}\) Goffman, *Asylums*.

\(^{236}\) Ibid., 4.
which ultimately is the purpose of the current prison (correctional) system. That is why Foucault's societal governance triangle must be examined at the level of the penal institution.

It is my contention that the inmate-produced media at Angola serve as technologies of (self)governance by dispersing the power (and in some cases reversing the notion) of Bentham's panopticon, which puts an omnipresent eye at the center of the prison that may or may not be watching a particular inmate at any time. Thus, the inmate's conduct is controlled by the potential of being watched. By reversing the panopticon, the inmate, as opposed to the Other, serves as the subject by which his actions are guided. Mayo sees this notion of subjectivity as individuals "being a subject and that of being subject to." However, inmate-produced media are not the only way to achieve the goals of governmentality, which in the case of a prison system may refer to successful self-governance and population (behavioral) control that places emphasis on the individual to police himself and others according to pre-established state rules. One might argue that the very idea of being in prison forces an individual to self-govern, or self-police, himself out of necessity. When asked to describe what being in prison is like, Chris, without any prodding, immediately launches into a discussion of a lack of privacy, a facet of prison life addressed by most of the men interviewed for this project. The lack of privacy that is indicative of incarceration forces inmates who want to better themselves and not resist rehabilitation, to police themselves, albeit at varying levels, out of necessity. With more than five thousand inmates at Angola and hundreds of employees, it is impossible to know who is watching whom and when. Those who become subjectified,

---

237 Bentham, "Letter II: Plan for a Penitentiary Inspection House."
or model inmates, are then rewarded with additional freedoms and less surveillance that may include office space (and a door); participating in the annual rodeo and thereby obtaining liberal access to free people; or leaving the penitentiary complex.

**Chris:** This is my theory; this has not been explained. But what happens here is, when you get to Angola … I was thirty years old and I had never been in this type of environment before, and you go into a dorm with sixty-four other people, or a thousand people on one yard, and you never have any privacy. When you go to the bathroom, there's a guy sittin' right next to ya. When you go to the shower, there's three or four guys in there with ya, or ten or twelve. You're never allowed any privacy, and eventually, over a period of time, it creates a psychosis, and you become paranoid. … These people cannot handle it. That's why some people don't want to come out of the cell blocks, because they literally cannot stand that type of openness. This place was created by design. Nobody's every told me that, but I guarantee it is. You walk down the walks, all the dorms are open, all the way. I can literally sit on my bed in one dorm and look at another bed in the next dorm. I can see a guy sitting on his bed, and I can see what he's doin' from my bed in the next dorm. So everything is open. The showers are wide open. Everyone can see you in there showerin'. When you're sitting in there on the toilet, handling your business every day, you're wide open to everybody watching you use the bathroom.

…You only have so many security officers that work here. They are not the ones that keep this place secure. Believe that. … What I'm referring to is inmates watching other inmates. And when you got thousands of ’em like you do here, and
you never got any privacy, over a period of time, you begin to police yourself. And it is a way of corrections. And in a way, you begin to watch your behavior because you know you're always being watched and you never have any privacy. So you're not going to go in the bathroom, and I'm going to be really explicit here, you're not going to fondle yourself, because someone is going to see you do that… you begin to police yourself so that you don't reap the repercussion of that.

For some it works, for others it don't. The ones that it don't, they'll tell you horror stories of what ends up happening to them over repercussions from their behavior.

From a traditionalistic standpoint, Bentham's panopticon is likely the most recognized surveillance dispositif in the realm of penology, and according to Foucault, may be considered "the oldest dream of the oldest sovereign." Though initially designed by Bentham as an architectural structure, the panopticon, as interpreted by Foucault, grants some person omnipotence over the prison population and affords said person the authority to enforce sovereignty and juridical principles. This surveillance tool is evident both in its architectural and metaphoric states at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Watch towers provide 360-degree views of the penitentiary grounds, while inmates like Chris are quick to discern that in such heavily populated and close-quartered areas, it is imperative to police oneself before someone else takes it upon himself to handle the policing. At one extreme, governing 'thy neighbor' may be read as the prison snitch who reports any infraction to the juridical principles of the penitentiary in order to potentially advance himself. Because, as addressed earlier, trust is sometimes more illusive than privacy in the penitentiary setting, one must be constantly on his guard to

see who is watching and when. Since this is virtually impossible to always recognize, the inmate is better served not acting counter to institutional rules from the get-go.

Interestingly, this idea of inmates policing inmates extends to other prisons and dates back several decades to when trusty (inmate) guards carried weapons and were charged with managing the inmate population. Though this scenario better illustrates enforcement of juridical principles and the punishments incurred by those who deviated from said laws, it does, at the most literal level, show the potential problems of placing power into the hands of the prisoner. During the time of inmate guards, Angola was a very different place, marred with extreme inmate violence and an overall lack of control by the state – hence the reason for the eventual elimination of these 'guards.' One could argue that despite the brute power afforded to these men, they lacked the necessary knowledge – of themselves and the soul – to be considered a docile body capable of carrying out the ideologies of the state. Of course, one might also argue that at this point in history, where slave labor and chain gangs remained commonplace, rehabilitation was not at the forefront of penal system objectives or ideologies either.

At the other end of the self-governing continuum, not that there can be a definitive start and end, is what I argue is happening at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. The inmate-produced media serve as not only tools of governance for the individuals working directly with said media, but also as tools of governance (dispositifs of security) for the entire population. Because the media are, in fact, inmate-produced, they serve as vessels for the inmates to control one another, ultimately reversing the concept of Bentham's panopticon and reflecting an image that allows the inmates to be the subject by which other's conduct is guided. It has already been established that those
inmates involved with the inmate-produced media were reviewed by various levels of institutional power before being placed into their positions. Furthermore, the freedoms associated with the positions, as well as the respect afforded to those particular men, serve as something other inmates may look up to. The messages of the media also carry a higher degree of merit because one of their own as opposed to a free, institutional spokesperson is transmitting them.

*The Angolite* regularly carries messages to the inmate population, be it general information from 'Around the Farm' or more specific information, including hepatitis prevention, of which Lane Nelson is the resident expert; diabetes management; or inmate-inmate sexual assault. Deputy Warden Sheryl Ranatza sees the magazine as being a source of pride for the other inmates, as well as the staff, largely because of its standing among free-world critics.

**Deputy Warden Ranatza:** The circulation outside of Angola is important to the Angolite inmates, and I think it is, too, to the general population because of the reputation of *The Angolite*, because of the quality of the information in there.

Some prison magazines, even in this state, are really more current events of what goes on in the prison, but ours is more broadly focused on issues. So I think that's important to the general population. It's not just about Angola, it's about the system, I guess.

Touted as being a non-censored publication, though it is more accurate to say the least censored prison publication, *The Angolite* looks to more general institutional issues than the day-to-day happenings at Angola. Because its readership extends beyond the
prison, unlike the television and radio stations, *The Angolite* staff has the unique opportunity of potentially influencing how its non-inmate readers govern themselves. This is an incredibly empowering aspect of the journalists' work and a component that is not lost on features writer John Corley. While he recognizes the inmate population as *The Angolite's* target audience, he also realizes that it is those beyond Angola who have the real power to reform the penal and criminal justice systems, particularly those in Louisiana.

**John Corley:** (W)hat has happened to all of these people in this prison, and in every prison, in every state in the country, what has happened to each one can happen to anyone. It can happen to you, you can get in trouble. (*snaps finger*) Just like that. Not intended, not planned. Just all of a sudden you are in trouble and facing the jury and the next thing you know, here you are in prison, wondering how in the hell did I get here? What am I gonna do? What's this about? And why can't I get out? That's why it's important. More people should read the magazine to enlighten themselves.

... I realize when I'm writing an article, I realize that there are five thousand people here who are at some point going to read what I've written and I know that the administration is going to read what I've written, and I know that the general public is going to read what I've written at some point. It's not difficult because I'm trying to tell the story truthfully, as I see it, and I'm not here on the staff to bash the administration, and I'm not here to bash the inmate population and talk bad about the legislature or the public, even though sometimes, sometimes each

---

240 Though KLPS radio station is low watt and designed for the inmate population, its coverage area does extend beyond the actual penitentiary grounds for a few miles.
group deserves something, a little bashing. You've got to do it professionally. None of us are professionals but you try to do it professionally and I try to walk that line between all the groups and we do well, I think. I think we do well. We present as professional a journal as I think can be expected in this environment with the personalities. … The articles we write, the feature articles especially, I think they're helpful. They're enlightening and their helpful and I think a lot of them offer solutions to very real problems that the penal system faces.

*The Angolite* is unquestionably unique, even among the company of LSP-Productions (LSP-TV) and KLSP radio station. As both the administration and the inmate staffers are quick to point out, *The Angolite* is more journalism than entertainment. That said, tenets of objectivity and unbiased news reporting are important, just as they are in traditional journalism, typified by such news staples as *The New York Times*. However, that is not to minimize the self-governing properties exhibited through more entertainment-based cultural technologies like Angola's radio and television stations. Unlike with *The Angolite* that reports more broadly on news and issues impacting the inmate population, the radio station more directly reiterates the premises (Christian values) behind Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation, allowing inmates to become more introspective and knowledgeable of their souls, and eventually transforming into a docile body that can be classified as a subject. This transformation, which shares more than one characteristic of pastoral power, will be more formally discussed later in this chapter. The television station, Angola's newest media, finds itself somewhere in between the magazine and radio station. Though it undoubtedly helps to convey the ideals of moral rehabilitation, it also serves (to a lesser degree than *The Angolite*) as an educational tool.
and a medium of record for documenting penitentiary activities, be it the annual rodeo, sporting events, or guest speakers.

From a practical standpoint, Alex, LSP-Productions longest employee, has witnessed firsthand how the television crew must work directly with other inmates to modify behavior. The television station, much like the radio station, is not a plaything; it was designed as an administrative tool for control and surveillance purposes. Therefore, the television staff must look at the needs of the entire prison population when choosing what material to air. This issue was previously addressed when the men explained the self-censorship that occurs when choosing movies to run. The LSP-TV staff withholds movies that may have risqué sexual innuendos or questionable language. It is important to recognize that the radio and television stations are accessible not only by those upper-level trusty inmates, but by those who are not ready to see themselves as a subject, such as those in restrictive housing units, cell blocks or Death Row. In reality, these are the men for whom the inmate-produced media were designed, further supporting the argument that the media serve dual roles of self-governance and control by the administration.

Though much of the governance of fellow inmates finds itself embedded in the cultural technologies of Angola's print or broadcast media, it sometimes manifests itself more blatantly. In one particular instance, Alex found himself directly confronting an inmate minister on his inappropriate behavior during a church service. Although the man's actions likely were neither intentional nor designed to create an uncomfortable situation, his conduct had to be addressed.
Alex: (I)t's happened already where a man preachin' adjusted himself and it's bad. So we have to watch. We could have left it, but do we want to broadcast that? Could someone take that the wrong way? So we cut it out. Then we went to tell him, you have a habit, you've got to stop. He didn't believe it so we brought that part and he said, 'Oh man. I can't believe it.'

With the television station, the very idea of Bentham's panopticon is reversed largely due to the lens of the video camera. No longer are an inmate's actions exclusively controlled by the potential of some person watching. Instead, the reflection of the inmate himself, as broadcast through the lens of the camera, makes the individual man the subject by which his own actions are guided. This transformation does not eradicate the original purpose of the panopticon, but rather creates a parallel power structure – this one led by the inmate with a focus on individualization as opposed to an entire population, as could be the situation with a total institution or sovereignty. Initially, conduct impacted by the panopticon could be seen as a disciplinary tactic. However, once the concept behind panopticism is reversed, the process more closely resembles governmentality.

In their book *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality*, Bratich, Packer and McCarthy define governmentality as "an attempt to reformulate the governor-governed relationship, one that does not make the relation dependent upon administrative machines, juridical institutions, or other apparatuses that usually get grouped under the rubric of the State." In redefining this relationship, cultural practices – including those seemingly innocuous entities – are fashioned into and utilized as control mechanisms. By doing this, individuals are able to (outwardly) play a direct role in their individual

---

governance as well as society's over all. Ideals are conveyed and supported through carefully selected culture that is embedded (at least to some extent) with the ideologies of the particular institution. Angola's inmate-produced media illustrate this, as do other similar cultural forms.

In Elenor Novek's work with an inmate-produced newspaper, the female prisoners involved with the Clara Barton State Prison newspaper saw the medium as a form of empowerment, allowing them to address such issues as breast cancer and prisoners' rights.\(^243\) When prison administrators began to censor articles that too closely scrutinized their institution, the realization of who maintained control over the prison's culture became painfully obvious. Still, the medium was able to provide inmate-participants with a sense of self-worth and readers with pertinent information.\(^244\) The leap necessary to afford inmates a voice in criticizing their own institution, or the justice system overall is a wide one, fraught with potential institutional problems, or at the very least, uncomfortable situations. That issues surrounding the inmates may be exposed to those outside the realm of the penitentiary suddenly makes the state a subject of surveillance. One must question, in the case of the Clara Barton State Prison, why the newspaper's publication was allowed in the first place if there was not administrative sincerity. Is it not worse to create an obvious false sense of agency among inmates that says: It might be cathartic and beneficial for you to voice concerns over certain issues, and it might even be beneficial to the state to ward off potential problems, but, as an inmate, you do not have the freedom to criticize those who control the only life you know? If inmate-produced media are used as forms of governmentality, thereby changing the general

---

\(^{243}\) See Novek, "'The Devil's Bargain'," 5-23; and Novek, "'Heaven, Hell, and Here'," 281-301.

\(^{244}\) Id., "'The Devil's Bargain'," 5-23.
definition of culture to "a distinctive set of knowledges, expertise, techniques and
apparatuses," inmates involved with the media are shaped and governed by the very
cultural items they have helped to create.

In addition to the media itself, the act of producing the media and its messages
also contributes to self-governance. As members of the media, the men have access to
privileges that other inmates do not, or at least not to the same degree. Although the men
state that their character is not based on the freedoms associated with their jobs, most
eventually admit that they are motivated to strive to do better to keep their freedoms and
to perhaps someday gain others. Hence, the men are governed through the freedom they
are granted as it forces them to self-police themselves to maintain their privileges and not
lose trustworthiness. The policing extends beyond the individual, however. The men
become pastors to guide those who have not yet been subjectified. They look out for the
interests of fellow inmates not only by serving as model inmates but also by carefully
choosing the messages disseminated throughout the penitentiary.

For some of Angola's men, working with the inmate-produced media allows them
to transform what little power they are afforded into a (pseudo)reality based on a life
before incarceration. *Angolite* editor Kerry Myers admits that his position at the magazine
helps him keep his sanity. Others, like Alex and David, say their work provides them
with a sense of accomplishment, while men like Robin Polk see the media as not only
having the ability to influence but equip inmates with a marketable skill should they ever
be released from prison. In this reality of manufactured hope, luxuries like free speech,
which tend to be a nonexistent or at best heavily restricted in total disciplinary
institutions, remain intact. By reproducing pieces of the world beyond a prison's gates,

---

inmates can feel a greater connection to their world before prison, thereby enhancing their own created reality. This simulation, as Baudrillard explains, is exhibited through actual events, objects or rituals. Indeed a sense of self-governance, however limited, plays into this concept and may manifest itself in cultural technologies like inmate-produced media. Inmates are content because they have a connection to the outside world, and the institutional hierarchy is satisfied because the 'deviants' under their watch remain (self)controlled and productive.

There is no definite response as to what would happen should these media – or any media – be removed from Angola. Some say that media in prison serve as escape mechanisms for the individuals who have nowhere else to turn, and removing those media would create a state of chaos in the penitentiary. Media, whether produced by the inmates or not, provide a valuable connection to the outside world and serve as a potential means to an end of despair for the men. Like co-worker Lane Nelson, John Corley was not a consumer of news prior to entering Angola. Now, news and media in general play an important role in his daily survival.

**John Corley:** Television is an escape. Television…you can get lost in a television program, and for that brief period, you can be away from Angola and you can be away from the stress and the pressures and the demands of the prison environment. So sure, it would make a difference whether it was the internal station or the outside. If they took out the televisions, I think that would be a tragic thing because… human beings need to be entertained. We need that in our lives. We can't just walk around stonily all the time and have no mechanism for

---

entertainment. People need that, especially in prison. TVs are important. They get you out of this place for a while. Newspapers. So many people are so absorbed in the newspaper, knowing what's going on, I think that's probably just a human characteristic, to want to know what's going on around you. And that would be tragic. You take *The Angolite* away, again along those same lines, that would be tragic. You cut off all your contact with the outside world and even with the inside world.

… Well, you kind of have to (pay attention to the news). Being in prison, in such a position, facing such hopelessness, you tend to want to look everywhere to see what can I use from here? That's one reason we read newspapers. What did this court say in another state and how can I use it?

Still other inmates, perhaps accustomed to the instability and uncertainty of any freedoms in prison, said inmates would simply adjust if the media were removed from Angola. After all, few other options exist for those subjects who have accepted moral rehabilitation. Rebelling is not an option. "We adapt; we're like cockroaches," explained one inmate. "It's kind of an ugly term, but it's the truth. Cockroaches adapt to anything. They've been around for billions of years in the same form."

