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War Stories? Analyzing Memoirs and Autobiographical Treatments Written by American Correctional Professionals

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ABSTRACT AND ARTICLE INFORMATION

Over the past century, many American correctional professionals (including correctional officers, wardens, and support staff) have written memoirs and autobiographies that described their experiences working at one or more facilities. Although the number of books of this nature pales in comparison to those that have been written and published by convicts and exconvicts, enough of them have been released in order to warrant a more in-depth analysis. This article presents the results of a content analysis of 30 English language, American based memoirs/autobiographies published between 1996 and 2017, on 14 variables. Not only does this study contextualize these books, but it also provides an analytic framework for their review. The conclusion points out areas where continued scholarship on this topic may be conducted. In particular, the article argues that more first-hand treatments need to be conducted on the prison institution by current or former correctional professionals who have experience working inside correctional institutions.

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A considerable amount of research and writing has been done on and published about corrections (including jails, prisons, their policies and practices, and the people who live and work there). This includes, but is not limited to, work by activists, clergy, politicians, reporters, scholars, the general public, and people with lived experience (e.g., victims of crime, convicts, and correctional workers and professionals). Likewise, the public learns about incarceration from a variety of information sources.

On one end of the spectrum, the public is exposed to a deluge of social media postings (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), news media reports (e.g., newspapers, television shows, etc.), commercial (i.e., Hollywood) movies that depict life behind bars (e.g., *Shawshank Redemption*), reality TV shows (e.g., *Locked Up*, *Locked Up Abroad*, etc.; Ross, 2011, 2015), and documentaries (e.g., *Solitary: Inside Red Onion State Prison*). The information, messages, and “knowledge” conveyed by these communication vehicles about what correctional facilities are like; how those housed and employed there experience daily life; the challenges faced by administration; and how prison culture is constructed, maintained, and reinforced varies in terms of its quality, including its reliability and veracity. Many of the conduits through which the information is delivered (e.g., social media and popular media) are criticized for creating and perpetrating myths and misperceptions about prisoners, prisoners, correctional officers, and incarceration (Ross, 2003, 2012).

On the other end of the spectrum is academic research, which is less accessible to the general public, but generally assumed to be more reliable because of the standards that it is subjected to such as research being subject to peer review.¹ Loosely located in between these two ends of a continuum are memoirs written by people who have direct experience of corrections. Here, the value of the memoir/autobiography becomes critical.

These communication vehicles appear to be important to the authors (if they were not, why would they invest significant resources producing these books?) and may also assist the audiences of this medium. Good memoirs/autobiographies tell a story that is timeless, inspiring, and empowering (Eakin, 1999; Svensson, 1997). The validity of the content of such books, however, can be debated, as memoirs/autobiographies are a selective retelling of the past. Incidents that a prospective audience would find favorable will most likely be included, and those which are potentially embarrassing to the writer are omitted.

First person accounts of working in and for a correctional facility are one of the least understood bodies of research and writing about corrections. In order to partially rectify this imbalance, the authors of this study analyze 30 book length memoirs and autobiographies of correctional officers who have worked in American jails and prisons whose memoirs/autobiographies were published between 1996-2017. In furtherance of this goal, the researchers briefly review scholarly literature connected to the major themes of this study.

Literature Review

In order to contextualize the research conducted in this article, scholarship on correctional officers, biographies of those with lived experience of prison, the absence of scholarship on prison officer memoirs, and the importance of autobiographies/memoirs as pedagogical tools are discussed.

Scholarship on Correctional Officers

A considerable amount of scholarship has been produced on correctional officers (COs) in the United States. It covers almost every topic imaginable. Some of this work looks at how COs are hired, trained, how they move up the ranks, and how they lead (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2019, Chapter 5). Other research examines correctional officers’ orientations (e.g., attitudes, opinions, etc.) towards a multiplicity of job-related issues (Hepburn & Albonetti, 1980; Valentino Ferdik, & Hills, 2017). Some of this scholarship digs into their on the job behavior, such as the development of a unique subculture (Duffee, 1974); race relations with other COs (Jacobs & Kraft, 1978); correctional officers’ relationships with inmates (Jurik, 1985); and deviance (Ross, 2013; Ross et al., 2016).

