



Strategies of Control (Classics of Law & Society)

Sheldon L. Messinger

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The groundbreaking study of transitions and control in the California prison system has been extensively read, cited, and quoted in unpublished form—and is finally easily available worldwide. A compelling part of the canon of studies in penology, criminology, sociology, and organizational theory, this new edition of STRATEGIES OF CONTROL adds a 2016 foreword by Howard S. Becker and afterword by Jonathan Simon, both contributing substantive and meaningful views of this important work. Considered influential to two generations of scholars worldwide, Messinger's thesis examining prison systems' organization and reform—or in some ways, regression—is said to anticipate Erving Goffman's and Michel Foucault's writings on "total institutions" by many years, and raised themes that only years later would become influential in criminology and sociology. Its new digital edition features quality formatting, active Contents, linked notes and cross-references, and all of the tables and charts of the original study.

Writing in the new foreword, Becker notes that this is a "a masterful analysis of a systematically connected group of organizations, seeing them not as separate entities, but as a system whose organizational routines and peculiarities we couldn't understand if we didn't know their external connections as well as their internal workings." Its research methodology was painstaking: "The officials of the new system's components, especially the wardens of the individual prisons, had [many] questions on their minds. You couldn't answer those questions by observing one of those prisons for a year or two." Not so in the author's decade of research leading up to this work. Indeed, Becker concludes, "Messinger's study provides the blueprint for more accurate and persuasive analyses of large organizations of every kind."

Simon writes in the new afterword that this book remains "an important contribution to understanding the nature of imprisonment and more broadly to the study of punishment in modern society," providing "a crucial background for rethinking the recent history of prisons and particularly the rise of mass incarceration, which has seen the proliferation of multi-prison systems, extensions of bureaucratic management within prisons, and the abandonment of rehabilitation as a central justification for punishment." Simon adds: "Creating a sociological analysis for such a complex extended network required a break with traditional sociological thinking," and going further in "suggesting another analytic shift from studying the 'prison system' to studying the broad array of agencies and authorities that made up 'the correctional establishment.'"

Part of the Classics of Law & Society Series from Quid Pro Books, this foundational book is at last available to a general audience, researchers, and students in ebook form, and soon in new paperback as well.

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