The freedoms enjoyed by those inmates who recognize themselves as subjects help shift and elevate some of Angola's men to a higher status, however limited, than much of the prison populace. Yet the men who enjoy this experience of self-governance and governmentality are reluctant to admit to any distinction other than the basic trusty-level classification that exists throughout the state. They are more than aware that not all inmates agree with the luxuries afforded to them or the positive publicity that

---

247 Novek, "'The Devil's Bargain'," 5-23.
may be generated through them. Therefore, the men are wise to minimize their authority, knowing that at the end of the day, they must leave their offices and return to a dormitory of more than sixty other men or a yard of more than one thousand. There is no place for braggarts in prison. However, there remains a deliberate, state-imposed segregation of inmates according to trusty status. There are all-trusty dormitories, as well as camps, thereby limiting, to some degree, the interaction between levels of men and further demarcating levels of power. In positions of power, the trustys do no act directly on others to modify their behavior. Instead, they lead, exercising power that Foucault describes as "a 'conduct of conducts' and a management of possibilities."248 In addition to limiting interactions, the segregation also allows for better control of freedoms afforded to the various trusty levels. For example, in certain trusty dormitories, the television can remain on all night and showers can be taken at any time. This stands in stark contrast to other living quarters that have limited television viewing hours and specific shower and exercising schedules.

The aforementioned class or caste system is not exclusive to prison. Indeed, it should sound familiar to anyone who has attended school, held a job, or become part of some sort of institutional entity. Social stratifications are necessary so that individuals might find their place in the world and know what is expected of them. Foucault sees this stratification, or classification, as a means of punishment and reward.249 Speak with someone who has attempted to transcend these boundaries and you will quickly learn how important and grounded they are. On a broad level, the social stratification system at Angola is based largely on those who have bought into moral rehabilitation and

---

248 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 341.
249 Foucault, Discipline & Punish
subjectified themselves and those who have not, though other subcultures exist within the broadest categories, to be sure. This is similar to the experiences found by Dordick and Rachlin\textsuperscript{250} in their studies of New York City's homeless.

Research conducted in several of the city's homeless shelters uncovered very definite status levels among the homeless. At a Manhattan Shelter, those men involved in the Work Employment Program (WEP) were housed on a specific floor with access to a television and videocassette recorder, though tapes had to be rented with the men's own money. Because money was involved, the men created a tight-knit group that prohibited others – those without access to money – from joining. The more the men worked to better themselves and move beyond their homeless state, the more liberties they received. Interestingly, media access was a high-priority liberty. According to Dordick and Rachlin:

WEP participants see themselves as having more 'pride' than other residents, a perception that plays itself out not only in an emphasis on personal hygiene but also in a rejection of drug and alcohol use...There is clearly a relationship between the desire of the men in the Work Employment Program to distinguish themselves from the other shelter residents and their extensive use of their VCR...Their sense of eliteness is entirely local to their environment, based on the meager scraps of privilege that make them just slightly less poor than those around them.\textsuperscript{251}

Novek, who spent more than two and a half years creating and advising the inmate-produced publication at Clara Barton, considers such media part of a 'devil's

\textsuperscript{250} Dordick and Rachlin, "Television in the Lives of the Homeless," 163-178.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 172-176.
bargain' because the paper "can function simultaneously as a control mechanism that serves the repressive functions of the prison and as a potentially empowering aspect of prison culture for inmates." Stopping short of introducing governmentality into her findings, Novek acknowledges the thin line that must be walked between advocating the state's ideological propaganda and broadcasting information that is crucial to the captive community.

Considering the history behind prison systems and the amount of control exhibited in them, it is noteworthy that governmentality is even considered within correctional institutions. Referencing Nikolas Rose, Chantraine describes governmentality in prisons involving inmates being "governed through their freedom," an interesting interpretation for a very captive population. Ultimately, prisoners are not governed by direct laws, rules or regulations. Instead, the potential exists for them to be controlled by the very culture that surrounds them and that they help to create. By having individuals serve as their own surveillance, governmentality is "more efficient and profitable in terms of the economy of power." In the case of Angola, the inmate-produced media serve not only as technologies of self-governance, but as dispositifs of security, effectively illustrating Foucault's triangle for societal governance and the interconnectivity – not the exclusivity – of sovereignty, discipline and government. Individuals are also given a sense of autonomy by being made to feel as if they are making conscious decisions to behave a certain way. In reality, the cultural technologies

serve as vessels for transporting the messages and ideologies of the state. That power then embeds itself into the individual who in turn incorporates the beliefs into his or her character, belief systems and behaviors.

**Inmate-produced Media beyond Angola**

Located in Long Island, New York, the Osborne Foundation is in charge of the *Rikers Review*, a prison publication put out by the inmates of the New York State Penitentiary at Rikers Island. According to its Web site, the advocacy organization exists to help transform the lives of prisoners and to "demonstrate that there are policies and procedures our nation can adopt that can foster a more effective and efficient criminal justice system and a safer and more just society."²⁵⁶ The foundation believes that despite arguments to the contrary, imprisonment does not focus on rehabilitation and discounts a person's ability to change his or her behavior. Therefore, prisons become a costly venture as recidivism rates rise and prisons themselves become overcrowded. The *Rikers Review* is billed as part of the foundation's Fresh Start program, designed to aid prisoners in learning a marketable skill during their stay on the island, similar to what Louisiana's Warden Burl Cain advocates. In addition to the literary magazine, the Osborne Foundation also offers cooking classes in order to prepare 'students' for work in a bakery upon their release.

The success of the educational program is touted on the foundation's Web site and by the New York State Penitentiary. Once again, it is difficult to find fault with a program that appears to yield nothing but success stories. On closer examination however, it is not hard to see that the foundation's premise is not that far removed from

the non-governmental organizations discussed in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*.257 Here, Empire's powers are not considered as "weapons of force," but as "moral instruments" that must be questioned ultimately for their motives.258 The duo writes:

What we are calling moral intervention is practiced today by a variety of bodies, including the news media and religious organizations, but the most important may be some of the so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which, precisely because they are not run directly by governments, are assumed to act on the basis of ethical or moral imperatives…These NGOs are completely immersed in the biopolitical context of the constitution of Empire."259

According to Foucault, biopolitics provide a sort of 'counter-politics'260 that are a reversal of standard, hegemonic relationship in much the same way that proponents of the status quo and alternative viewpoints historically have existed simultaneously. The concerns with NGOs and the help given to the Rikers Island Penitentiary are similar in point to the moral rehabilitation exhibited at Angola. Though the Angola media are unique because they are produced without day-to-day input from outside organizations, there remains an obvious link and sort of indebtedness to NGOs that exists, particularly for the radio station.

Initially, the equipment for KLSP 91.7 FM was donated in 1987 by the Christian televangelist, Jimmy Swaggert. When that equipment became outdated, Moody Broadcasting, another Christian religious affiliate, held a three-hour East Coast telethon and raised 120 thousand dollars, allowing the radio equipment to become modernized.

258 Ibid., 35.
259 Ibid., 35-36.
Evangelist Kenneth Copeland also contributed to establish LSP-Productions. Warden Cain insists that morality is not found only in Christianity, but admits that in the South, the two are often inextricably linked. He also acknowledges that KLSP is gospel-based in part out of obligation. Music is screened for inappropriate language, violent or sexual messages and other improprieties that do not carry a Christian message. If any of the station's rules are violated – including using letterhead for personal use – inmate deejays immediately lose their privileges and the fate of the station is threatened.

That being said, opponents of the obvious religious connection to the penitentiary must ask themselves if Angola would be better off without it, especially considering that none of the three inmate-produced media are funded or sustained through taxpayer dollars. This eliminates any potential conflict between church and state, the warden believes. "We don't have any appropriation to it," explains Warden Cain. "It's just self-sufficient; no tax dollars. The public will help, you've just got to ask 'em. They want to help. The public is happy that we evangelized the inmates. It's calming; makes them safer." Public support extends to other areas of the prison complex, too. According to Cain, the public donated more than two million dollars for the multiple inmate-constructed chapels throughout the penitentiary, an example of responsibilization.

"Assumed to act on the basis of ethical or moral imperatives" is a key phrase that one might expect to find in a system of governance based on pastoral power. However, overcrowding has forced many prisons to no longer focus on rehabilitative objectives, relying on responsibilization of NGOs to (hopefully) step in. The three-strikes-and-you're-out-rule exemplifies that rehabilitation is lost and NGOs like the

---

261 Von Ziebauer, "Spinning Hope on Incarceration Station."
262 Hardt and Negri, Empire, 36.
Osborne Foundation do nothing to hide it. The agency openly acknowledges that nearly fifty percent of New York inmates are drug offenders and that nearly thirty percent are nonviolent prisoners. These are the individuals who most frequently pass through Rikers Island, learning perhaps how to write a news story or to bake a loaf of bread, but as proven by statistics, not learning enough to keep themselves out of prison. This presents a quandary for those institutions that wish to promote a sense of self-governance. By lapsing into a more disciplinary/punishment role, these institutions create the façade of rehabilitative interest, when in actuality, change is nonexistent or inappropriate at best.\textsuperscript{263}

The creation of docile bodies is but temporary. "Our current strategy of 'make them pay and keep them far away' simply incapacitates lawbreakers temporarily and at a ridiculously high price. It ensures that the 130,000 people who pass through Rikers Island every year...will continue pursuing the two things they know best: doing crime and doing time."\textsuperscript{264} Of course, such is not necessarily the case at Angola, where the vast majority of those entering the prison will never leave.

There is indeed truth to the adage that a little knowledge can be dangerous. NGOs like the Osborne agency continue to shift from discipline to control in order to better accommodate the changing needs of capital and governance. Since discipline is no longer the primary issue, institutions like the prison can handle criminals with a Band-Aid approach. Alternatives to direct custody, like parole, probation and electronic monitoring may be utilized to avoid dealing with the physical issues of having to incarcerate one more person.\textsuperscript{265} In this situation, the token assistance provided by NGOs is even less

\textsuperscript{263} Goffman, \textit{Asylums}.
available and criminals are expected to govern themselves vis-à-vis the characteristics of panopticism.

If such governance does not occur, one of two things may happen: the basis of governance may shift from discipline back to control (punishment) or the individual may be ignored, left to continue the cyclical nature of crime. This constant shifting, I argue, helps the prison system save face with the community for problems that it cannot necessarily address on its own. If self-governance, or even discipline, is not working for inmates and recidivism rates are climbing, the prison administration can simply say it has no other choice but to revert to a system of punishment. Taxpayers, if not seeing a rehabilitated criminal, will at least see a punished one. Again viewing the inmate as an entity rather than a human being, the taxpayers are receiving something for their money. A number of Angola's inmates admit that the wrong inmates are being released from prison. Men with short prison sentences enter the penitentiary, do their time and little more, and are released back into the community to commit the crime again. This, the men with life sentences say, is a major problem with sentencing structures, especially in states like Louisiana where a life sentence means life and there is little chance for an inmate to alter that. Men awarded life sentences, especially those first-time offenders found guilty of crimes like second-degree murder, may in fact become rehabilitated after taking part in Angola's programs and serving a chunk of time in prison because they have the time to engage in self reflection and the opportunity to lose the criminal mentality. Those not charged with as serious crimes, thus receiving considerably shorter sentences and parole board access, may find themselves back on the streets in mere months or years, only to return to the prison system for a similar crime. In that case, the inmate was not in prison
long enough to be disciplined into not simply a docile-bodied prisoner, but a docile
citizen.

Though prison publications like the *Rikers Review* are not as common as they
once were, the New York prison is attempting to capitalize on what it produces by
distributing the magazine beyond the island and into the New York City community at-
large. The purpose of this extended distribution, I would argue, is twofold. In addition to
serving as a propaganda tool for the State, it provides the non-criminal with a glimpse
(however skewed or fictitious) of life behind bars. This turns the panopticon on the
general population which in turn is controlled by fear of ending up 'like one of them.'

Quoting Mitchell Dean, Bennett writes, "Government is any more or less calculated
and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing
a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working
through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and
with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences." The inmate and the
culture of being in prison are seen as treacherous commodities that can be sold to the
public as a forewarning of what could be if they do not follow the laws and mores of
traditional society. The ultimate hope is that which instills fear or moral questioning in
society will help serve as a control mechanism.

A similar situation exists in Quebec penitentiaries where prisoners are allowed to
design their own activities but risk them being taken away if disruption occurs. In

---

268 Chantraine, "Prison and Sociological Perspective."
those cases, Chantraine argues that inmates are actually creating "the 'candy' in the 'goody system.'\textsuperscript{269} Like Rikers Island and the Louisiana State Penitentiary, the Quebec scenario is indicative of using culture as a form of (self)governance among prisoners.\textsuperscript{270} However, none of this (self)governance is possible without the men being subjectified. In achieving subjectification, the subject (inmate) acknowledges a certain set of ideologies within himself that others are also able to identify and accept.\textsuperscript{271} Those ideologies manifest themselves only after extensive introspection and self-reflection, soul searching to the deepest degree, aid the individual in coming to terms with who he is or who he aspires to be. At Angola, these ideologies must be in harmony with the ideals of moral rehabilitation if they are to maintain support from the state, indicating that a degree of coercion to become subjectified may exist.

**Instilling Forms of Subjectification and Ethical/Moral Reflection**

In his first chapter addressing Foucault's governmentality, Dean addresses four components necessary in the quest for self-governance. The ascetics,\textsuperscript{272} in this case inmate-produced media, were addressed earlier in this chapter as well as in the ethnographic accounts of the research. In this section, I shift to Dean's first and third points: the "ethical substance,\textsuperscript{273}" or the soul of the inmate; and the "mode of subjectification,\textsuperscript{274}" who/what the soul becomes when it is worked upon. Beyond acting as an impetus for improved self-esteem, inmate-produced media serve as vehicles for subjectifying inmates and in turn creating docile bodies. By encouraging introspection

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., *5.
\textsuperscript{270} Bennett, "Putting Policy into Cultural Studies," 23-37.
\textsuperscript{271} Foucault, "The Subject and Power."
\textsuperscript{272} See Dean, "Basic Concepts and Themes," 17.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.
into issues important to prisoners, prison media cause inmates to become more knowledgeable about themselves. This is particularly important for those inmates who do not have the freedoms associated with Class A Trustys. Inmates on Death Row, those in restrictive housing units, or those with limited movement throughout the penitentiary are not privy to the live social, religious and educational programs conducted through the prison. However, such programs are broadcast throughout the complex, affording all inmates at least limited accessibility to the messages. If the prisoner is guided by pastoral power, he must learn not only what he must do in order to obey those in control, but those in control must recognize that the prisoner has bought into their truths and understands how and why they are applicable to him.\textsuperscript{275} Once this occurs, the prisoner successfully becomes the subject and in turn may look to himself for governance. Governmentality cannot exist if an individual is not subjectified.

The pastoral governance addressed by Foucault in a February 22, 1978 lecture is eerily descriptive of Angola. According to Foucault,

\begin{quote}
...If Christianity, the Christian pastor, teaches the truth, if he forces men, the sheep, to accept a certain truth, the Christian pastorate is also absolutely innovative in establishing a structure, a technique of, at once, power, investigation, self-examination and the examination of others, by which a certain secret inner truth of the hidden soul, becomes the element through which the pastor's power is exercised, by which obedience is practiced, by which the relationship of complete obedience is assured, and through which, precisely, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{275} Foucault, "The Subject and Power."
economy of merits and faults passes. … The pastorate seems to me to sketch out, or is the prelude to what I have called governmentality.”

Prior to successful self-reflection, Angola's inmates are very much like sheep being watched over by their shepherd. Based on Foucault's 1977-1978 lectures, I contend that the shepherd is not God, or a god, as some might suspect. God, according to Foucault, does not govern in the pastoral sense, but rather rules based on sovereignty.

Instead, those inmates who have been subjectfied and have become docile bodies, as well as state employees who are given the official task of making sure all members of the flock are accounted for, are seen in this pastoral sense. This task occurs quite literally several times a day when an official count of inmates is taken at the penitentiary. “...it is true that the shepherd directs the whole flock, but he can only really direct it insofar as not a single sheep escapes him.”

Warden Cain, select prison employees and the inmates themselves recognize that at any point in time, the inmates could take over the penitentiary."(Warden Cain) governs by permission," stated Inmate B, a definite critic of Cain who is not employed by any of Angola's media. "We let him run this prison. He'll tell you himself. We can take it anytime we want, and like he says, he'll take it back, and it won't be nice. We understand that." Still, something prevents that from happening. Cain would say that moral rehabilitation has been accepted by a number of the inmates who govern through pastoral messages. Such pastoral power, I would argue, can also influence oneself; a man could be

---

279 Ibid., 128.
his own shepherd, especially considering "an in-depth individualizing knowledge of each member of the flock"\textsuperscript{280} is necessary. Who knows one better than oneself? Because of that, and because of dispositifs of surveillance, like other subjectified inmates and the inmate-produced media, such incidents of disruption are rare. However, because the trusty system is based foremost on the trustworthiness of each individual, shepherding one's self becomes more of a maintenance project as opposed to an impetus for altering one's personal behavior.

During the analytical process of obtaining knowledge and applying it to the self, ethical and moral reflections aid in the installation of subjectification. Recalling Greek philosophy, Foucault\textsuperscript{281} writes that more important than taking care of oneself is knowing oneself, placing emphasis on examining one's soul. Writing has long been a way of achieving this goal, with the self as the subject of the piece. Althusser\textsuperscript{282} also acknowledges subjectification and distinguishes recognizing oneself as a subject from having the required knowledge to understand the ideologies allowing the subjectification. Conversely, those who prescribe to Goffman's\textsuperscript{283} thoughts on total institutions place little emphasis on the importance of subjectification. Instead, prisoner conduct is based on regulations designed by the establishment for control purposes. Inmates take their cues from signs, both literal and figurative, that are conveyed by the institution. Surveillance exists to monitor behavior and those who disobey or disregard the signs are subject immediately to discipline. It is unlikely that in such institutions inmate-produced media

\textsuperscript{280} Dean, "Pastoral Power, Police and Reason," 75.
\textsuperscript{281} See Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 223-251; and Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 326-348.
\textsuperscript{283} Goffman, \textit{Asylums}. 

252
would exist because of the potential for challenging institutional rules and the status quo of the national and state criminal justice systems in general. Ultimately, concern for the self is unapparent, with institutional emphasis instead placed on maintaining order and punishing those who deviate from it.