A subset of scholarship about correctional officers also investigates CO stress (Cullen et al., 1985) and its related behavior of burnout (Morgan et al., 2002). This academic literature provides an important backdrop in any understanding of correctional professionals.

First Person Accounts of Life Behind Bars

Walk into any of the remaining bricks-and-mortar bookstores, like Barnes & Noble, and head for the criminology/criminal justice or true crime section. These days, not only are you likely to find lots of books on infamous serial killers, mass murderers, spree killers, and sensational crimes, but you will also notice a handful of tomes about jails, prisons, and convicts. Among the classic offerings are prisoner

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autobiographies/memoirs that contain accounts of individuals who are currently or were formerly incarcerated for different kinds of crimes and various lengths of time.

Memoirs/Autobiographies of Convicts/Exconvicts

Over the past century, a number of American inmates² have written autobiographies and memoirs recounting their time spent in custody. Some of this work appears in edited collections of chapters written by convicts (e.g., Gabriel, 2005), while others are extended works and sold as books. Some convict and ex-convict authors (e.g., Abbott, 1981; Liddy, 1996; Malcolm X, 1965; Timilty, 1998, etc.) cover the entire period they served behind bars, while others, such as Rolland (1997), only choose to focus on particular incidents such as riots.³ Many of these books have a timeless quality (as evidenced by their sales that have been sustained over a long period of time), while others appear only to be quickly forgotten and remaindered. This kind of writing has also been the subject of scholarly analysis (e.g., Franklin, 1982, 1988), with an emphasis on categorizing and analyzing the different subgenres in this field of study.

Memoirs/Autobiographies Written by Correctional Professionals

Less prevalent are biographies written about correctional professionals (e.g., officers, wardens, or support staff). Slightly more prevalent, however, are memoirs/autobiographies written by correctional professionals. For criminology and criminal justice students, others who aspire to be corrections professionals, and scholars of incarceration, autobiographies/memoirs written by those who have direct contact with the criminal justice system provide introductions to what life may be like working behind bars and dealing with inmates, other correctional workers, and administrators. In short, such books are first-hand accounts by members of one of our country's largest professions, who work in one of the most controversial but poorly understood occupational settings. Readers should not assume that the memoirs and autobiographies meet the rigorous scientific standard of being evidence-based. They should also not believe that the memoirs or autobiographies are auto-ethnographies, where subjects not only describe, in a qualitative manner, their experiences but also systematically engage with it (e.g., Newbold et al., 2014).

In comparison to books by convicts, those written by correctional professionals are probably less well known and understood.⁴ This study is an attempt to analyze these books in order to provide better understandings about this type of writing, the individuals who penned these texts, and the

correctional contexts in which they worked. This study moves beyond basic review and annotation, but also focuses on what such books offer as a body of knowledge and understanding of institutional corrections. Included in this analysis are the ways such pieces of evidence can be analyzed to situate the times and places where and when the books were written and the major content of each.⁵

Why Memoirs/Autobiographies by Correctional Officers are Important

Memoirs and autobiographies of corrections professionals offer us an alternative perspective on carceral experiences. In this way, autobiographies and memoirs of those who have been (or still are) involved in institutional life may be the primary means for society's members to learn accurate information about prisons and jails (Johnson, 2012). In small part, the available memoirs/autobiographies of those involved in the American correctional industry may help to combat the pervasive negative images the public has derived about corrections professionals and places like jails and prisons. While certainly far from describing "fun" and "happy" places, the negative connotations afforded by the public to corrections (including staff and inmates) may be offset by the ability of such works to humanize the setting and those so involved. This is clearly a more realistic light. In counterbalancing this perception, it is also important to keep in mind that memoirs/autobiographies are mediated representations of the "facts" of what took place behind bars.

In recent years, both correctional officers and administrators have written memoirs/autobiographies that describe and, in some cases, reflect on their experiences working in prisons (and to a much lesser extent jails). These have garnered an audience among some practitioners, instructors, and students and are marketed for and occasionally used in university graduate and undergraduate programs. Frequently, these books chronicle the correctional professional's life and career, with at least one of the major foci on the writer's career progression, tasks, and how their career both changed and how it affected them. For some, these memoirs/autobiographies are seen as reflections on human services delivery or correctional administration approaches, philosophies, and techniques. In this regard, such texts can be highly instructive for both subsequent generations and critics: Understanding how the job can be done, has been done, and seemingly should (or should not) be done is valuable and desirable information.

Are correctional professionals' experiences and philosophies interpreted and experienced in the same ways that convicts or other criminal justice practitioners would interpret and experience such

events? For most, probably not. However, the value is in understanding how those in the positions of authority experience that status and the power that comes with it. In this regard, it is helpful that some correctional professionals have chosen to share their experiences and their approaches to their work. Only through opportunities presented to us by those who have been inside – through efforts such as these books – can most of us ever know or come close to conceiving of the experiences of the carcerality involved. A content analysis of correctional officer memoirs/autobiographies may point out not only how a select number of correctional workers understand their role in the field, but also discrepancies between what they think is important and what scholars deem to be important.

Methodology

In order to identify the numerous memoirs and autobiographies, the researchers performed a content analysis following basic principles articulated by experts such as Krippendorff (1980/2018). In 2016-2017, we conducted a keyword search of www.amazon.com with combinations of the search descriptors: autobiography, corrections, memoir, prison, and staff.⁶ The descriptions of these books were read, and if they appeared to be either autobiographies or memoirs of correctional officers, they were either purchased and/or borrowed from a library. A total of 30 books were secured (See Appendix). Excluded from this step were books written by support staff such as doctors⁷; maintenance workers⁸; and memoirs/autobiographies of guards and administrators who worked in Guantanamo,⁹ the US facility where “enemy combatants” in the war on terror have been incarcerated.¹⁰ Although numerous respectable memoirs of correctional officers/administrators can be traced back to Lewis E. Lawes’ 1932 autobiography *20,000 years in Sing Sing*, the books chosen for this analysis were all published between the years 1996 and 2017. The researchers believe that this time period would be a reasonable time frame from which to draw meaningful generalizations.

An initial coding sheet was developed and revised a handful of times as additional variables were considered. Variables were selected based on a very intuitive manner. In short, we asked ourselves, “What would we want to know (as researchers, instructors, or students) after having read these books?” It was not an attempt to compare what scholars write about correctional officers versus what correctional officers deem important in retelling of their own stories. This process recognizes that coding of this nature is an iterative process. In other words, one cannot predict all

the themes and content in a body of literature until one has read it through at least once. Each book was coded twice by separate researchers. Throughout this process, the researchers communicated with each other to address nuances and ensure consistent interpretation of coding criteria between the two data sets. Once the coding was complete, discrepancies were identified, and each difference was discussed by the researchers to determine if it was a coding error due to missing the data in their read of the source or variation in interpretation of coding criteria between the two coding researchers. The majority of discrepancies were coding errors or omissions and easily corrected. Because of the relatively low number of books, and resource restraints, there was no attempt to empirically analyze inter-rater reliability. In the end, data were collected on 14 variables. With respect to the themes, in order for it to be counted in our analysis it was simple presence of a topic. We did not believe that it was necessary to look for particular words or strings of words because we did not think that much utility would be gained from this kind of approach.

Results

Introduction

By focusing on publicly available books, we were limited in the kinds of generalizations we could make.¹¹ The variables are divided into three categories: book basics, correctional professional background details, and themes addressed.

Book Basics

Year the Book was Published

Within the scope of books published between 1996 and 2016, a total of 30 correctional professionals’ memoirs/autobiographies were located (See Table 1). With the exceptions of 1997-2000, 2003 and 2006-2007, in every year a memoir/autobiography was published. In 2015, the greatest number of these kinds of publications appeared (5/16.67%). This may have to do with dynamics of printing technology and changes in the book publishing industry that make the release of books of this nature less expensive and more accessible to those wishing to have a book published than they were at an earlier point in time.

Type of Publisher

A variety of publishers have produced the memoirs/autobiographies of correctional professionals (See Table 2). Unfortunately, only 10% ($n=3$) of these are published by academic/university presses. An additional 10% ($n=3$) of books were published by a major commercial publisher. The majority of publishers were less well known, self-

published/print on demand publishers, including CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform that accounted for six books. In these situations, authors are responsible for getting their books ready for the publisher’s platform. This typically involves absorbing a number of costs including copy-editing, formatting, and marketing that traditional publishers normally do for authors.¹² This kind of situation reflects the quality of the books. University presses, on the other hand, subject the content to peer review, and less well-known publishers and self-published presses are less rigorous in terms of vetting the stories, quality of writing, and production value.