However, knowing oneself and identifying one's ideologies are no easy task. For this reason, the shift toward governmentality is not an easy one. Support must be given to inmates who seek out this process, and a recognition that this is a lengthy, continually evolving process must exist. As Foucault writes, "Work on the prisoner's soul must be carried out as often as possible. The prison, though an administrative apparatus, will at the same time be a machine for altering minds." Therefore, once docility or even moral rehabilitation has been reached, the process must continue. According to Bruner,

"Self" is a surprisingly quirky idea – intuitively obvious to common sense yet notoriously evasive to definition by the fastidious philosopher. The best we seem to be able to do when asked what it is, is to point a finger at our forehead or to our chest. … I want to begin by proposing boldly that, in effect, there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there ready to be portrayed in words. Rather, we constantly construct and reconstruct ourselves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future." The difficulty of this process may be why Foucault believes that the modern subject is made to "know thyself" whereas in certain strains of Greek thought "taking care of

---

284 Foucault, _Discipline and Punish_, 125.
oneself" has more importance. Whatever the case, a deep degree of introspection is necessary if self-governance is ever to be achieved. Angola's inmate-produced media provide a daily reminder of not only what can be achieved through effective self-governance, but as a constant, though indirect, reinforcement of the principles of moral rehabilitation and the values of docility.

McGrath Morris\textsuperscript{287} lists multiple reasons why inmates may become involved with prison journalism, including therapeutic and truth-seeking purposes. "Truth is always a precious and elusive thing, but more so in prison. There, one person's truth is, more often than not, another's lie. There is no middle ground."\textsuperscript{288} As Bratich, Packer and McCarthy state, "The conduct of conduct takes place at innumerable sites, through an array of techniques and programs that are usually defined as cultural."\textsuperscript{289} Moral and ethical reflections represent two of these techniques as well as the two that may be most closely related to subjectification. As previously discussed, working with inmate-produced media carries with it certain extrinsic rewards, including status recognition and institutional freedoms. However, the intrinsic reward of knowing thyself ultimately may be the most fulfilling. Alex sees his work at the television station as something of which his family can be proud. When he entered Angola a decade ago, his mother told people he had died, presumably to avoid the embarrassment of his crime and incarceration, Alex explained. Now that his mother faces a serious illness, he tries to give her reasons to believe that he will be okay.

**Alex:** (A)t the end of my life I want to have an accomplishment. I don't want to be ashamed of my being at Angola. I read an obituary of people who spend the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[287] Morris, *Jailhouse Journalism*.
\item[288] Ibid., 18.
\item[289] Bratich, Packer, and McCarthy, "Governing the Present," 4.
\end{footnotes}
majority of their life here, and you read the obituary and they don't mention Angola. And I'm tryin' to figure out why. You have to be embarrassed. When I got locked up, I was the baby of the family. My mom and I were real close. But when I got locked up, her way of dealing with it, because of embarrassment, was to tell everyone that I died. So when she would see friends...she'd just say, 'He passed away and I don't want to talk about it.' It was weird. I kind of laughed it off, but … I mean I understood. It was her way of dealing with it. … My momma was a school teacher and when I graduated the seminary here, she had already, she didn't make it. She's always expressed on how proud she was that I made a bad situation better, as much as I could. … and how to see me smile, she finds strength in my smile. I don't know what tomorrow holds. If she does get better, I wouldn't have failed her. Here's my accomplishment.

Kyle Hebert credits Angola's Bible College and The Angolite for helping him mature and allowing him to help others learn how to better themselves. This, he explains, is his mission in life and something he hopes to continue when he is released from Angola.

**Kyle Hebert:** My life's unfolding, and as I get older, I'm seeing the big picture. I'm seeing that it's not me, it's about other people, and these are just elements. … We have to continue to adjust our lives to (God). If we keep him first, he's going to show us. A lot of people say, you're getting real spiritual; that fine if that's what they want to believe. But it's living proof in my life, me being obedient to him, the positive things that he's allowing to happen in my life. Is everything happy? No. It's not about a life of happiness. It's about a life of character building. That's why he said in the world you show tribulation. The trial and tribulation is what
develops our character. And even in the midst of learning the media, it's not always a day of peaches and roses and all that. It's a lot of trial. But that's what allows me to work hard and dig in.

Self-knowledge, however, represents only one of two definitions considered by Foucault. The concept of docile bodies, addressed throughout the project, is representative of the second definition. According to Foucault, the term subject may be defined as: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge." Once again, each definition may be applied to the inmate-produced media. The mere privilege of allowing inmate-produced media within an institution exemplifies the control exerted by the state over the subject. By allowing prisoners to be part of disseminating messages and their underlying ideologies, the state sacrifices a bit of its own power and allows inmates to construct their own realities.

By helping to construct their own realities, prisoners develop a sense of agency. This illustrates that power need not always be thought of in negative terms. "In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production." Ultimately, it is up to the individual to decipher his newfound knowledge and to determine if that knowledge is appropriate to better understanding the self. Foucault refers to this as understanding the technologies of the self "which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of

290 Foucault, "The Subject and Power."
291 Ibid., 331.
292 See Foucault, Discipline and Punish; and Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here," 281-301.
293 Id., Discipline and Punish, 194.
operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."\textsuperscript{294} This power structure plays directly to pastoral care and looking out for the welfare of not only oneself but also the entire "flock"\textsuperscript{295} that is apparent at Angola.

However, one must ask if this newfound empowerment is actually a false sense of agency. If the autonomy afforded to inmates by their institution is genuine, inmate-produced media can serve as models for implementing a positive sense of governmentality. However, one could argue that if indeed the inmates are simply docile bodies who prophesize nothing but the words of the state, inmate-produced media may actually limit self-governance but aid in the construction of a mental simulacra\textsuperscript{296} that alludes to (a false sense of) free will and/or self-governance. "Subjects are created as the purported sites of agency, but according to Foucault agency lies in the constant interplay between strategies of power and resistance, not in the self-consciousness of the subject."\textsuperscript{297} The possibility exists that inmates, after being transformed into docile bodies, are simply duped into believing that they have a sense of agency, where in reality, they are simply messengers of the state. Or conversely, the state is duped into believing the men have become docile bodies and is being manipulated into awarding unearned freedoms.

\textsuperscript{294} See Id., "Technologies of the Self," 225.
\textsuperscript{295} Dean, "Pastoral Power," 73-97.
\textsuperscript{296} Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," 453-481.
\textsuperscript{297} Mayo, "The Uses of Foucault," 114.
Ultimately, only Warden Cain and the men themselves know what is actually happening, and the realities may differ from one inmate to the next. The Louisiana State Penitentiary lists as its mission statement that it will,

provide services in a professional and efficient manner so as to protect the safety of the public, staff, and inmates. It is the Louisiana State Penitentiary's responsibility to provide a positive environment the promotes goodness and humanity. The Warden will formulate goals for the institution at least annually and will translate these goals into measurable objectives.298

Similarly, the penitentiary's philosophies state that the Louisiana State Penitentiary:

1. (W)ill protect the safety of the public, the staff and the inmate population.
2. (W)ill provide for the care and custody of its inmate population through the provision of basic services relating to adequate food, clothing, health care and shelter.
3. (I)s committed to quality services and continuous improvement while respecting diversity, legal rights, human dignity, and productivity.
4. (W)ill provide an environment which enables positive change through the availability of educational and rehabilitative opportunities for inmates who demonstrate motivation for change and the desire to participate in such programs.299

These are the only promises made by the institution, of which Warden Cain serves as its chief representative. Interestingly, there is no mention of moral rehabilitation in either the mission statement or the penitentiary's philosophies, indicating that although the idea is

299 Ibid.
clearly of importance to the warden, as anyone can tell in a conversation with him, it is his project and not that of the state. Nevertheless, it is a project about which he is passionate. This should cause one to pause and question if the penitentiary will operate in a similar fashion upon Cain's retirement. Cain admits that he did not start from scratch when he assumed the position of warden, but had the "good sense" to keep projects like The Angolite and KLSP radio station running and therefore fell into their successes. It is impossible to predict what a predecessor might do.

As a tool of resistance, The Angolite has the potential of supporting the greatest amounts of autonomy among its creators. But with that power comes certain duties and obligations, according to Barry Hindress, including taking responsibility for those individuals who, for whatever reason, are incapable of a similar level of autonomy.300 Yes, there are administrative expectations that certain events will be covered by The Angolite, but there is no specific list of coverable and non-coverable topics. Trust is placed in the hands of Editor Kerry Myers and the other journalists to provide clear, concise and accurate information on topics pertinent to the inmate population. At times, that may place the penitentiary or the state or national prison system in a bad light. But that comes with fostering a two-way flow of respect. What is most important is that the magazine disseminates truthful information. And not just truthful information, corrects Kerry Myers, but truthful newsworthy information. Stories must not be so narrowly tailored that they impact only a miniscule portion of the population. Rather, they must be applicable to the larger group and not localized gossip, exemplifying again the idea of responsibilization.

**Warden Cain:** They need to be accountable … rather than do gutter reporting like you see some do. And so, we do the same thing here, and they're accountable for their story and its integrity. And the truth sets us all free. If they write the truth and deal with the truth and address the truth then why should I have a problem? If they deal with lies and innuendos and cause blues and spread rumors and gossip and untruths, then they should be reined in. And any press should, even though we have freedom of the press. We have to have a responsible press and that's what's wrong I think in our country. We get a lot of irresponsible press. Just to get the ratings. And so, our inmates understand responsibility and responsible reporting and truthfulness. And therefore, I have no problem. It makes sense, doesn't it?

Butler’s\(^{301}\) description of becoming a subject is particularly applicable to the inmates. In "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All," she explains that in order to become a subject, one must initially have been presumed guilty and eventually transformed, retried, and found innocent. The process is eternal and in order to remain subjectified one must continually abide by one's new conscience. If the cycle breaks, the inmate reverts back to being a subject for someone – or something – else. Warden Cain, and by extension, his employees, aid in the step-by-step process of subjectifying the inmates to the extent to which they can. By ending up at the penitentiary, it is obvious that the inmate has already been presumed, or more specifically found, guilty. At this stage, there is little interaction with Angola proper, though other state institutions are certainly participatory. The transformation process may be enhanced by the prison

---

system, through special programs and access to educational resources like the inmate-produced media that help convey the institutional ideologies. Ultimately, however, the true transformation lies within the soul of the individual, which according to Foucault is "the prison of the body," and is birthed from "the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body," or power-knowledge relationship.

As the subjectification process continues to unfold, Warden Cain and his employees must engage in the riskiest part of the process: a retrial. As noted earlier, the trust afforded to inmates by Cain is not "blind trust" but part of an ongoing relationship of sorts that factors into a series of calculated risk taking. Jonathan, one of the television crew members who is able to travel beyond the prison to film certain events, applauds the warden's willingness to take such risks, but sees such risk taking as necessary for progress to occur. Murton, author of The Dilemma of Prison Reform, would agree. Quoting himself from a previous article he writes, "In order to be meaningful, the opportunity to demonstrate responsibility must also include the possibility of demonstrating irresponsibility. Inherent in a true chance to succeed is the chance to fail." Whereas a prison power structure based on discipline strives for conformity, a structure based in self-governance recognizes the individualization of the process and calculated risk taking and managing on behalf of the administration are necessary for this new structure to succeed. Indeed, some – or all – of the inmates may be duping
Warden Cain with their 'docility.' However, inmates too, monitor which men hold which positions. All it takes is for one man to lose Warden Cain's trust or to give Cain a reason not to trust him for an entire group to lose its privileges.

**Jonathan:** (I)f the television station does bad, that's bad. It's a chance they're takin', but that's why it goes back to character, expecting the people who work here are of good moral fiber and character, cause when we leave here, a lot is on our shoulders. We're carrying the whole Louisiana (Department of Corrections) with us. We have to keep that in mind.

KLSP deejay Robin Polk agrees, likening Angola to its own city, something that Warden Cain, too, addresses. Despite past problems the men of Angola may have had with the law, they are still just that, men. The three-strikes-and-you're-out mentality cannot be what governs the administration of control within a correctional system.

**Robin Polk:** One thing, like I said earlier, this is a society, and this is a large society. So we have to have something to do, you know? We're not like a dog just locked in a cage. The ones who don't want to change and whatever their reasons are, they say this isn't where it's at. But you have to have somethin' going on inside this place to occupy and develop the people's minds. Knowledge can change them. You keep people informed of what's going on. We have sports: boxing, football, basketball, baseball, volleyball. We use to have weights, but they don't have them anymore. You have to have some activity. Some prisons, they don't have anything goin' on. There's not a lot of people who really get out every

---


262
day around here, so you've got to have something to do. Give yourself worth, at least inside this society without being out there.

Because of a lack of research regarding inmate-produced media, one may again turn to Novek's study of the Clara Barton prison to note the importance of ethical and moral reflections. Of sixteen categories of subject matter identified in the prison's newspaper, spiritual pieces that reflected on religion and/or higher powers were most abundant; self-help pieces ranked fifth. Furthermore, news pieces fell thematically into one of three metaphoric areas: heaven, which situated prison as space for personal development, growth and transformation; hell, which accounted for the lack of support, loss of personal identity, and general sense of worthlessness; and here, which showed the prisoners as resilient to the hell, but willing to accept and embrace the heaven. Because prisoners are traditionally told not to become emotional so as not to evoke administrative or peer chastisement, writing in this case provides a sort of catharsis for the female inmates similar to how Foucault acknowledges writing as an important facet of caring for the self. Novek references several inmates who have used the prison newspaper to disclose their own personal awakenings:

Prison for me is one of the best places to make a positive change in one's life. If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere in the world. I say that because I have been forced to deal with people from all walks of life...What is rule today

306 Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here," 281-301.
307 Ibid.
309 Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here," 281-301.
may change tomorrow. People I laughed with in the morning may end up cussin me out by night.\textsuperscript{310}

I have spent the last five years in prison. Why? Because my caretaker chose to abuse me. … I will never give up trying to get my life together. I do wish, however, that I had spoken out all those years ago. If I did, I would not be in prison and my abuser would not be walking around jeopardizing other children's lives as we speak.\textsuperscript{311}

Angola's inmates are no different. The "Sounding Off" and "Expressions" sections of \textit{The Angolite} are popular among the men, both to submit to and to read. "Sounding Off" closely resembles guest editorials while "Expressions" is much more creative and includes both short stories and poetry. In some instances, the sections provide inmates with a forum in which to vent or attempt to make sense of the injustices in their own captive community. The following appeared in the January/February 1981 issue of \textit{The Angolite}:

\begin{quote}
Violence strikes sudden and unexpectedly in prison. It can strike as swiftly and as deadly as a cobra. While prison is basically a place where boredom and monotony prevail, it can also be a place of intrigue, danger and vice – a place where violence is quickly resorted to as a means of settling a dispute or getting even for an old grudge…Irregardless (sic) of how imagined it may be, the only thing a man has – and will fight to the death to protect – in prison is his pride.\textsuperscript{312}
\end{quote}

In the July/August 1994 issue of \textit{The Angolite}, another inmate contemplated, "What Do Life Mean?"

\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., 293.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid., 295.
\textsuperscript{312} "Violence Strikes at Angola," \textit{The Angolite}, January/February 1981: 10.
You never really know what life means, until you enter a world where less enthusiasm and optimism exist. It is pathetically sad to live in prison where men have no dreams of their tomorrows and are reluctant to face their shame and sorrow.\footnote{Carlwynn Jose Turner. "What Do Life Mean?" \textit{The Angolite}, July/August 1994: 78.}

Pulling out from a desk drawer a file folder several inches thick, Kyle Hebert says he has little problem finding content for the magazine's "Sounding Off" and "Expressions" sections. Just as inmates revel in hearing their names broadcast over KLSP radio or seeing their face on LSP-TV, so too, do they thrive on seeing their name associated with something positive in the press. Though Kyle will not run submissions that address directly specifics of an individual's case, there is never any shortage of material from which to choose.

Interestingly, the ethical self-reflection and transformation to docile bodies needed for successful neo-liberal governmentality closely resembles the ideals of some conservatives, making the two philosophies unlikely bedfellows. As Mitchell Dean explains:

\begin{quote}
The notion of freedom and the free conduct of individuals once again becomes the principle by which government is to be rationalized and reformed. However, this principle itself is subject to a series of successive displacements. The displacements reveal a conception of freedom that moves away from the emancipatory aspirations of social movements toward the virtuous, disciplined and responsible autonomy of the citizenry desired by neo-conservatives.\footnote{Mitchell Dean, "Neo-Liberalism and Advanced Liberal Government," in \textit{Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society} (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), 155.}
\end{quote}
Graham Burchell, in "Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self," outlines the neo-liberalist's definition of society as being "the product of governmental intervention," pointing to a myriad of governmental programs that (currently) structure the way society is shaped. Governmentality, a neo-liberal ideal, would restructure the power of these programs, placing instead the power with the individual, an historically conservative approach to eliminating big government.

"Telos of Governmental or Ethical Practices"  

As part of Dean's fourth and final stage of attempting to self-govern, one must examine the end result or desired outcome of the process. Though roughly ninety percent of Angola's men will never leave the Louisiana penitentiary, Warden Cain has for those men the same desired outcome as those who will be released in a few years time: moral rehabilitation. Moral rehabilitation is one of two byproducts of successful self-governance in prison. The other, very practically, is a safe and well-run penitentiary; a model if you will. A heavy focus on morality came in 1995 when the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established an Angola extension campus, offering inmates a free education and opportunity to earn an associate's and/or bachelor's degree in Christian ministry. The success of the program and its graduates has been so great, that Angola has begun sending some of its inmate ministers to other prisons throughout the state. The penitentiary has also played host to officials from other states who hope to establish a similar program within their institutions.

---

316 Dean, "Basic Concepts and Themes," 17.
Considering the vast size of Angola and the limits/restrictions placed on a number of its inmates, it should not come as a surprise that Warden Cain needed another venue for encouraging moral rehabilitation. The prison's inmate-produced media are the ideal vessels to carry out those messages. It is no secret that in the 'free' society, media traditionally serve as key transmitters of ideologies and that those ideologies are representative of the majority and status quo.\textsuperscript{317} As media consumers in the United States, we are governed through our culture, in which media play a major role. Realistically, we are not unlike the prisoners who are controlled from within their institution. Ideologies, be they mainstream or alternative, are embedded into media messages that we in turn either accept or reject. Mass media in prison, especially that media which is inmate-produced, allow prisoners to participate in their own governance, however limited.

As part of the inmate-produced media, select inmates – less than two dozen – have a direct role in shaping the messages sent to the prison population. \textit{The Angolite} magazine, a tool of resistance that often focuses on the current, and problematic, state of criminal justice in the United States and Louisiana, carries perhaps the most controversial messages. Its editor and staff writers navigate through uncharted territory as the least censored prison magazine in the country. Equally important as not only inspiration to current inmates, but as educational devices to the world beyond Angola, \textit{The Angolite} provides a more balanced account of prison activities and the lives of inmates or past inmates. After several years of consideration, a long-awaited success story of former inmates is in the works for \textit{The Angolite}. Its author, John Corley, says stories like that are noticeably absent from mainstream publications, giving current inmates little to aspire to

and the rest of society the misconception that recidivism rates are one hundred percent. Though most men who enter Angola will not receive a sentence reduction, the possibility of a future that does not include Angola helps perpetuate what several of the inmate-media employees describe as manufactured hope.

**John Corley:** I hope I can write it to be encouraging and inspirational, because there's so much negativity. Every time you turn on the television, it's always a parolee did this and an ex-con did this and blah, blah, blah. But that's not always the case. As a matter of fact, the statistics show more favorable numbers as far as people being able to stay out of prison. But the thing is, there's so many obstacles out there. The mindset of society, we just don't like it. We don't want you around because you've been in prison, and it's a struggle. But it's a struggle that can be overcome. And I hope that I can put this together to show someone that's about to get out or is getting out in the future that these guys did it. These are not the short-termers I'm writing about. These are the guys who spent twenty, the one guy was here thirty-two years. You can spend a lifetime in prison and still get out if you want. It's like what the new book out, *The Secret*, the positive thinking. I feel like if you want it, you can make it happen. It's not necessarily going to be easy. But these guys did, and I hope my readers will say well if they did it, I can do it, too. I don't necessarily have to go back and fall into that pattern.

Editor Kerry Myers is also critical of mainstream journalists and contends if he and *The Angolite* staff are able to fact check and uphold traditional journalistic standards with their limited resources, so should other journalists. It is ironic that as an inmate journalist,
Myers and the other men are held more accountable for their reporting than free-world news correspondents.

**Kerry Myers:** One of the frustrating things is to read something in the newspaper, and we've done it many times, and see how inaccurate it is about prison, about prisoners, about the system. … You didn't do any fact checking; you didn't care enough to think it was relevant, socially important. Now, why would anybody care about prison? Again, prisoners are the people that society believes, they've hurt someone, and they're bad, and they're dangerous. And then when I speak to a tour and I say how many of you all know somebody in prison, and half of them raise their hands, and I say, do you like 'em? Are they related to you? Do you think they're good people who made a mistake, or horrible people? Do you love 'em? Now put a face on it. Now individualize it. And now all of a sudden the whole picture starts to change.

… I'm not talking career criminals, but then you got to start looking at how many people in this prison at least are first offenders. Then you start having a serious social question of why are we locking up so many people. I don't think the media portrays that aspect of it. The fact is there's a cost, a social cost. Victims are important, there's no question about it. But it's a one-way street. There are victims here who have tried to get people out of prison and nobody pays attention to 'em. Why don't they pay attention to them then? They only pay attention to them when they want to scream and keep someone in prison?
Haas situates alternative media, of which I would argue inmate-produced media are, as part of the public sphere and questions if they should be considered as creating an alternate one. Indeed, in the case of inmate-produced media, not only is an alternate public sphere created, but also the power afforded to said prisoners aids in the construction of an alternate reality, one which is built on manufactured hope. Even the most trivial communication applicable to the inmates helps foster a sense of community. Admittedly, the power allotted to prisoners is variable depending on the institutional power structure. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, a trusty system helps to classify inmates, and access and freedom within the prison complex is largely dependent on the inmate's classification level. This system is very much based on trust and harbors in it a certain degree of power. Therefore, those men who work with the inmate-produced media, who are chosen to reinforce and enlighten others with the messages of moral rehabilitation, must be the highest level of trustys.

Though Downey and Fenton argue that Habermas believes mass media have changed the public sphere from a site of public debate to a realm of vertical communication controlled by the elite, Angola's inmate-produced media have the ability, albeit in varying degrees, to create a more horizontal flow of communication, though never entirely void of state influence. The creation of an alternate public sphere within prison allows the dominant sphere to be challenged, as can be evidenced directly by The

319 Foucault, Discipline and Punish.
320 Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here," 281-301.
321 John Downey and Natalie Fenton, "New Media, Counter Publicity and the Public Sphere," New Media and Society, 5 no. 2 (2003): 185-202.
Angolite's coverage of a death by electric chair and the state of Louisiana's subsequent abolition of the chair as a means of execution. Haas, further distinguishes alternative public spheres based on their mass-ness to the public at large. Inmate produced media, despite their slight trickle into mainstream society, fit best into the micro-public sphere level in which Haas has placed public access cable television.

Although prison media are surely subject to stricter scrutiny than would be applied to public access programming, "their democratic significance is comprised by a predominantly local orientation that, among other issues, manifests itself in a lack of access to people residing outside the immediate community, a lack of financial support for distributing programming among different stations, and a resulting lack of ties to broader spheres of public debate." Only the latter characteristic is debatable when discussing Angola's media. Angola's inmate-produced media, a "class of texts" unto themselves, aid in normalizing inmates' lives in prison. Without a discursive nature that takes into consideration issues applicable to the world at large, the media would be little more than an absolute reflection of the world around them. The penitentiary would be the center of the world for the inmates, offering little in the way of hope, be it manufactured or not.

Of course, to assume that the state and/or the penitentiary itself do not impact inmate-produced media is naïve. Considering the current United States penal system lies

somewhere in between the creation of docile bodies and governmentality, though recent events, including the release of the Angola 3 members from decades of solitary confinement point more towards a prison system based on punishment, one must continually question how much influence the state has on the content of inmate-produced media. Certainly even in the best of situations, the control is immense and the ideologies and worldviews of the ruling class or public sphere, in this case the administration, are conveyed discursively. As Marx and Engels explain, "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it." This too, is indicative of the prison scenario. Ultimately, it is the state that allows inmate-produced media to exist, thereby placing the institution in complete control over distribution and content. However, Warden Cain and his deputy wardens appear sincere in their tolerance to opposing viewpoints and ideologies as conveyed through the inmate-produced media, in particular, The Angolite. Still, everything must be approved by the state, which stands akin to the dominant, ruling class. In the case of the radio station, where live broadcasts occur, inmates who do not convey appropriate messages face immediate disciplinary actions.

Warden Cain's willingness to allow opposing viewpoints and self-governance is an anomaly, based on the steady decrease of inmate-produced publications and a perceived reluctance to allow inmates access to media in general. In Novek's study on the effects and impact of an inmate-produced newspaper at the Clara Barton State Prison,

---

328 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
330 Novek, "'The Devil's Bargain'," 5-23.
we witnessed how the censorship of certain ideas was readily apparent. Prisoners were allowed to criticize and analyze general penal policies, but were censored from focusing on their particular institution. She refers to the process as a 'devil's bargain', noting that the medium simultaneously served as a tool of empowerment and repression.\textsuperscript{331} Though the dichotomy admittedly caused frustration among the inmates, one must question if the mere attempt at providing an alternate voice in such a controlled setting is beneficial in its own right. It is illogical to think that state institutions like the prison can switch easily from stymieing voices completely to allowing full disclosure. As Haas writes, "The democratic significance of alternate media resides not only in their efforts to broaden the scope of public debate by introducing topics and participants generally excluded by mainstream media, but also in the modes of discourse applied."\textsuperscript{332} Additional information on inmate-produced media as alternative journalism will be addressed in a later chapter.

While \textit{The Angolite}, considering its award-laden history, may appear more controversial and substantive than its other media counterparts, the immediacy of messages the radio station offers its listeners cannot – yet – be matched. I include the term 'yet' because it is the desire of the television staff to include live programming in its repertoire. However, because of the newness of LSP-Productions and the fact that an inmate-produced television station is unprecedented, the station proceeds with caution. The station's general manager, Maurice Rabalais, admits that the speed at which the small station has grown in just more than a year is scary, though he quickly points out how much he enjoys the work. But at the radio station, live broadcasts and feeds are commonplace, albeit the off air switch can be thrown at any time through the warden's

\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{332} Haas, "Alternative Media, Public Journalism," 117.
office. If inmates do not like the Christian messages, integral to moral rehabilitation, delivered over the air, they can opt to listen to another station.

**Warden Cain:** One time they were playing David Duke and I went and pulled the plug on it, because I heard it. We're not going to be racist, and so, we're listening. And on the television, it's Channel 21. We've got all these different channels; you can turn and change the channel. They can, too. I don't force them to watch it except the Sunday morning service, and that's two hours.

Still, deejays are entrusted to say what is appropriate and are punished if something morally questionable is transmitted. And although the television works with prerecorded and edited material, knowledge and capability exists among the staffers to transmit unsuitable material if they so desired. That is why a high level of trust must exist between the administration, employees and the inmates chosen to work with the media. That trust stems from being a morally rehabilitated man who is interested in bettering the community in which he lives. That trust encourages men like Alex to excel at whatever they are doing. Alex acknowledges that staff capabilities coupled with technology could equate to improper behavior, but what would the purpose be? The men would gain nothing, but have everything to lose.

**Alex:** (Warden Cain) trusts us. I mean if you think about it, … we could create somethin' and send a message to Camp C (one of the penitentiary's outcamps). By the time that they realize, it's too late. Same thing with radio, we all are trained by not only our supervisor but by security, by wardens to where they can trust, they can say, I trust he'll do what's expected of him to do. We'll scrutinize ourselves,
because at any moment, they can come back and say why are you showin' that?

Why you doin' that?

Even though the inmates are seen as the message conveyers, the fact that the state is the central, overarching governing player, cannot be lost. And it is not lost; inmates themselves recognize why the media exist. Likewise, they recognize the opposition to their limited freedoms, access and trust.

**Chris:** I believe Warden Cain's main objective, his theory, is that the use of the media, the radio station, the television station, and *The Angolite* is to present his theory of moral rehabilitation; not just rehabilitation, because there really isn't anything like that anymore in prison. But if you understand that it's morally wrong to rape, to rob, to murder, to commit the three major crimes of the people who are here, then you won't do that again. … Through having quality jobs, it's not a quality job to go and pick cotton, but for me to work for a television station, or to work training horses, that's a job that can be done on the street, some of the other jobs, plumbers, electrics… This is just one of several entities that's been created. The basis of his college of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the radio, television stations and The Angolite is to create that atmosphere of moral rehabilitation, and I believe it's working. I want another chance to be free, and I know I'm gonna get it.

**Alex:** We're still doin' what we're told. Some people may argue my son or daughter don't have that because their life was taken, and I can't argue with how they feel. We enjoy what we do, but it's not fun. It's fun during the day, but in the evening, when it's time to go home, we don't really go anywhere. So Warden Cain
allows us to make the best out of a bad situation. They didn't sentence us to death, so why can't we live a life? Not everyone can be in the fields. Somebody has to take it out of the field. … There's A to Z. You just can't have A.

Self-governance among the inmates can fully exist only to the extent that the administration does not want to revert to a system of total punishment or discipline. Even at Angola, where a sense of governmentality exists in the prison, the shifting of governance – or façade of self-governance – toward the inmates themselves, ultimately is a control tactic used by the institution to appear less disciplinary and coercive or as Bratich, Packer, and McCarthy put it, more distant. "(C)ulture finds itself caught up in the process of government without a necessary reliance on the codified, institutionalized forms of governing culture. And, when policy is a primary concern, it is often non-State institutions that are concerned with managing conduct."333 This could create a false sense of agency334 that would complement well the idea of manufactured hope. However, that is not to say that such cultural forms are not without merit. The amount of autonomy afforded to inmates by the institution plays a major role in determining the sincerity and authenticity of the inmates' agency.

In the case of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, inmates are given a considerable amount of autonomy from the institution, provided they have been morally rehabilitated. For those who have not, they may choose to spend their time locked in a cell or working in the fields. The end choice is theirs to make. One could argue that by not adhering to the policies of the institution, the combative inmate is more self-governed than the inmate who has become a docile body, who experiences added freedoms and trust. To that

person I would pose the question: Is it possible ever to be completely self-governed? Are we not as human beings guided by some sort of moral code? If we are to assume that morality makes us less self-governed then one must examine carefully the alternative – a world riddled by chaos and anarchy. Angola, under the direction of Warden Cain, appears to have struck a balance, especially for those men who want to change the course of their life. Self-governance is there for the taking, but the inmate must first prepare himself for it through morally rehabilitative means. For those who do not wish to contribute toward a successful end result for the penitentiary, a locked cell and fieldwork awaits; the inmate may choose that he be governed in that fashion if he so desires.

At Angola, the inmate-produced media illustrate not only how governmentality can be effectively used and reinforced within a prison, but also how they serve simultaneously as control mechanisms, or dispositifs of security in much the same fashion as culture is manipulated in the free world. Network television and mainstream newspapers are not radical forms of media, beckoning change and calling for revolt. Instead, they work to reinforce the status quo and maintain a society of good citizens – motives not that far removed from Cain's moral rehabilitation. Even in prison, it is impossible to escape from media or other cultural forms. By placing the creation and production of said media in the hands of morally rehabilitated men, Angola ensures that, to the extent possible, the media will be positive influences on the inmate population. As Bennett writes,

Culture is always there, and there first, immanent within economic, social, and political practices, organizing them from within, while it can itself be affected by such practices only to the extent that they supply external conditions for the
operation of cultural practices which – since they too are language-like in their organization – are themselves, of course, also always culturally structured from within.\textsuperscript{335}

The average non-incarcerated person may find difficulty in coming to terms with the notions of docile bodies or governmentality in prisons. However, the scenario is not that far removed from what citizens experience in the free world, making the importance of understanding the concepts critical. Substitute inmates with free citizens and the prison system with the state and an eerily similar reflection of U.S. society can be found. It is Baudrillard\textsuperscript{336} who states that the prison system functions as a simulacra, hiding the truth that society in general is restrictive, and citizens are actually prisoners to the state. Once that image comes into focus, it is likely the notion of governmentality will become a greater interest in the public sphere overall. Until that time, however, inmates recognize that although their work with the inmate-produced media has a positive effect on the prison population overall, there are still those who do not see the legitimacy in having prisoners work with television cameras and computers, let alone leave the penitentiary.

\textbf{Jonathan:} With regard to the people here, the guards here, and there are many who look down upon this, they're not forward thinkers. They live in the past. … Guys were killing up each other, and it was just terrible. I hear them say this: It needs to go back to the way it was, which says a lot for the mentality of those individuals. You like violence. So who needs to be locked up? If you like to see all this violence and see all this bloodshed, maybe you need to be here. Imagine … a guy gets out of prison after being locked up for seventeen years and he gets

\textsuperscript{335} Bennett, "Culture and Governmentality," 51.
\textsuperscript{336} Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," 453-481.
out there and commits another crime and is going back. Some politician says, see? Look what they do. I'm gonna be tough on crime, and then they make new laws and lock you up for longer periods of time. Why did he commit the crime? What did the state do with him for seventeen years? It's supposed to be a correctional facility. There was no correction going on. Did they prep him for the outside world? So when people say, ya'll don't need this TV station, ya'll got all these clubs and organizations, all these programs, just go out in the fields and chop sugar cane. My question is: Which way do you want it? A guy who gets out of prison and commits another crime or a guy that's in prison and is trying to rehabilitate himself with programs that are available to him to make him a better person? Which way do you want it? Do you want an educated person coming out of prison and being productive, or do you want an animal coming out of prison and committing another crime?

**Michael:** I would tell him that the rehabilitative stage is very important for those of us who want to grow. You really can't grow by workin' in the fields, workin' in the kitchen, workin' on the walk. There's no educational thing in it. To me, my viewpoint is by having an opportunity like this here, the TV station, the radio station, *The Angolite*, all this is part of our rehabilitation. It's helpin' us to think and to stretch our vision beyond what we normally would think about. As far as being young men in this environment. Back in the days, I was told, I've been here almost twelve years, I was told the only thing they had here was *The Angolite*. So that means, ninety-nine percent of the population was either in the fields, workin' the walk, or in the kitchen. So, then it was, having something like this occupies
our time and it gives us the education for things and actually helps rehabilitate us for those of us who have thoughts of the future and want to better ourselves, I would tell 'em this is a plus in our lives. It gets us to the point to where we're educated and no longer the same individuals. There are some people who say we just become educated criminals, but everyone's not an educated criminal. Some guys actually do change when the opportunity is given to them or been awarded to them. So some guys actually change, and I'm one of them.