Table 1: Year Book was Published.

Year	N (%)
1996	1 (3.33)
2001	4 (13.33)
2002	1 (3.33)
2004	2 (6.7)
2005	2 (6.7)
2008	4 (13.33)
2009	2 (6.7)
2010	1 (3.33)
2011	2 (6.7)
2012	3 (10.00)
2013	1 (3.33)
2014	1 (3.33)
2015	5 (16.67)
2016	1 (3.33)
Total	30 (100)

Table 2: Publisher Type.

Type	N (%)
Academic	3 (10.00)
Independent Publisher	4 (13.33)
Major Publisher	3 (10.00)
Self-Published	20 (66.67)
Total	30 (100)

Total Pages

Page lengths vary from 30 pages to 630. The mean length of the books is 231 pages. Most commonly (43.33%), books are between 200 and 300 pages in length. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Number of Pages.

Pages	N (%)
1-99	1 (3.33)
100-199	11 (36.67)
200-299	13 (43.33)
300-399	3 (6.9)
400-499	1 (3.33)
>500	1 (3.33)
Total	30 (100)

Background Details of Correctional Professionals

Sex of Author

In getting a sense of who the authors are, 76.67% of the books were written by males and 23.33% by women (See Table 4). This pattern is consistent with the field of corrections that is predominantly a male dominated field. Although the number of males and females who work as correctional officers and senior administrators varies across jurisdictions, “male employees outnumber[ed] female employees by a ratio of 2 to 1” (Stephan, 2008, p. 4). The reason why more men produced memoirs and autobiographies as compared to women may also be a reflection of the decreased free time that women have because of additional non work demands they assume as caregivers, meal preparers, and so forth, compared to men.

Table 4: Sex of Author.

Sex	N (%)
Female	7 (23.33)
Male	23 (76.67)
Total	30 (100)

Year that the Memoir Covered

For most of the memoirs (14/46.67%), it was not possible to determine the age that the writer started the autobiography (See Table 5). The balance of the memoirs (16/53.33%) recalled the writer’s life and career starting from ages 16-55. Similarly, it was difficult to figure out at what age in the life of the writer that the memoir ended. For the bulk of the memoirs/autobiographies coded, this aspect was unknown (14/48.28%). Otherwise, memoirs ended in a range of 35-80 years of age (15/51.72%).

Table 5: Age Memoir Began and Ended.

Age Range	Started N (%)	Ended N (%)
16-20	3 (10.00)	1 (3.33)
21-25	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)
26-30	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)
31-35	1 (3.33)	2 (6.7)
36-40	1 (3.33)	2 (6.7)
41-45	2 (6.67)	4 (13.33)
46-50	0 (0)	2 (6.7)
51-55	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)
56-60	0 (0)	2 (6.7)
61-65	0 (0)	3 (10.00)
66-70	0 (0)	1 (3.33)
71-75	0 (0)	1 (3.33)
76-80	0 (0)	5 (16.67)
Unknown	14 (46.67)	1 (3.33)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)

Job Rank

A majority (16/53.33%) of the books were written by correctional officers. The other books (14/46.67%) were primarily authored by administrators (i.e., wardens, sheriffs, assistant wardens, and administrators). This distribution is not surprising as the vast majority of correctional workers are correctional officers. Additionally, administrators are nearly always well-seasoned professionals and those with the highest level of education and understanding of the contributions that their voices may have. (See Table 6).

Table 6: Job Rank.

Rank	N (%)
Administrator	3 (10.00)
Assistant Warden	4 (13.33)
Corrections Officer	3 (10.00)
Sheriff	20 (66.67)
Warden	10 (33.33)
Total	30 (100)

Years on the Job

When examining the books for indications of the length of time that the authors worked in

corrections, approximately 24% do not provide specific information on the length of their career in this field. However, for those texts in which this information is decipherable, authors' length of time in corrections ranges from 1 year to 50 years, with the most (30%) clustering around 21-30 years of experience in institutional corrections. (See Table 7).