As the youngest of the men interviewed, David too, recognizes that there is a world of people who are ready to throw away him and the other men because of past actions. Yet at twenty-nine-years-old, he struggles with how he – or anyone serving a second-degree murder sentence – can attempt truly to repay society for what was done. As a graduate of the Bible College, David says he seeks to be more than his crime but ponders if that is possible. He can see how and why society may question some of the benefits of working with the inmate-produced media, as well as some of the other more prestigious inmate job positions. However, he cautions opponents not to become caught in the spiral that claimed him and offers the following advice:

David: Maybe this isn't what inmates should be doing. Maybe you should come and tell us what inmates should be doing. Maybe you should step into the place of Warden Cain, or step into the place of the corrections facility, Prison Enterprises, and you feel the pressures they feel. You deal with five thousand inmates and if you think layin' a whip to their back every day will be what an inmate or a person who has broken a (law) deserves, if that's what they deserve you do it, and let's see what type of results you get. I mean, if I had a farm and I raised cattle. I abuse
them; I underfeed them everyday; I'm not going to have cattle for very long. It's the same way with us. It's the same way with anything. If you abuse, you mistreat, you mishandle, eventually you're either going to kill it or it's going to rebel against you. I'm not preachin' rebellion, but what I'm sayin' is, I lost my humanity whenever I decided to take a life. Do you want to lose your humanity by trying to be vengeful on me for taking that life?

**Benefiting More than Few**

Norman Fairclough tells us that "the wider social impact of media is not just to do with how they selectively represent the world… it is also to do with what sorts of social identities, what versions of 'self', they project and what cultural values… these entail." These thoughts are particularly noteworthy when the media being addressed are inmate-produced discourses. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, because the media are used as dispositifs of surveillance and cultural technologies through which moral rehabilitation is supported and maintained, the projected versions of the self that Fairclough addresses must be monitored and somehow controlled. As addressed earlier, one could examine these discursive texts at both the macro- and micro-levels, each offering its own unique insight. Considering the prison as an institution is also viewed at both levels, in this particular project, I examined not only the cultural ramifications inmate-produced media have at Angola (the micro-level) but the potential for impacting the greater (macro) level of society. Thus whereas Novek's research on the Clara Barton State Prison newspaper dealt primarily with the micro-level, this dissertation challenges individuals to examine

---

338 Ibid., 35-52.
340 See Novek, "'The Devil's Bargain'," 5-23; and Novek, "'Heaven, Hell, and Here'," 281-301.
the societal impact that such self-governance has or could have. I did this not to discount Novek's work, but rather to increase the relevance of similar studies.

As a nation, the United States is very much guided by its cultural artifacts. Opinions are formed and ideologies are enforced largely by mass media. That being said, it should not be so surprising that the prison system operates in a similar vein. What may be more shocking is that some institutions allow their inmates to produce the media that ultimately serve as the governing tools. This is neither done flippantly, nor without state input. Certainly, such media do not enjoy the first amendment protections that are afforded to 'free' media. However, different institutions allow their media to exist under varying degrees of autonomy. Interestingly, the more this topic is explored, the more frighteningly similar the scenario becomes to how mainstream, free-society media operate.

Based on ethnographic research, including, but not limited to, observations and interviews, it is obvious that the men working with the inmate-produced media clearly have greater freedoms than the majority of the prison population. However, they are not the only contributors to the cultural forms. Other prisoners and non-inmates may also participate, and in some instances, stories are reprinted or video footage is aired from more mainstream sources. Although Class A Trustys comprise the staffs of the inmate-produced media, the entire prison population is represented. Inmates confined to cellblocks may request (through the mail) songs to be played on KLSP; LSP-Productions does not limit which inmates may be featured on the in-house Channel 21; and The Angolite not only accepts submissions from a cross-section of the inmate population, but from other prisons and free-world contributors as well. Likewise, it features stories

---

341 Shere, Cain's Redemption.
written on all classifications of inmates. Though Angola has not held an execution since 2002, Lane Nelson has profiled Death Row inmates since the early-1990s. "With the guys that were having an execution, I've been able to interview them before they go to the Death House," Nelson said. "Actually, at the Death House, I interviewed that last one the day before his execution."

Letters to the editor, guest editorials, and occasionally a complete story come from free-world contributors as well. Such submissions are selected for print in a similar fashion to how traditional newspapers choose what pieces are printed by the public. While inmates or "deviants" are traditionally thought of as being reluctant – if at all willing – to let outsiders into their community, it is somewhat peculiar that a non-inmate would be invited, or encouraged, to participate in this alternate public sphere that is created within the prison. However, as a mode of normalcy within prison, a topic to be discussed in a following chapter, the inmate-produced media do not limit themselves to what is immediately available. It is the inmates' goal that the radio station is not just a good inmate-run station, but a quality radio station overall. The Angolite staff judges its work not against other prison publications, but other news outlets like The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune. Considering the impressive record of awards earned by the magazine and its staff, the comparison is indeed warranted. And LSP-Productions, the youngest of the media triad, has staff members that watch mainstream news and sports coverage to figure out how they can do it better. As General Manager Maurice Rabalais was quoted earlier as saying, "I want people to look at them and not

---

342 As an Angola inmate's execution date approaches, he is transferred from Death Row to the Death House, where he is housed until his death.
comment on them as a good inmate crew, but that they're a professional television production crew."

Perhaps equally unusual is that some prisons, including the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and the New York State Penitentiary at Rikers Island, market their publications to individuals outside of prison. From the inmates' perspective, distribution to the outside community provides their publication with a greater sense of credibility and validates the work they do daily. Even those not involved with its production note its high acclaim. They read the magazine because it is credible, because it is held with regard by those beyond Angola, and because it is written by some of their own. It also helps carry out the initial purpose of inmate-produced media, that of advocacy. Though Warden Cain's rehabilitative methods may have their critics, there is support, too. The following two examples, both from different California authors, appeared in the January/February 1983 and March/April 1985 issues, respectively. Though inmate letters clearly dominate "The Mailbag," non-inmate correspondence is not without a decent presence.

I wish to commend your most interesting magazine. It is certainly commendable in many ways, and should do good for those who seek due process in our society as a whole. The freedom of speech is there. The writing is eloquent and very constructive. It is not (a) surprise that it is becoming the talk of the country, and with special consideration for those who have permitted this important publication to be read by all...As an attorney, I can especially appreciate *The Angolite.*

---

Your Angolite issue of Jan/Feb. 1985 has been a tremendous success in my Teenager and the law class. The article, "A Report for Victims," was very informative to my class…"\(^{346}\) Though far from popular reading, these publications do have the potential to serve as a control mechanism over the free population. Foucault addressed a similar notion when he discussed the purposefulness of punishment, not just for the criminal but also for the remainder of society. He writes:

One must calculate a penalty in terms not of the crime, but of its possible repetition. One must take into account not the past offence, but the future disorder. Things must be so arranged that the malefactor can have neither any desire to repeat his offence, nor any possibility of having imitators.\(^{347}\)

Thus, the spectacle of punishment served as a deterrent to those individuals who might consider committing a crime. The Angolite magazine, the only one of Angola's three media that has a substantial audience beyond the penitentiary, could be seen as a spectacle in its own right. Unlike romanticized movies and television programs, The Angolite is based on real stories and the participants are not actors. They are the men who will call Angola home for the rest of their lives – and some rightfully so; the men whose families have forgotten; the men who have not been corrected; the men who fight daily to remain morally rehabilitated even though they will never likely leave The Farm; and the men who manufacture hope daily, never losing sight that they might be one of the chosen few who someday receive a sentence reduction.

\(^{346}\) The Angolite (January/February 1985): 3
\(^{347}\) Foucault, Discipline & Punish, 93.
Once imprisoned, the boundaries of one's world become recognizably close. Those who enter the system for a fixed time may hold tight to the fact that they will eventually leave the institution, while 'lifers' must come to terms with the fact that their world as they knew it no longer exists. However upon close inspection, the institutional world is remarkably similar to that of the outside, albeit on a more condensed and intense scale. Although there has been a shift from punishment toward a governmentality perspective in prisons, ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) remain a major component of implicit and explicit control. Media in prison, whether inmate-produced or mainstream, is representative of an ISA, although one could argue easily that because prison is a form of institutional punishment, inmate-produced media is more indicative of a repressive state apparatus (RSA) that first places emphasis on repression and then ideology. Such is not the case at Angola, however.

As it currently stands, the correctional system in the United States is, generally speaking, broken. With sharp sentencing guidelines and overcrowding affecting virtually every prison and under-funding issues plaguing all state institutions, alternative control mechanisms must be considered. Turning to Foucault's triangle for societal governance is a likely progression, based on not only his social history of the prison, but his 1977-1978 *Security, Territory, Population* lectures at the Collège de France. As a country that prides itself on individualism and its democratic roots, placing government in the hands of oneself (self-governance) seems like a given. Yet the thought of decentralizing governmental powers simultaneously serves as a frightening notion, especially considering the moral and ethical self-reflection that must occur if, in fact, self-

---

348 Id., *Discipline & Punish*.
350 Ibid.
governance is to succeed. One must recognize that accepting self-governance, be it in the
free world or under the auspices of the prison system, does not mean eliminating other
forms of governance. Rather, new relationships are formed to illustrate the neo-liberal
ideals.351

Applying Foucault's triangle to the prison system does not mean eliminating
sovereign and disciplinary forms of control from the mix, either. On the contrary, it
means refining each to work more effectively. "(T) he idea of a government as
government of population makes the problem of the foundation of sovereignty even more
acute … and it makes the need to develop the disciplines even more acute."352 As
opposed to working against each other, the three forms of governance act symbiotically,
compensating where one falls short and holding back where another excels. Once the
stages of governmentality are complete and dispositifs, like inmate-produced media, are
in place to ensure a perpetuation of moral reflection, the three may begin to work. There
is no definitive point where one begins and the other stops, nor is it possible to pinpoint
specifically when an individual is prepared to self-govern. However, at some point, trust
must be afforded to the inmate by the state to make the proper choices for himself and
others, to provide the proper pastoral guidance. This is, perhaps, the most difficult step
toward utilizing self-governance in an institution like the prison, yet one not addressed
directly by Dean or others, but utilized by Warden Burl Cain and the inmates at the
Louisiana State Penitentiary.

CHAPTER NINE

SITUATING INMATE-PRODUCED MEDIA

Although little has been written\(^{353}\) on inmate-produced journalism, and even less on inmate-produced media in general, the products have been around for more than two hundred years. Initially created as an advocacy apparatus, the current purposes of such media are diverse, ranging from creative outlets, to rehabilitation, to reformation tools. Because the Louisiana State Penitentiary has the only inmate-produced television station and FCC-licensed radio station in the United States, it is impossible to provide a history of such media because the Angola inmates are creating – and living – history. Elements of historical contextualization were included, where possible, in earlier chapters of this project.

The prison's magazine, however, is one, albeit a distinguished one, in a long line of inmate-produced journalism, specifically magazines and newspapers. Although media and freedom have been linked within the United States since drafters of the Constitution promised that Congress shall make no law abridging freedoms of speech or press, no similar promise exists for those who have been found guilty of committing a crime. In fact, the Supreme Court has refused specifically to apply the First Amendment to inmate journalists.\(^{354}\) Instead, inmate-produced (print) journalism often more closely resembles corporate newsletters by publicizing administrative news releases, or more of a creative writing outlet, printing poetry, artwork and stories. Thus, *The Angolite*, with its extraordinary First Amendment freedoms, remains a unique publication in terms of prison journalism, but still quite comparable to other more "mainstream" publications.

---


\(^{354}\) Id., *Jailhouse Journalism*.  

289
Like its mainstream counterparts, it illustrates how communications technologies can help "society to know itself and to govern itself on the basis of its own knowledge."\textsuperscript{355}

As Angola's medium of record, \textit{The Angolite} covers noteworthy events at the penitentiary, while maintaining its more issue-based, advocacy role. Unlike traditional newspapers, which are many times preoccupied by the spectacle of events,\textsuperscript{356} \textit{The Angolite} instead focuses on the 'why' behind such occurrences. From a news gathering standpoint, it is relatively easy to write a story on a prison riot or videotape the scene of a school shooting. However, it is much more difficult and time-consuming to go beyond the spectacular and answer the 'why' question. Certainly, the reliance on events impacts mainstream and outlier groups alike, but it is the minority groups, in this case inmates, who have the most to lose when focus remains only on the momentary event. "They need to define and communicate their ideas to a larger public as the first step toward meeting their goals (generally social or political change)."\textsuperscript{357} Relaying information to current members is not problematic; disseminating knowledge and conveying ideals to non-members presents the challenge, especially when the media producers themselves have limitations on their own movement. Nevertheless, the dissemination of information via \textit{The Angolite} mirrors a similar transmission of knowledge\textsuperscript{358} found in other non-inmate-produced publications. In addition to this transmission view of communication, as addressed by James W. Carey in "A Cultural Approach to Communication," evidence of Carey's ritual view, which he admits has "not been a dominant motif in American

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid, 155.
scholarship.\textsuperscript{359} is also very much apparent in the penitentiary, particularly as it pertains to Angola's radio and television stations.

Although both communicative viewpoints will be addressed later in this chapter, to appreciate fully the importance of prison journalism – in magazine, newspaper or newsletter formats – one must understand its historical background and significance.\textsuperscript{360}

As previously mentioned, such journalism is not a new fad but rather, I contend, an important subgenre of journalism, falling under the auspices of alternative and/or advocacy journalism. This chapter examines inmate-produced journalism and media from more of a professional perspective, acknowledging the governmentality component discussed in earlier chapters, but looking at the media from the standpoint of other media producers as opposed to cultural studies scholars.

The chapter begins with a brief historical perspective of inmate-produced media, specifically journalism, and proceeds to place such media along the continuum of traditional and alternative media/journalism. It is not my contention to offer a preference of one form over the other. In fact, to distinguish between the two categories – which may serve the public better if they were eliminated – is a feat not easily accomplished. What may once have indeed resembled a linear progression, with objectivity at one end and point-of-view at the other, has become in recent decades more of a nebulous situation, with journalists themselves admitting that it has become virtually impossible to remain completely objective when reporting the news. It is my hope that the historical context in this chapter will provide more of a cultural history of the media, thereby

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{360} At this point, Angola's inmate radio and television stations must be removed temporarily from the bulk of discussion because they are, essentially, exclusive to the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Therefore, although I situate them (largely) as alternative media, an historical component is noticeably absent.
addressing what James W. Carey sees as a problem with journalism history – a lack of exploration into the "reflexive process wherein modern consciousness has been created in the symbolic form known as the report and how in turn modern consciousness finds institutionalized expression in journalism."  

**History of the Prison Press**

Nearly 30 years before Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm founded the first African-American newspaper or Elias Boudinot attempted to Christianize Native Americans with the *Cherokee Phoenix*, a very different type of newspaper spawned from the confines of New York's Debtors Prison. Aptly named *Forlorn Hope* by its creator, William Keteltas, the newspaper was designed to shed light on the atrocities that existed in the nation's debtors prisons. In March 1800, the newspaper became the first publication in what ultimately led to a string of prison media, or jailhouse journalism.

Despite the overwhelming similarities between prison journalism and more well-known forms of advocacy journalism, little has been written on jailhouse journalism and even less has been discussed in media history classes. Therefore, one must go directly to said prison publications, extrapolate data, and compare information to research conducted on more mainstream advocacy publications.

---

362 Components of this section were presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in San Francisco, August 2006.  
363 Morris, *Jailhouse Journalism*.  
of media history is indeed detrimental to the scholarship of journalism, advocacy or not. Nancy Roberts addresses the societal impact of advocacy journalism in *Ten Thousand Tongues' Speaking for Peace: Purposes and Strategies of the Nineteenth-Century Peace Advocacy Press*.

Numerous alternative periodicals have given voice to cultures and viewpoints not expressed in the mainstream press. This alternative press tradition includes many vigorous social movement advocacy publications which have challenged the dominant culture to consider new ideas and issues and to foment change. Important nineteenth-century examples include the periodicals of abolitionists, evangelicals, temperance activists, woman suffragists – and of peace advocates…

The penal press has indeed morphed in the last two hundred years. In many instances, publications have changed from news outlets paralleling mainstream newspapers to journals of creative prose. Even prison literary journals that birthed prison poetry have begun to slowly lose their footing in state and local penitentiaries, making historical tracking even more pertinent. To date, the prison publications have touched every state, with the exception of North Dakota, and the District of Columbia. Despite the popularity of such journalism, however, few researchers have delved into the highly specified subgenre or examined the purpose of targeting such a narrow, albeit captive, audience.

---

365 Boudinot and 'Indian Removal.' In *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History*, ed. Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 115-144.
367 In contrast to prison journalism, which has received little recognition throughout its lifetime, prison poetry is a fairly popular form of creative writing, often published in volumes readily available to the public.
Russell N. Baird is one of two authors who have acknowledged at length the concept of prison journalism. In his 1967 book, *The Penal Press*, Baird looked at such journalism from a variety of facets, including as: an information medium, an entertainment medium, a medium of influence and an outlet for creative self-expression. He writes,

> Publication of newspapers and magazines – instruments of freedom and individual expression – indicates at least two things. First of all, it reveals an obvious fact to which the penal press often directs the attention of outside readers: prisoners, though outcast from society, are after all, still human beings with definite needs for information, communication with others, and outlets for creative self-expression. Secondly, it indicates the existence of enlightened and persevering institutional administrations, because periodic publication of the printed word immediately bodes trouble and extra work for those who must maintain a secure, orderly society.

Thirty-one years later, James McGrath Morris took Baird's work one step further, assuming a more cultural approach to the history of jailhouse journalism, while still banking on the advocacy qualities of the press – both to inmates and reform.  

"The press is and always has been an essential window through which to view various aspects of American history. Nevertheless, the concept of diversity in the historical study of the press has been slow to find its way to the scholarly agenda of departments…throughout the nation's colleges and universities."  

\[368^{\text{Ibid.}}\]
\[369^{\text{Ibid., 10.}}\]
\[370^{\text{Morris, *Jailhouse Journalism*.}}\]
\[371^{\text{Hutton and Straus Reed, *Outsiders in the 19th-Century Press*, 1.}}\]
introduction to *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives*, the previous words are a testament to the lack of literature on the penal press.\(^{372}\) Even where editors Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed highlighted the works of the Mormons, Chinese-Americans and peace advocates as alternative or advocacy press publications, jailhouse journalism is absent, with nary a line acknowledging its existence. Hutton and Straus Reed wrote that their examples shared one commonality: being "outsiders" to the "mainstream American society of the 19th century."\(^{373}\) Closer examination of key tenets found in several advocacy press subgenres reveals that the prison press deserves a place alongside such publications as the black or suffragist presses.

To a journalism scholar, the names Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm,\(^{374}\) are surely more familiar than the name William Keteltas. Designed to give blacks an outlet to express their own viewpoints\(^{375}\) at a time when few – if any – mainstream publications would grant a similar request, *Freedom's Journal*, at the most basal level, provided a voice for an underrepresented segment of society. It focused not only on the achievements of African-Americans but also on the need for equality. Entering the realm of advocacy journalism at about the same time as the black press were suffragist press publications like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Revolution* and Lucy Stone's *Woman's Journal*. By keeping the ideals of the suffragist movement fresh in the minds of women and potential supporters, such journals and newspapers counterbalanced the hostility emanating from the mainstream press. According to Sherilyn Cox Bennion,
Women's rights periodicals are readily identifiable as part of the venerable tradition of alternative voices in the press of the United States. Certainly, they shared the traits one writer listed as characteristic of the dissident press: They were underdogs, at least until well into the 20th century; they held views that diverged from the mainstream; they wanted to effect social change; they were excluded from the traditional media marketplace, but their ideas gradually filtered into it.\textsuperscript{376}

If one considered the suffragist press an underdog, then what might that same person make of a subgenre of advocacy journalism that has existed nearly three decades longer than that of the black press and is still publishing in 2008? Barbara F. Luebke admits in "Elias Boudinot and 'Indian Removal'" that the Native American press\textsuperscript{377} is "barely acknowledged" in journalism history,\textsuperscript{378} but even a slight mention of the Native American press is more than the prison press has been given to date.

*Forlorn Hope*, the first of many prison publications, was created by a New York lawyer-turned-debtor at a time when prisons brimmed with those guilty of little more than owing a few dollars. Little differentiated the publication from other mainstream newspapers at the time, save the masthead's drawing of two men in chains under which, in semi-circular formation, was the saying: "Liberty suspended but will be restored." In a slightly smaller fashion, Keteltas emblazoned the cry: "We should starve were it not for


\textsuperscript{377} Also appropriate to being placed under the genre of advocacy journalism, the Native American press began in 1828 with the creation of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. It is worth noting that although the Native American press was published by Native Americans, it in some instances was used as a tool for assimilation and 'white man's' propaganda.

\textsuperscript{378} Barbara F. Luebke, "Elias Boudinot and 'Indian Removal,'" in *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History*, ed. Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 115-144.
the Humane Society.\textsuperscript{379} It is only when the pictorial and the verbiage are coupled that one might begin to question the motive of this publication.

Unlike virtually every other prison publication to date, Keteltas' newspaper was not aimed at the prison population, but rather exclusively at the outside world. It was there he hoped to find advocates willing to change the laws regarding debtors.\textsuperscript{380} That the paper was a business as well as a tool for social change was immediately evident with Keteltas' price tag: $3 per annum; $1 "in advance to city"; or $1.50 for "country subscribers."\textsuperscript{381} He also promised prose and poetry from additional authors.\textsuperscript{382} Similar to other newspapers that fell under the auspices of advocacy journalism, Keteltas emphasized his crusade but also included mainstream news from abroad as well as more feature-like pieces. Yet from the beginning of the paper's brief run, Keteltas was direct in stating his advocacy position. In his inaugural editorial, placed prominently on the front page of multiple editions, Keteltas decried his position and begged for legislative intervention.

I ask the Representatives of the people, to whom is intrusted [sic] the application of its preserving power, to apply the remedy by a law for our deliverance! To point out the necessity of legislative interference, I need only relate the devastation of property and the destruction of lives, lost by the operation of a law intended to have a contrary effect. Finding it impossible to do this by a petition, as forcibly as through the medium of a paper, I have determined to attempt the

\textsuperscript{379} Forlorn Hope, 31 March 1800, 1.
\textsuperscript{380} Lasting for less than one year, it is unlikely that Keteltas' Forlorn Hope had an impact on the changing face of debtors prisons. It was not until the mid-1800s that the process of jailing debtors was no longer common practice.
\textsuperscript{381} Forlorn Hope, 19 April 1800, 4.
\textsuperscript{382} Ibid.
establishment of one for this express purpose, of which this is a specimen, and
will accompany proposals to obtain subscriptions for its support.383

Also unique to this particular prison publication was that the four-page newspaper
was published without the support of the prison system, forcing Keteltas to rely on
outside advertising dollars and subscriptions to fund his crusade. Advertisements
mimicked the style of notices frequently carried by mainstream newspapers, though were
clearly less abundant. The scarcity of quality advertisers was a common concern of those
publishers who worked with the advocacy press. Afraid of boycotts by the ruling class,
advertisers often shied away from ventures that could have a costly impact on their
business.

The life of *Forlorn Hope* was a short one, and the newspaper ceased operation
approximately six months after it began,384 perhaps due to a lack of audience or lack of
funds. According to the newspaper, problems with carriers and printers plagued the
publication, making its public reliability shaky at best.385 It took eighty-three years before
another prison paper was published,386 and with that newspaper came changes that served
as a template for a new wave of penal media. *Forlorn Hope*, though considered the
grandfather of prison publications, was an anomaly. Its successors focused attention not
primarily on the general public but on the society behind prison walls.

383 *Forlorn Hope*, 31 March 1800, 1.
384 New York's Public Library contains issues of *Forlorn Hope* through Sept. 6, 1800, though James
McGrath Morris and the library list an end date of Sept. 13, 1800.
385 *Forlorn Hope*, 19 April 1800, 3.
386 Prison reformer Zebulon Brockway introduced *The Summary* to the Elmira Reformatory, Elmira, N.Y.,
in 1883.
Traditional and Alternative Journalism

As with many parts of life, compartmentalization finds itself in the realm of communications as journalists attempt to categorize exactly not only what type of journalist they are, but also for what type of publication they work. However, few things in life are so easily labeled, and media are no different. Thus, an ongoing dialogue – if not debate – exists in an effort to clarify and categorize traditional and alternative media. Traditional or mainstream media tend to pride themselves on the mantra of objectivity, hoping to be acknowledged for credible character and unbiased reporting techniques. However, there is a great difficulty in grasping the true meaning of objectivity because, as David Mindich writes, its definition is littered with negatives, "a lack of bias, a lack of party affiliation, (or) a lack of sensationalism,"\(^3\) telling journalists what they ought not to be as opposed to the reverse. Similarly, journalists subscribing to the objective model tend to define themselves through others, thereby establishing what they are not. The results of both situations lead an audience to believe that if one is objective, one does – and says – little of anything. Surely this was and is not the portrayal journalists had intended, though proponents of objectivity may present their reporting methods as being closest to the 'truth'. As journalism instructor Michael Bugeja states, "Objectivity is seeing the world as it is, not how you wish it were."

As difficult as some scholars find it to define and explain the objectivity typically thought to exist in mainstream media, non-mainstream media present their own


\(^3\) Brent Cunningham, "Re-Thinking Objectivity," *Columbia Journalism Review* 42 no. 2 (July/August 2003): 26.
definitional challenges. Alternative, dissident, underground, advocacy, indy and radical are just a brief sampling of terms often used interchangeably when dealing with those media that do not conform to the tenets of mainstream media, namely, objectivity. According to Atton, alternative is the overarching category under which the aforementioned media lie, with radical media typically associated with social movements and underground media often shrouded with some sense of secrecy and intense animosity towards an institution, as in the case of the scholastic press and GI press during the Vietnam War.

Perhaps it is indicative of its rule-breaking, unconstrained nature that alternative media have yet to be defined uniformly by communications scholars. Instead, a myriad of definitions exist, some broad and others narrow, but all overlapping to some extent. Some argue that alternative media must represent minorities and show hostility toward majority opinion. Other groups argue that non-commercial publishers or those who focus on "social responsibility or creative expression" may be considered alternative. Atton attempts to provide an acceptable definition of alternative media in his article, "What is

---

389 Atton, Alternative Media.
390 Kessler, The Dissident Press.
392 Hutton and Reed, Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History.
396 Kessler, The Dissident Press
398 Atton, Alternative Media.
400 Atton, Alternative Media, 13.
'Alternative' Journalism?" "Alternative media privilege a journalism that is closely wedded to notions of social responsibility, replacing an ideology of 'objectivity' with overt advocacy and oppositional practices."\(^{401}\) Such media also provide information that counters mainstream media messages.\(^{402}\) Drawing on research from Atton, Downing, and others, Atkinson defines alternative media as: "(A)ny media that are produced by non-commercial sources and attempt to transform existing social roles and routines by critiquing and challenging power structures."\(^{403}\) For clarity and consistency, the aforementioned definitions by Atton and Atkinson should be considered whenever the term alternative media is used to describe The Angolite magazine at Angola in comparison to mainstream, traditional or objective journalism within this chapter. I specify The Angolite, as opposed to all of Angola's media, because the radio and television station, while also worthy of an alternative media label, deserve such a moniker more because of their non-commercial, highly tailored status. Although differences surely exist between traditional and alternative media, and will be noted in this chapter, similarities are equally apparent, and in turn heighten the difficulties in pigeonholing media into one category or another.

The similarities

Tuchman\(^{404}\) lists five techniques used by (traditional) journalists wanting to claim objectivity: fact verification, presenting conflicting possibilities and supporting evidence, use of quotes, and appropriate structuring of information. Assuming that such

\(^{403}\) Atkinson, "Towards an Understanding of the Media," 78.
characteristics exist only within the realm of objective, mainstream journalism – or media in general – is quite unfair, however, and casts negativity against those media that are not considered mainstream. To say that fact verification is unimportant to alternative publications is nothing less than insulting to The Village Voice, a three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning publication or Angola's Angolite magazine. During his incarceration at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, former inmate-editor Wilbert Rideau collected multiple awards for his magazine work, including the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for coverage of problems of the disadvantaged; the Sidney Hillman Award for reporting that advanced the human condition; and the 1996 Excellence in Journalism award from the Louisiana Bar Association. Most recently, the magazine was awarded the Death Penalty Information Center's Thurgood Marshall Journalism Award.

Although the current Angolite staff sees the magazine as educating the inmates and public, as well as serving as an advocacy tool by enlightening its (primarily free world) readership, objectivity remains at the forefront of its mission, according to Angolite editor Kerry Meyers. Meyers maintains that he and the staff present the information in an unbiased manner and then let readers formulate their own conclusions. Lane Nelson, who joined the staff during Rideau's tenure, recognizes why some people may first believe the publication to be biased. He, too, was skeptical about the publication, initially believing it was a biased, public relations tool for the administration. He has since changed his opinion, recognizing that it takes considerable planning to decide what is newsworthy enough to be printed. Just as with any publication, there is a space limitation as to what can be covered in a particular time period. ”

405 Information was obtained from the online resume of former Angola inmate and Angolite editor Wilbert Rideau at http://www.wilbertrideau.com/resume.html. Last viewed on November 6, 2006.
think we're pro-administration because we won't write about riotous things, you know, to start a riot over this or that. You got to sit down and have balanced thoughts," Lane explained.

Tuchman\textsuperscript{406} and Mindich\textsuperscript{407} also consider information structure to be an important descriptor of objective journalism, pointing to the inverted pyramid as mainstream journalism's organizational model. Critics of the inverted pyramid cite a distortion of the truth through fact ordering that allows the public's perception to be manipulated.\textsuperscript{408} The end result may be indicative of framing, and at the ultimate level, techniques of propaganda. Whatever the case, the method illustrates Tuchman's argument that objectivity is indeed a strategic ritual and to insist on objectivity is a "peculiar demand."\textsuperscript{409} It must be stated, however, that recent decades have popularized narrative journalism among mainstream outlets, there again blurring the line between mainstream and alternative media. Despite this trend, objective media remain overwhelmingly loyal to the inverted pyramid, promising to report 'just the facts.'

The implementation of narratives by mainstream media is not the only crossover between the two media forms. Atton\textsuperscript{410} considers civic journalism to be a distinguishing factor between objective and alternative media. However as the responsibility of media continues to be challenged,\textsuperscript{411} mainstream journalists are finding civic journalism to be a way to regain some credibility among their readers and viewers. Taking a modern foothold in the 1990s, what now is considered civic journalism, Ida B. Wells practiced

\begin{footnotes}
\item[406] Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual."
\item[407] Mindich, \textit{Just the Facts.}
\item[408] Ibid.
\item[409] Schudson, "Discovering the News," 291.
\item[410] Atton, "What is 'Alternative' Journalism?"
\end{footnotes}
regularly toward the end of the nineteenth century. Her coverage of southern lynching illustrated the inherent flaws in the objectivity heralded by the mainstream press.412 "All the 'objective' reporters and all the 'objective' methods could not put together a reasonable understanding of lynching. The truth lay outside the rhetoric of 'objectivity.' Wells was not 'objective,' but perhaps some journalists ought not to be."413 Formulating her own definition of civic journalism, Moscowitz states, "In the civic journalism model, citizens mobilize and use the media to bring the issues they feel are most important directly to policy makers, pressuring political elites to act in the interest of the community."414 This definition provides one answer for Bagdikian's question, "Is it twilight for press responsibility?"415 *The Angolite* as a tool of advocacy and/or resistance does just this; by providing a real look at the criminal justice system and prison life, as opposed to one that is over-dramatized or romanticized, staffers hope the magazine might serve as an impetus of change to better serve the interests of its community members.

Admittedly, one might argue that the interests of inmates may be in direct conflict with those of non-inmates. However, there is a more direct correlation than one might believe. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, the vast majority of the 5,108 incarcerated men will never leave the eighteen thousand-acre farm because in Louisiana, a life sentence means just that – there is no parole. Yet in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, there are rehabilitated men and those who may well be on the road to rehabilitation. There are old men and sick men, who even administrators agree no longer deserve to be

---

413 Mindich, *Just the Facts*, 137.
imprisoned. "Even Charles Manson gets a parole hearing," says Warden Burl Cain. These are men who have graduated college while in prison, who have learned a trade, and who have traveled to other prisons to spread the Word of God. Yet Louisiana law maintains that successful rehabilitation does not matter beyond the prison gates, that public tax money should continue to go toward expanding prisons even if some of members of the prison community could assimilate back into society as productive citizens.

If the economic component does not hit a nerve, perhaps the sociological element will. Thomas Murton, in *The Dilemma of Prison Reform*, writes,

> The prison is the American society in microcosm. Examination of the prison provides a unique opportunity to study, observe, and analyze the manipulation and exploitation of man, as well as the harshness, bitterness, and underlying greed that motivate both staff and inmates in the prison community. If for no other reason, the prison should be scrutinized as a cultural phenomenon in order to examine the coarseness of human relationships without the façade of respectability that so often masks our freeworld relationships and blocks comprehension of human behavior.\(^{416}\)

For those 'free-world' individuals who wish to contribute to *The Angolite*, whether to address relationships, human behavior, or not, the magazine accepts submissions, and its "Mailbag" section is regularly filled.

In his social history of U.S. newspapers, Schudson ponders why objectivity is considered a standard in journalism and questions if such objectivity is truly plausible to achieve. Again pointing toward journalism as a business, Schudson speculates that to

---

assume that "political organs" like mass media should be objective may be unrealistic.\textsuperscript{417} Though the political economics of the freeworld media industry are not addressed in this project, it is no secret that the ownership and cross-ownership of media, as well as advertising revenues, become major issues when examining news coverage and considering objectivity. Can an entity realistically report negatively on that institution or agency that allows it to survive? Publisher E.W. Scripps said no and hence created \textit{The Day Book}, a newspaper that existed not through advertising, but through its publisher's deep pockets. The publication enjoyed a limited lifespan and folded in 1917.\textsuperscript{418}

Considering that \textit{The Angolite} is a prison publication and the warden is its publisher, it is indeed surprising the amount of freedom afforded to the publication. There is an apparent 'gentlemen's agreement' among the administration and \textit{Angolite} staff that states the inmate journalists can – and will – tell the truth on newsworthy issues pertaining to the penitentiary, whether or not they necessarily cast the prison, or the penal system in general, in a positive light. Likewise, the inmate journalists are not out to commit suicide; they do have to live in the penitentiary and return to their dormitories every night. Therefore, newsworthiness, not sensationalism, is a top priority.

There is no administrative budget list of stories telling \textit{The Angolite} staff members on what they must write. The men believe that the magazine is the least censored prison magazine in the United States, and Kerry Meyers considers the story selection process very similar to that which goes on beyond Angola, questioning how much autonomy freeworld journalists are truly afforded. Herbert Gans also questions this indebtedness as well as the amount of self-selection journalists have in covering material.

\textsuperscript{417} Schudson, "Discovering the News," 291.
\textsuperscript{418} Stoltzfus, "Carl Sandburg."
"Journalists…are by no means totally free agents, and in any case, they rarely make selection decisions on overtly ideological grounds; rather, they work within organizations which provide them with only a limited amount of leeway in selection decisions, which is further reduced by their allegiance to professionally shared values." Though more entertainment-based than journalistically-focused, Angola's inmate-run radio station is an exemplar of Gans' sentiments. Although deejays do not speak from scripts, there is an obvious focus on Christian values and moral rehabilitation, or the shared values of the institution. Despite the immediacy of the broadcasts, the administration trusts that the men will not deviate far from reinforcing the ideologies of the penitentiary.