Table 7: Years on the Job.

Years	N (%)
1-10	5 (16.67)
11-20	1 (3.33)
21-30	9 (30.00)
31-40	4 (13.33)
41-50	4 (13.33)
Unknown	7 (23.33)
Total	30 (100)

Level of Government for Facility Where Person Worked

After reviewing the memoirs/autobiographies, we determined that close to 67% of them were authored by individuals whose experience is solely/primarily in state level corrections. Of the remaining books, 30% of them documented the writer's experiences across federal, local, or various levels of corrections. Whereas the distribution of issues like the author's sex and job rank show representative distributions, here we find an overabundance of state corrections professionals as authors and a proportionate under-representation of contributions from local corrections officials. Local correctional facilities (e.g., jails) outnumber prisons in the United States by more than two to one, yet typically are physically and operationally much smaller and employ far fewer individuals than prisons. Nonetheless, there is an abundance of books written by state prison officials and very few books about the typical entry point to corrections: jails. (See Table 8).

Table 8: Facility Type.

Years	N (%)
City	2 (6.67)
Federal	3 (10.00)
State	20 (66.67)
Unknown	3 (10.00)
Various	2 (6.67)
Total	30 (100)

Geographical Location for Facility Where Person Worked

The books’ authors focus their recollections of their time working in the field of corrections in 14 different states (See Table 9). Additionally, fully 30% of books encompass an author’s career across multiple locations; these are primarily federal correctional employees. In the federal system, it is normative to move between jobs and institutions throughout one’s career, and interstate transfers are common. The only state systems represented by more than one book in the data are California (5), Texas (4), New York (3), and Mississippi (3). The first three of these are among the five largest correctional systems in the country, and therefore, it is not surprising when represented in multiple books.¹³

Table 9: State Where Facility is Located.

State	N (%)
AZ	1 (3.33)
CA	5 (16.67)
IL	1 (3.33)
KS	3 (10.00)
KY	2 (6.67)
MI	1 (3.33)
MN	1 (3.33)
MS	3 (10.00)
NY	3 (10.00)
OH	1 (3.33)
OK	1 (3.33)
TX	4 (13.33)
VA	1 (3.33)
WA	1 (3.33)
Unknown	2 (6.67)
Total	30 (100)

Themes Covered in the Books¹⁴

Treatment of Violence

Multiple themes were written about in the memoirs (See Table 10). With the exception of two autobiographies (6.67%), all memoirs covered violence that the authors experienced or knew about. The majority of violence that was reported on was inmate on inmate violence (28/93.33%). Slightly less frequent was violence by prisoners against correctional officers (27/90%). The least frequent type of violence that was discussed concerned correctional

officer violence towards inmates (20/66.67%). None of the memoirs/autobiographies talked about violence between or among correctional workers.¹⁵

Table 10: Violence Covered in Memoir.

Violence Type	N (%)
CO against Inmate	20 (65.52)
Inmate against CO	27 (90.00)
Inmate against Inmate	28 (93.33)
Violence Not Covered	2 (6.67)

Presence of Corruption by Officers and Administrators

Eleven of the memoirs omitted discussion of corruption (11/36.67%). Corruption was documented when it was committed by correctional officers (18/60%) and by the correctional administration (8/26.67%). (See Table 11).

Table 11: Corruption Covered in Memoir.

Corruption Type	N (%)
Corruption by CO	18 (60.00)
Corruption by Correctional Administration	8 (26.67)
Corruption Not Covered	11 (36.67)

Treatment of Rehabilitation

Similar to violence, few of the memoirs/autobiographies avoided this topic (3/10%). Otherwise, three types of rehabilitation were given approximately equal coverage: educational/vocational (19/63.33%), physical (18/60%), and mental health counseling (14/46.67%). (See Table 12).

Table 12: Rehabilitation Covered in Memoir.

Rehab Type	N (%)
Educational/Vocational Rehab	19 (63.33)
Physical Rehab	18 (60.00)
Mental Rehab	14 (46.67)
Rehabilitation Not Covered	3 (10.00)

Coverage of Substance Recovery Programs

When we drill deeper into the books we find that most of them (23/76.67%) did not review substance recovery programs. This may be a function of the specific job postings that each individual

memoir writer had rather than a general trend in the field of corrections. (See Table 13).