The differences

Considering that freedom of the press is one of the pillars on which the United States was built, it is a daunting task to explore the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of mainstream journalism. However, pinpointing traits of alternative media is additionally problematic because of the myriad of names used to describe that which is deemed not the norm. Scholars like Glessing,\textsuperscript{420} Kessler,\textsuperscript{421} Downing\textsuperscript{422} and others further demarcate alternative journalism into more distinct categories, all with overlapping and/or similar characteristics. Wherever possible, the most specific term utilized by the author is included in this chapter. However, use of one term should not exclude others from possessing similar or identical traits. Furthermore, because a particular trait is said to be characteristic of a particular form of alternative media, it should not be understood as exclusive to alternative media and may surface in more traditional media as well.

\textsuperscript{420} Glessing, \textit{The Underground Press}.
\textsuperscript{421} Kessler, \textit{The Dissident Press}.
\textsuperscript{422} Downing, \textit{Radical Media}. 
Because profitability is not a priority of the underground press, the economic perspective is likely the largest difference between mainstream and at least some forms of alternative journalism.\textsuperscript{423} Certainly, this characteristic is indicative of all three of Angola's inmate-produced media. Although \textit{The Angolite} charges a twenty-dollar subscription fee to United States residents for the bi-monthly publication, the price tag does not cover all operation and publication costs, according to the administration, though it does provide a certainly degree of self-sufficiency for the magazine. There are also no advertisements. A similar situation exists for the radio and television stations, which do not rely on commercial dollars to support programming or equipment costs. Instead, both rely heavily on donated equipment, the generosity of prison employees who sometimes donate equipment or material, and the Inmate Welfare Fund. No taxpayer money supports any of the three media, making their successes all the more awe-inspiring.

While certain alternative publications undoubtedly pay attention to their bottom line, the proliferation of the internet has allowed for the mass dissemination of information at a relatively low cost. For Angola's inmates, however, the internet is not currently a luxury available to them. In fact, computers in general are a touchy subject with some administrators. Currently, \textit{The Angolite} staff hopes to trade its film-based cameras for digital ones, eliminating the need to send film out of the penitentiary to be processed, and thereby eliminating costs. Although Deputy Warden Sheryl Ranatza, who oversees \textit{The Angolite}, supports the idea, there are those who see the cameras as a potential security risk and are reluctant to endorse their purchase.

\textsuperscript{423} Glessing, \textit{The Underground Press}. 

308
In some instances, alternative journalists, particularly those involved with the more radical forms like underground media, are viewed as rebels seeking some sort of societal uprising. Such journalists are able to work in the underground realm because their identities are shrouded behind a veil of pen or screen names. While alternative and underground media often are considered to expose what they believe to be a corruptness of the establishment and to challenge the hegemonic framing existent in traditional media, an ironic twist of fate rears itself because, in the case of underground publications, journalists often hold other primary employment positions from which their livelihood comes.\footnote{424} Thus, the journalists at times criticize the very establishment that allows them to eat and live. The potential exists for Angolite journalists to find themselves in a very similar situation, except in prison the concept of anonymity is nonexistent. Some administrator or security officer knows which inmate has been asking about what topic or traveling to what area of the penitentiary at all times, indicative of the panoptic aspects of prison life.

Another widely discussed subgenre of alternate journalism is that of radical media, known for its first-person, native reporting and usage among social movements.\footnote{425} Atton expands his use of the term 'media' by including the essays and books of George Orwell, who relied heavily on native reporting when conducting research for his work. Unlike the wide range of definitions and purposes associated with alternative media, radical media have a much more specific goal:

(T)o provide access to the media for protest groups on those groups' terms. This entails developing media to encourage and normalize such access, where people

\footnote{424} Ibid.  
\footnote{425} Atton, "News Cultures."
of low status (in terms of their relationship to elite groups of owners, managers and senior professionals) can make their own news, whether by appearing in it as significant actors or by creating news themselves that is relevant to their situation.\textsuperscript{426}

Herein lies another potential crossover with mainstream journalism, what Boorstin (1999) refers to as the pseudo-event.\textsuperscript{427} The attractiveness of the pseudo-event for mainstream media lies in its accessibility and immediacy of information. Though preplanned to serve a particular agenda, pseudo-events lend themselves to the objective model of journalism, with a thorough journalist managing to cover more than the obvious event. For alternative media, pseudo-events may be self-created, meaning that the event is designed or initiated by a particular medium and then promulgated to serve a self-fulfilling prophecy.\textsuperscript{428} Therefore, the same tactic is taken advantage of by two different types of media in two very different ways.

The pseudo-event's involvement with mainstream media exemplifies what Kessler describes as a preoccupation with the spectacle instead of overarching issues.\textsuperscript{429} Pseudo-events, as well as those spectacles that are spontaneously produced, provide an easy hit for print journalists looking to fill space or broadcast journalists looking for eye-catching video feeds.\textsuperscript{430} From a public relations perspective, Angola is no stranger to the spectacle of events, and because of the nature of the institution, penitentiary 'news' often focuses on planned events that largely support the ideologies of the penitentiary. From guest

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 493.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{429} Kessler, The Dissident Press.
evangelist Kenneth Copeland, to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary graduation, to the annual prison rodeo, there is an underlying message that says, "Moral rehabilitation is working here, and it's safe to come see for yourself." The inmate-produced media and traditional free-world media outlets can then document these events. What The Angolite lacks in immediacy, the television and radio stations more than make up for. However, The Angolite provides the inmates with something concrete they can hold, send to their families, keep in storage, or view at their leisure.

Pointing toward politically liberal media like The Guardian, a former political public relations tool turned radical political paper, Atton further defines radical media as loosely organized, struggling to remain autonomous against the hegemonic constraints of the state, as opposed to the highly (vertically) structured mainstream media. This is strikingly similar, if not identical to, Ostertag's research detailing social movement journalism or advocacy journalism. Ostertag begins his work on social movement journalism with the abolitionists and suffragists and then moves to the gay and lesbian press, underground press, and the journalism surrounding the environmental movement. Distinguishing between mainstream and alternative media, Atton offers a typology for the latter that includes content, form, reprographic innovations, distributive uses, transformed roles and responsibilities and transformed communication processes. Speaking broadly, alternative media involve more cultural/social information dissemination, with consumers often supplying the news. Considering The Angolite staff's reliance on free-world individuals who are willing to research and/or collect

431 Glessing, The Underground Press.
432 Atton, "News Cultures."
433 Ostertag, People's Movements.
434 Atton, Alternative Media.
information for the journalists to write up, consumers quite literally supply much of the news that ultimately is disseminated among *Angolite* readers.

Though the idea of nonpartisan media is attractive, one must recognize that competing ideologies must be represented to fully subscribe to the marketplace of ideas concept. Objective journalism may bill itself as treating opposing sides equally and transmitting only facts, but as Goldberg and Alterman point out, mainstream journalism is at odds with itself as critics and journalists themselves try to establish a liberal or conservative bias. Clearly if such bias exists, media objectivity is questionable, as is the credibility of those who tout its existence. Conversely, alternative media are more obvious with their agendas and their calls to action by consumers. Haas considers "the importance attached to providing audiences with 'mobilizing information' directed both at external political activism and at participation in news production." Atton also sees political empowerment and societal reform through participatory democracy as key distinguishers from the agenda of mainstream (objective) media. If news does, as Soloski writes, typically support the status quo, then the challenge instigated by alternative media is necessary to publicly continue the system of checks and balances on which the United States has been built.

**Transmission and Ritual Communication Views**

In his work, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," James W. Carey describes two different views of communication that exist within the culture of the

---

United States: the transmission view and the ritual view of communication.\textsuperscript{440} Each view is distinct in its own right, with the latter less frequently addressed, though publications like the \textit{Journal of Media and Religion} might buck that trend.\textsuperscript{441} However, in addressing the inmate-produced media at Angola it is appropriate to apply not one but both views to the communication tools utilized within the penitentiary. Although the two views are addressed separately in this chapter for purposes of clarity, one should not assume that the models cannot simultaneously exist in the same medium.\textsuperscript{442} As cultural devices, \textit{The Angolite} magazine, KLSP radio and LSP-TV play integral roles in not only communicating information, but also controlling the population. Indeed, their main purpose, as stated by the administration, is to disseminate information throughout the eighteen-thousand-acre penitentiary. The immediacy of both the radio and television station provides officials with instant access to the entire inmate population at once, a particularly useful tool in case of emergency.

I have argued in the previous chapters of this project that information conveyance is but one of the outcomes of Angola's inmate-produced media. Foucault's concept of self-governance was detailed at length in Chapter Eight, but what has not been fully explored is the sense of community created by the inmate-produced media. In this final section of text, the practical uses of inmate-produced media are addressed, again focusing on the media from a professional, journalistic standpoint as opposed to a cultural studies one. Carey's transmission and ritual views are applied to illustrate how traditional point-to-point communication occurs as well as how shared belief systems are created. Carey

\textsuperscript{440} Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication."
himself acknowledges that the existence of one view need not negate the other. "A ritual view does not exclude the processes of information transmission or attitude change. It merely contends that one cannot understand these processes aright except insofar as they are case within an essentially ritualistic view of communication and social order." For Warden Cain to effectively run the Angola penitentiary on the basis of morally rehabilitating its inmates, both types of communication views are necessary.

Transmission view

Although each inmate-produced medium has qualities that could be modeled after the transmission view of communication, *The Angolite* best exemplifies the term. In Carey's own words, "The transmission view of communication is the commonest in our culture – perhaps in all industrial cultures – and dominates contemporary dictionary entries under the term. It is defined by terms such as 'imparting,' 'sending,' transmitting,' or 'giving information to others." Warden Cain uses the media to transport information over distances throughout the prison. The sheer size of the penitentiary, both in land and population, makes face-to-face communication impractical on matters that impact the whole prison. Instead, the administration uses its media to convey messages concurrently throughout the penitentiary. This is not unlike traditional newspapers in the free world. Carey posits that if newspapers are examined under the transmission view, newspaper content is examined as per its effect on readers, a more mechanized approach to communication.

Although *The Angolite* is a bi-monthly publication and therefore not appropriate for relaying information of urgency, its physical presence and reputation among the

---

444 Ibid., 15.
445 Ibid., 13-36.
inmates make it a solid choice for disseminating general information. For example, the following excerpts stem from the January/February 2007 issue of the magazine. The section, "On the Farm," features inmate correspondents writing about general items of interest throughout Angola.

Excerpt No. 1: **DEPARTMENT REGULATION C-02-009**, effective immediately, requires inmates to sign a release form in order for the Department of Corrections to handle your mail. The form gives your consent and acknowledges your understanding that the department may open and read your general correspondence. Failure to sign the form may cause the loss of mail privileges. All inmates will have the opportunity to read or have the form read to them. For more details, contact your area classification officer.  

Excerpt No. 2: **LARNA**\textsuperscript{447} **APPROVED PROGRAM.** A new program for inmates with a history of substance abuse is being offered by the mental health department. The program will cover topics such as making better decisions and the roots of violence, all geared toward learning skills to become a man who does not solve problems with violence… \textsuperscript{448}

Although inmates will have heard, or should have heard, about these issues before *The Angolite* is published and distributed, its reappearance in the magazine reinforces the prior announcements.

As most newspapers do for their communities, *The Angolite* serves as a journal of record for the happenings at Angola. If an inmate cannot attend a particular event, he may

\textsuperscript{447} Louisiana Risk Needs Assessment  
\textsuperscript{448} Sherman, "On the Farm," 61.
read about it in the magazine. While it is the ritual view of communication that is typically associated with religion, the transmission view also sprung from that arena. However, the ease with which information could be transmitted without the support of transportation, via machines like the telegraph, opened the doors for any and all information to be sent. The distance between points was no longer an issue. KLSP radio and LSP-TV share similar abilities for transmitting information. However, it is my contention that the news value of their messages is secondary to the sense of community they create.

Beyond the dissemination of particular messages for informational purposes, Carey's transmission view is evident in the general control over Angola's space. Inmate-produced media must be utilized to effectively communicate with the entire prison population in much the same fashion as media are used in the free world. United States residents obtain their news, their information, from media outlets – not, or at least very rarely, from public address systems. There is a sense of outsider normalcy and civility that a newspaper, radio station and/or television station bring to the community of Angola. Warden Cain admits that if the prison were one building, the communicative devices utilized might be very different. In that instance, flyers, meetings or public address announcements might be more appropriate, albeit more indicative of an institutional setting. Furthermore, at least two of the inmate-produced media transcend the borders of the penitentiary, thereby reducing the "space" separating the free world and the prison.

Ritual view

Maintaining an accurately informed population is important, particularly when the audience is a captive one and disagreements spawned from inaccuracies and innuendo have the potential of causing riots. Warden Cain maintains he encourages the inmate-produced media to report the truth so as to squelch rumors before they become 'believed facts.' Yet the men spoken to for this project see their in-house media as representing more than news outlets. Granted, some see the media triad as being nothing more than vessels of propaganda for Warden Cain and his moral rehabilitation. Depending on how one views Cain and his philosophy, the term propaganda could be appropriate. However, another way of situating these media, particularly the radio and television stations, is within the framework of Carey's ritual view of communication.

According to Carey, "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs." Unlike the transmission view, the ritual model "conceives communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed." Without question, KLSP radio station serves to promote religion, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and its teachings, as well as reinforce the tenets of moral rehabilitation. So too, does LSP-TV with its religious service broadcasts and Bible studies. But if one does not examine the media further, he or she will miss an even broader purpose of the productions.

With 5,108 men living at Angola, it would be impossible for every person to attend every event, no matter how important. Logistically, it would not be feasible.

Furthermore, not every man serving a sentence at the penitentiary has the privilege of attending events, even those that have the potential of being beneficial. Privileges and freedoms must be earned and are not available to everyone, including those on confined cell restrictions or Death Row. Likewise, some men are bedridden in the prison hospital and do not have the physical ability to leave the infirmary. Warden Cain is forthright about seeing the penitentiary as more than an eighteen-thousand-acre prison. "It is a community," he states. "The dormitory is a city, an aisle is the street, and a bed is a house." Because establishing a sense of community is important to maintaining order at the "city of Angola," events like church services, the Bible College graduation and annual rodeo allow the inmates to participate in shared experiences, even if the men never leave their cells. Such activities are important to cultural studies scholars because they help establish the cultural history of the penitentiary, a tangential aspect that does not always come through in the actual journalistic message itself.452

_The Angolite_ also exhibits characteristics of ritual communication, albeit at a different level. The immediacy of the television and radio broadcasts coupled with their abilities to incorporate audio and/or images makes them easily relatable to the population. They, more so than the magazine, can appeal to the drama and spectacular aspects of the news as opposed to the facts, not unlike similar divisions found in the free world. That much of the drama surrounds religion is ironic, considering the ritual view's origin in religion and purpose of "fellowship" and "the possession of a common faith."454 However, _The Angolite_ also engages in creating unity and shared experience, as evidenced when the magazines are immediately taken, read, and then shared on

453 Carev, "A Cultural Approach to Communication."
454 Ibid., 18.
distribution days. The international acclaim the magazine has earned throughout the years also gives the inmate population "bragging rights," as one man said, similar to KLSP radio, "the incarceration station; the only one in the nation."\(^{455}\)

Carey states that he does not distinguish between culture and communication.\(^ {456}\) Instead, the two are embedded into all aspects of everyday life. In order to fully recognize this feat, one must examine both the transmission and ritual forms of communication and how they impact, or serve as, culture. Considering both the message and the shared experience simultaneously allows one to better understand how culture is created and ultimately, how it is lived. By not looking at the models as being binary, a more complete picture is created. "Cultural history is not concerned merely with the events but with the thought within them," Carey explains. "Cultural history is, in this sense, the study of consciousness of the past. … The objective is not merely to recover articulate ideas or what psychologists nowadays call cognitions but rather the entire 'structure of feeling'…"\(^ {457}\) If journalism history is to be better documented, as Carey contends it must be, cultural historians must consider not only the message (transmission view), but the thought process and experiences (ritual view) generated through them, as well as their progressions through history.

\(^{455}\) Although LSP-TV is also unique to Angola, at less than two years old at the time this research was conducted, it had not yet established itself in the same fashion as the radio station and Angolite magazine. Thus, it has not yet been able to establish a true reputation – positive or negative – or audience among the inmates.

\(^{456}\) Grossberg and Carey, "Configurations of Culture, History and Politics," 201.

\(^{457}\) Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," 89-90.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

In 1976, Thomas Murton wrote about the dilemma of prison reform in a book by the same name. In addition to providing an evolution of United States penology as well as examining the issue of prison reform, Murton discusses the concept of an alternative managerial prison model that utilizes participatory government.\footnote{Murton, "Participatory Government," 189-225.} Though first published more than three decades ago, the words resonate loudly with not only this project, but also Foucault's notions of governmentality and self-governance and Angola Warden Burl Cain's belief that the Louisiana State Penitentiary is, particularly because of the large number of men serving life (or life equivalent) sentences, a community. Murton, quoting an earlier article he authored,\footnote{Id., "Inmate Self-Government," \textit{University of San Francisco Law Review} 6 no. 1 (1971) 88-90.} writes,

This new dimension in prison administration requires some courage and a great deal of perception by the reformer. To turn the prison around requires some skill and intuitive action which allows the formation of a new society. A new prison community must be brought into existence which is unique in that it is a coalition between the staff and inmates as opposed to the traditional adversary relationship.\footnote{Id., "Participatory Government," 214.}

Angola indeed utilizes this participatory form of control and governance, although it is not the exclusive power-relationship within the Louisiana prison, nor, at least according to Foucault, should it be expected to be. Power is, "a set of procedures, and it is as such, and only as such, that the analysis of mechanisms of power could be understood as the
beginnings of something like a theory of power. Thus, Foucault continues, "…the set of procedures whose role is to establish, maintain, and transform mechanisms of power, are not 'self-generating' or self-subsistent'; they are not founded on themselves." From a social history standpoint, medieval justice led to the fifteenth and sixteenth century administrative state, which led to governmentalization, the art of government, or governmentality. All are still apparent in some ways.