Table 13: Substance Recovery Programs in Memoir.

Program Type	N (%)
Alcohol recovery program	3 (10.00)
Drug recovery program	6 (20.00)
Non-residential treatment	1 (3.45)
Residential treatment	2 (6.67)
Recovery programs not covered	23 (76.67)

Summary of Findings

The findings suggest that almost every year, one or more memoirs or autobiographies are written primarily by current or former male correctional officers. They are also mainly self-published and range between 100 and 300 printed pages in length. Although the correctional officers mainly worked at the state level, no one state is prominently featured. The authors are seasoned correctional officers; most have over 20 years' experience. Most of the writers cover the same subject matter that academic authors do (e.g., leadership, relationships with other C.Os, inmates, etc.), but there tends to be an emphasis on different types of violence and corruption. Although some of the books mention or review rehabilitation programs, most do not cover any alcohol or drug recovery programs.

Discussion

While accepting the fact that this study may have missed a handful of correctional officer memoirs/autobiographies, the researchers are confident that they secured the most prominent ones for analysis. The following is an attempt to shed some light on the accessibility and importance of memoirs/autobiographies of correctional officers, the challenges of writing a memoir/autobiography, and alternative research methods to examine first person accounts written by correctional officers.

The Paucity of First-Hand Accounts Written by Correctional Officers

This study suggests that while memoirs/autobiographies written by correctional workers are available, they do not appear to be either easily accessible to broad audiences or diverse in their coverage of types, locations, and levels of correctional institutions. This is unfortunate because there is a paucity of accurate, informative, and non-exploitative mass media that provides realistic depictions and

understandings of the American correctional industry. Just as there are few contemporary treatments of incarceration from (usually formerly) incarcerated authors, this lack of broad access to insider knowledge leaves the American public (and policy makers) with a body of literature that is largely skewed, dated, or presented with fictional exaggerations.

Difficulty of Writing a Memoir

Another point worth remembering is that writing a memoir or autobiography is often a difficult, resource intensive task. The authors may lack the necessary writing skills to complete a book of this nature; they may not be knowledgeable and comfortable with the publishing industry; they may face significant distractions, including the need to produce an income and to attend to their families while writing; and they may need to rely heavily on their memory of events that took place several years ago. Just like any other memoir or autobiography, there may be a healthy amount of bias in their recounting of events.

The Necessity for More Memoirs of Correctional Officers

If there is a comparative lack of memoirs and autobiographies available from the staff of American correctional institutions, it becomes yet more important that scholars provide the views, experiences, and knowledge of these populations through scholarly work. Here the value of ethnography becomes clear. Ethnographic treatment of carceral environments, coming from and/or focused on both the staff and convict perspective, are valuable because they provide a contextualized, detailed, and processual understanding of the operations and culture of correctional institutions (Newbold et al., 2014). With an ethnographic approach, readers are provided with an enhanced understanding of more than just the "facts" about an institution or system. Instead, readers are offered an opportunity to see the world of prison through the eyes of those who both experience it and who create, manage, and resist the social environment of a correctional institution. This perspective allows for a greater understanding of the how and the why, not simply a focus on who, what, when, and where. By understanding the interconnections of actions, reactions, interactions, and interpretations within the environment, there is a sense of knowing provided that can only be garnered through an immersive experience.

Conclusion

Predictably, none of the autobiographies and memoirs written by correctional officers were best

sellers, but they did tell their readers about the journey these (primarily) men took from front-line criminal justice practitioner to administrator in some of the toughest correctional systems and facilities in America. Largely because of the choice of publisher and the numerous entertaining anecdotes featured within, many of these treatments are, in many respects, geared more for a popular-trade audience than a scholarly one.