As a society, we are defined and exemplified by our culture. As a microcosm of society, a prison also may be characterized by the cultural artifacts produced by its population. The Louisiana State Penitentiary is unique in that some of its cultural artifacts involve forms of mass media, including The Angolite magazine, KLSP radio station and LSP-TV. These media, in addition to being reflective of the population, also help define/control/govern the men serving time at the prison. The end result allows the men, despite being incarcerated and subject to the rules and regulations of the penitentiary, to play a direct role in their governance, thereby providing them with some sense of autonomy and normalcy. James W. Carey states,

To study communication is to examine the actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used. … Our attempts to construct, maintain, repair, and transform reality are publicly observable activities that occur in historical time. We create, express, and convey our knowledge of

---

462 Ibid.
and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems: art, science, journalism, religion, common sense, mythology.\textsuperscript{465}

Considering 7.2 million men and women, approximately 3.2 percent of the United States' adult population,\textsuperscript{466} are part of the correctional population,\textsuperscript{467} it is pertinent that as much as possible be learned about this captive – and growing – group, especially considering the number of prison newspapers in the United States has fallen sharply since the 1970s.

This project, through ethnographic research methods and the application of cultural studies theory, argues that self-governance exists within the Louisiana State Penitentiary and is being carried to the penitentiary masses, at least in part, through the inmate-produced media. These cultural technologies serve simultaneously as both products of the state and the subculture by which they are produced. Indeed, they could not exist were it not for the support of Angola's administration or the willingness and abilities of the inmate staffs. The triad of media fosters community through shared experience and helps disseminate the ideals of Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation. Yet each medium can also serve as a tool of resistance when necessary. To describe how this type of self-governance is implemented at the penitentiary, the inmates were called upon to share their own experiences. They are the ones who live within the space that is Angola, who wake up each day hoping to do something purposeful, but no doubt hoping more that will be the day when they will become the exception to the penitentiary norm, when they will be able to leave the prison and carry out their purposefulness as a free man. They are the ones who must wake each day and manufacture hope.

\textsuperscript{466} Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/p06ppus06pr.htm
\textsuperscript{467} This figure includes those who are incarcerated and in the community.
Admittedly, Angola's media are the exception among penitentiaries throughout the nation. Yet it cannot be forgotten that only decades ago, the penitentiary was known for being the worst of the worst, where weapons and fear ruled over the inmates and the employees. Now, Warden Cain's moral rehabilitation, a philosophy with deep roots in Christianity that is not without its critics, abounds. The inmate-produced media serve as vessels not only for promoting, but reinforcing, the morally rehabilitative values addressed in the prison's Bible College and other programs, which themselves represent a sort of neo-liberal responsibilization. No one person or program can take complete credit for the transformation, but the transformation is there nonetheless. The long-termers, those who have been in the prison for more than twenty years, easily describe the metamorphosis, and except in rare cases, support the change.

**Inmate C:** The culture here has changed. It's gone from the bloodiest penitentiary in the nation to probably the most blood-covered penitentiary in the nation. Because now it's covered by the blood of the lamb. There's healing. One time we all carried knives. Now, we all carry swords, the sword of the Word. So it's just really a big transformation, a big change.

In "Censorship in the Big House: Death of the Jailhouse Press," Leah Caldwell quotes H. Bruce Franklin as stating the decline of prison journalism stemmed from its "unifying prisoners and engaging outsiders." The worse the prison, the tighter the gag orders on inmate journalists. Once again, Angola is an anomaly because its inmate-produced magazine, *The Angolite*, has First Amendment freedoms and is considered an uncensored prison publication. According to Warden Cain, he would rather know about

---

an issue before it festers and becomes a problem with the men. Therefore, provided The Angolite staff reports facts and not speculation and innuendo, he supports the publication and its contents, though he may not always agree with its arguments. With an international subscription base and multiple awards, The Angolite is respected both in and outside of Angola. Although some of the inmates see the publication as a tool for perpetuating Warden Cain's personal ideologies (as well as those belonging to the state), staff members see the magazine as giving the outside world an accurate look at prison life. Perhaps more important to the men of Angola, The Angolite serves as a tool of resistance or advocacy publication, enlightening the public as to Louisiana's extraordinarily harsh sentencing laws and sometimes-backward legal practices.

Of the three-inmate-produced media, The Angolite has been around the longest, since the 1950s, and has carved a niche for itself at the penitentiary. Unlike the radio and television stations, the magazine focuses more on news and less on entertainment. Staff members admit they are allowed to criticize the prison system in editorials and point out factually based, institutional problems in their stories, but stop short at calling the magazine uncensored; least censored is more appropriate. Then again, they ask what journalistic publication is truly uncensored and has little regard for advertisers or the ideologies of its publisher? Their point is not without merit, further illustrating the idea that the prison system is a microcosm of society. For Angolite Editor Kerry Myers, who is in year fifteen of a life sentence, the magazine gives him purpose for a life in which he must daily manufacture hope. And although he loves his job and can think of no other position he would rather have in prison, Kerry says he would give it all up for freedom.
"I'd rather live under a bridge and be free than have this job in prison," he said, admitting that the ideal situation would be to be similarly employed on the outside.

Kerry Myers is not the only inmate working with Angola's media who feels a sense of purpose because of his job placement. Almost every man spoken to looked to the bigger picture and recognized that his individual work affected others at Angola as well as beyond the actual penitentiary. Undoubtedly, this impacts directly the self-esteem of the media producers. Those working with the inmate-produced media are afforded privileges and freedoms beyond those given to the average inmate and even those given to a Class A Trusty. The men have greater access to move throughout the penitentiary grounds, more occasions to interact with the administration and other "important people" who visit the prison, and more opportunity to travel beyond the penitentiary to cover events. This is particularly true of the LSP-TV staff that travels monthly to film inmate boxing matches at various correctional institutions throughout the state. With these freedoms and sense of respect comes stricter scrutiny by the administration, however. The men are not known simply by their department of corrections number; almost everyone – the administration, the guards and other inmates – knows who they are and what they do. They have privileges, but they are still inmates, a point that is lost on no one. The men must check in with guards and follow the rules of the prison. Like the other inmates, they cannot leave after a hard day's work or call their families to relieve the day's stress. At night, most return to a dormitory to sleep alongside more than sixty other men. In one instance, their 'popularity' fosters a sense of normalcy. The inmates are not just numbered units, one of more than five thousand at Angola to be used for production purposes. Instead, they are men with names, talents, responsibilities and goals. However,
the popularity also imposes great pressure to be the model inmate, although every man spoken to said he would behave the same way and have the same character if he swept floors on "the walk."

The self-esteem garnered by the inmate-media producers helps perpetuate the subjectification process that encourages introspection and moral self-reflection. By achieving and maintaining subjectification, the men are better equipped to engage in the neo-liberal process of self-governance, the third power/governing problematic in Foucault's triangle of sovereignty, discipline and government.469

Self-esteem is a technology of citizenship and self-government for evaluating and acting upon ourselves so that the police, the guards and the doctors do not have to. … Individuals must accept the responsibility to subject their selves, to voluntarily consent to establishing a relationship between one's self and a tutelary power such as a therapist, a social worker, a social programme, a parenting class or what have you.470

That the men allow themselves to be subjectified should not be seen as a lack of autonomy or as cowering to the state's ideologies. Rather, it should be considered an evolutionary process of the self that is ultimately determined by the individual. Without the individual's willingness to become subjectified, change cannot occur. Subjectification is not limited to those Angola inmates who work with the media, however.

KLSP deejay Keith Alexander sees himself as a "guardian angel," helping his inmate audience see the value of moral rehabilitation. God moves through him, he

explains; he serves as only the messenger of His word, encouraging inmates to resist temptation and wrongdoing. David, who works on the LSP-Productions' crew, readily acknowledges the television station's purpose is to aid in the promotion of moral rehabilitation through a similar immediacy as the radio station. With both media, the prevalence of religion is apparent, making the pastoral relationship more readily seen than with *The Angolite*, though religious events are featured in the magazine. Yet the impact of the media extends beyond the actual messages being transmitted. The men working on the inmate-produced media serve as models, whether they aspire to or not, for the other men in the penitentiary. They are incarnations of hope as to what other inmates could possibly have or be should they allow themselves to become subjectified through morally rehabilitative techniques.

Though the aforementioned means are often associated with religion, as per the culture of the South, they need not always be. However, the ideals must be accepted so that the men may reach a level of esteem among others and preparedness for self-governance. "Consent in this case does not mean that there is not exercise of power; by isolating a self to act upon, to appreciate and to esteem, we avail ourselves of a terrain of action, we exercise power upon ourselves." 471 In the case of the prison and its inhabitants, an inmate must first problematize himself before he can effectively engage in self-reflection. 472 Of course, not every inmate is willing or able to become subjectified. Thus, governmentality, or self-governance, works synergistically with sovereignty and discipline to maintain control at Angola.

471 Ibid.
With 5,108 men incarcerated at a penitentiary that covers, through a series a mini-prisons or camps in addition to the Main Prison, an area the size of Manhattan, implementing mass media to communicate with the population is realistically less innovative than it is practical. Warden Cain points to the effectiveness of the media, particularly the radio and the television stations, for reaching the entire population quickly, especially in times of emergency. However, he also acknowledges the significance of the media in fostering a sense of community, especially among those men with very limited access to the prison and its programs. This illustrates that both the transmission and ritual views of communication are evident in Angola's media, the prior being more commonly addressed. Under the transmission model, the inmate-produced media are used to disseminate information throughout the penitentiary via magazine articles, radio announcements, or televised segments focusing on particular happenings at the penitentiary. Even more important, the media convey information to the outside world. For The Angolite, which prides itself on a history of advocacy, relaying information to the free world allows it to disrupt the hegemonic framework of traditional media by providing information that causes one to challenge the status quo. In a best-case scenario, this could mean prison reform for the Louisiana penitentiary and the thousands of men with life sentences.

The ritual model of communication, however, is concerned far less about the actual message than the shared experience the media foster. Following tenets of the ritual model, activities like religious services, lectures, sporting events, and even graduation ceremonies can be broadcast and conveyed to the at-large prison population,

---

including those men who are restricted for whatever reason to their cells. A Death Row inmate may not be able to attend church services, but he can view the same service that others attend via Channel 21; he may receive no visitors, but can listen for a "shout out" from one of the KLSP deejays. He may also watch one of the most spectacular events at the penitentiary, an event that draws thousands of free people to venture through Angola's front gate for one weekend in the spring and every Sunday in October. The "Wildest Show in the South," or Angola's prison rodeo, allows inmates and free people to walk among one another without shackles or bars. For many of the inmates, the annual event is a chance to make a few dollars by selling crafts. For others, it is an opportunity to win bragging rights and even more money should they succeed at one of the rodeo events. And for still others, the event is simply an occasion to experience some semblance of normalcy, to interact with more people in one day than they will the entire remainder of the year.

Some inmates will never have the opportunity to attend the rodeo, but all have the chance to experience it through some form of media, thus creating a common occurrence among the men. But events like the rodeo do more than foster a sense of community. They give the public an opportunity to witness firsthand the changes at Angola and allow free people to realize that not all inmates are animals, and perhaps even more important, that inmates may be rehabilitated. Many of those incarcerated are not defunct members of society, but rather individuals with talents and skills, who yearn to continue their work outside of prison. In many cases, they have made incredibly poor choices in their lives, but they have learned from them and hope to help others do the same.
The rodeo, while creating positive publicity for Warden Cain and the prison, also provide positive publicity for the inmate population. As one of the men said, "You never know who's watching, and you never know who you're going to meet. So it's best to be on your good behavior at all times and act like you know you should." His sentiments reflect the point at which disciplinary and governmentality power relationships intersect.

The idea that someone is always watching is representative of the omnipotent being with the panoptic gaze.\textsuperscript{475} Foucault addresses this in \textit{Discipline & Punish}, his social history of the prison system, when he writes,

\begin{quote}
…the major effect of the Panopticon (is) to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.\textsuperscript{476}
\end{quote}

Foucault continues on to state,

\begin{quote}
…it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations. Bentham was surprised that panoptic institutions could be so light: there were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks…
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{475} Bentham, "Letter II: Plan for a Penitentiary Inspection House."
\textsuperscript{476} Foucault, \textit{Discipline & Punish}, 201
This thought basis leads into the concept of self-governance and behaving properly "like you know should." However, it is imperative that the individual be subjectified in order for this segues to occur. The inmate-produced media and events like the annual rodeo help to reverse the notion of Bentham's panopticon so that eventually, the men are guided by themselves as subjects. They become the actors in cultural technologies that influence behavior and maintain control.

The literal road to Angola is long, but the roadway is virtually endless for the men "doing time" at what was once considered America's bloodiest prison. With sentencing laws that leave little – if any – room for parole in a life sentence, most Angola residents will never leave their prison community. They have been branded as broken and unwanted by much of society, and left to die. But that does not destroy the hope, manufactured or otherwise, onto which the men hold. Nor does it stop outside entities from engaging in responsibilization and recognizing the change in the men. The inmates build, as much as they can, a sense of normalcy into their institutional lives; they create and support a community, however contrived, so that they can continue to be productive citizens. There are those who have given up, who have become institutionalized and go about their days with a distant expression on their faces. For them, the hope is gone; it no longer exists. But for the others, hope is a drug, a necessary evil that helps them get through the day. "Anyone who tells you they're okay with being here, especially the young ones, is just trying to be cool," explained one man. "They don't want to be here; they just don't want you to know they care."

Certainly, some people could argue that inmate-produced media are luxuries that should not be afforded to criminals. Others could say that the Louisiana State
Penitentiary, with its fertile farmland and sprawling acreage is almost picturesque. The inmates will tell you otherwise. For them, the flowers and shrubbery do not outweigh the fact that Angola is still a prison. No magazine or radio station, not even a television station, could ever do that. KLSP deejay Sirvoris "Shaq" Sutton tries to hammer home that point when he speaks to tour groups, especially those with teenagers who may see working at the radio station as cool and the penitentiary as not that terrible a place.

Shaq: I tell them all the time, even with this, I don't want them to be fooled. I tell 'em the biggest lie about Angola. I say, 'Did you see how far you had to come to get into this place? … Did you see … the horses, the cows, and you see all that? I say, let me tell you something: That's the biggest lie about this place, because just beyond those gates, you're gonna get into the belly of the beast. Not everybody looks like me, not everybody talks like me, not everybody is thinking the same way, not everybody's acting the same way. So I don't want you to be fooled by this. This is real prison. This is real maximum-security prison. Your everyday life is controlled in some form or fashion. Your choices are very limited.' I tell them most of things that are in your world are in this world, too. The first thing they're gonna ask is how. Humph, go figure. But nevertheless, it's true. You still have to make choices. There are a number of things in this prison also that are very good while you're here, since you have to be here. … You can take full advantage of the time you've been afforded.

The inmate-produced media represent three of the positive ways to engage in prison life and benefit not only those immediately involved in them, but the prison population at-large, and to some extent, society overall. The fact that the media successfully exist not
through tax dollars, but through self-sufficiency, donations and the Inmate Welfare Fund, makes them that much more appealing.

If indeed, rehabilitation is a goal of incarceration, then techniques like Angola's inmate-produced media should not be frowned upon, but rather encouraged, particularly because they help promulgate a prison maintenance model that utilizes self-governance. Providing inmates with a sense of agency and normalcy affords them a connection to the world beyond Angola, the world in which they used to live. Carried out correctly, the media can create and maintain a sense of community that helps generate and preserve order and structure within the prison. Of course, self-governance is not the only power structure utilized in the penitentiary. Facets of sovereignty (punishment) and discipline also exist to complete Foucault's triangle of societal governance. Yet, it is the neo-liberal governmentality, focused on self-governance, which employs the pastoral care so clearly exhibited at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. To say that Angola's inmate-produced media are the only reasons successful self-governance exist at the prison would be naïve. However, to not include them in the equation, or worse, to exclude them from the prison community all together, as has been done in so many prisons throughout the United States, is a much greater detriment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


_____. January/February 1983.


Downey, John and Natalie Fenton. "New Media, Counter Publicity and the Public Sphere." New Media and Society 5, no. 2 (2003): 185-202.


*Forlorn Hope*, March 31, 1800, 1.

______. April 19, 1800, 4.


Gates v. Collier, 501 F.2d 1291 (5th Cir. 1974).


*Rikers Review*, June 30, 1948: 3


VITA

Kalen Mary Ann Churcher

Kalen Churcher's current work addresses the implementation of self-governance by subcultures through cultural devices, particularly media produced within the specific group. She is interested in contemporary first amendment issues, social justice media, techniques of governance and power-knowledge relationships, as well as agency within marginalized groups. Kalen explores these areas through ethnographic research methods, focusing on observations and (reflexive) interviews. Although her research is situated within communications/media studies, it is largely interdisciplinary, with (current) applicability to fields of criminal justice, sociology, penology and political science.

Kalen received her Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Wilkes University and a Master's Degree in Human Resources from the University of Scranton. She is currently an instructor at the Pennsylvania State University, State College, and a Doctoral Candidate with a projected graduation date of August 2008. She has presented research papers at international, national and regional conferences and has experience teaching a variety of courses, both seminar- and lecture-based; theoretical and skills-focused. Courses taught to date include: Public Speaking, Basic News Writing, Feature Writing, Mass Communication & Society, Media Ethics, and Media Law. She also received the Penn State University College of Communications Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award.

Kalen will begin an assistant professor position at Niagara University in August 2008.