That being said, a handful of supplemental research methodologies might allow us to better understand different components of correctional officer memoirs/autobiographies. As previously mentioned, a content analysis, in the manner that this one was conducted, has numerous advantages. In many respects, it is a first step towards getting into the minds of these types of correctional personnel. Follow-up research could endeavor to ask the authors of these books about the experience of writing the memoirs/autobiography, including questions surrounding their motivation and the effect it had on their lives and careers, if any. There are numerous reasons why correctional officers may write these tomes. Motivations may include a desire to improve and reform jails and prisons, to educate those interested in the subject, or to benefit others from their

insights. However, we really do not know until we ask them directly. Alternatively, these memoirs might be juxtaposed with either memoirs/autobiographies of convicts, exconvicts, or other criminal justice practitioners (e.g., law enforcement officers) to see if there are similarities or differences regardless of the type of institution or branch of the criminal justice system. Moreover, the original access point (Amazon) could be extended to a search of the Library of Congress database to look for other possible memoirs that could be located in a larger sample. Finally, the sample could be expanded in both directions to approximately a decade before 1996, to 1986, and from 2017 to present. In both cases, a strong rationale should be made for this kind of additional expenditure of resources before committing to this strategy.

In the end, this genre of literature is of value to many in society and should be encouraged. To learn about how correctional institutions work, through the eyes of the people who are the front line staff, and how those who are responsible for the safe and humane care and treatment of our law-breaking brethren is critical. Understanding the perceptions of those who are responsible for running such places and monitoring convicts should enable a useful, informed, and humane approach to corrections.

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Endnotes

¹ We use the word “accessible” in terms of easy to obtain and understand. Our comment should not be interpreted as a slight against the considerable scholarly research on correctional officer attitudes, perceptions, etc.

² Although the authors of this article recognize that both incarcerated individuals and correctional personnel frequently distinguish among the terms convict, inmate, and prisoner, we use them interchangeably.

³ Other literature falls under the genre of prison journalism. In some jails and prisons, like Angola, the infamous State Penitentiary in Louisiana, a respected convict newspaper, called *The Angolite* thrives. This work is primarily the result of convict journalists (e.g., Rideau & Wikberg, 1992).

⁴ The discussion ignores self-published memoirs and autobiographies, the universe of which is hard if not impossible to determine.

⁵ There is a tradition of using and analyzing memoirs and autobiographies for pedagogical purposes (Diebel, 2002; Gamble, 2002; Masters, 2012; McGrath, 2002; Richards & Mathers, 2010).

⁶ Although one could debate using Amazon as the entry point to select books, this meant that the memoir/autobiography could be easily purchased and that it was generally available to the public. Also, Amazon, unlike the Library of Congress database, provides a number of contextual advantages. Typically, there are detailed description of the books, and sometimes there are reviews. Moreover, occasionally there are previews of a portion of the book too.

⁷ See, for example, Beacher (2003).

⁸ See, for example, Neal and Neal Harrison (2015).

⁹ See, for example, Saar and Novak (2005).

¹⁰ Although other databases could have been consulted, including Barnes & Noble and Library of Congress OCLC, we believed there would be a strong overlap among these sources and the titles we located via Amazon. Moreover, our goal was not to capture every memoir/autobiography written by correctional professionals working in the American Corrections during the time period identified, but to capture ones that were easily accessible, and for that reason, we believed that Amazon was a sufficient data source.

¹¹ Commentary on the quality of writing, including the veracity of the story, the content/interpretation, and what kind of reaction the book had in the general public, including sales, is not made. These kinds of deeper questions are difficult to determine without the greater expenditure of resources including, perhaps, interviews with the authors of these books.

¹² In order to determine the specifics, we would need to look at the websites of each of these publishers to determine exactly what the authors' and publishers' responsibilities are.

¹³ "Unknown" refers to the fact that the author does not indicate their state. If there were any authors who worked in multiple states, this was not detected in coding. While some authors transitioned from state facilities to federal facilities, their movements were geographically limited. If we missed an instance in which an author changed states, it was likely because it was mentioned in passing without much detail.

¹⁴ Drawing from the scholarship on correctional officers, almost all the books mentioned, in some shape or form, the following: hiring, training, moving up the ranks, leadership, correctional officers orientations, the development of a unique subculture, race relations with other correctional actors, officer deviance, stress, and burnout. However, the most dominant content was in the area of violence and rehabilitation, and this is why the researchers reported on these activities.

¹⁵ Because of the nature of the question/variable, the numbers and percentages in this table and the ones that follow should not add up to 30 or 100%.

Appendix: Memoirs and Autobiographies that were coded

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