

American Corrections

13th Edition

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13th Edition

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**American Corrections,
Thirteenth Edition
Todd R. Clear and Michael D. Reisig**

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Cover Designer: Chris Doughman

Cover Image: iStockPhoto.com/AVNphotolab

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2020952226

Student Edition:
ISBN: 978-0-357-45653-8

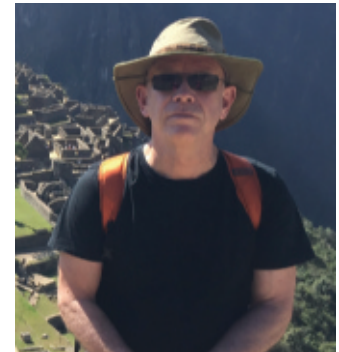
Loose-leaf Edition:
ISBN: 978-0-357-45659-0

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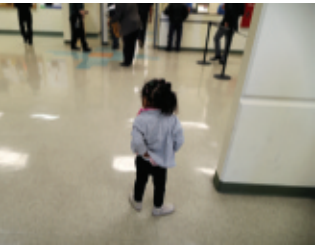
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The publication of the thirteenth edition of a textbook is a cause for celebration. This is especially true if the book is *American Corrections*, which has been a leader in the field for more than 30 years and has introduced more than half a million students to this most interesting portion of the U.S. criminal justice system.

The first edition of *American Corrections* was inspired by our shared belief that undergraduate students must be exposed to the dynamics of corrections in a manner that captures their attention and encourages them to enter the field. The thirteenth edition continues this tradition.

We celebrate this milestone, but we also recognize that, as authors, we have a responsibility to provide readers with the most up-to-date factual material, policy trends, and changes in correctional practices.

Since 1986, when *American Corrections* was first published, this dynamic field has undergone many revolutions of both policy and practice. For example, the shift to mass incarceration was already under way then, with state and federal prisons holding 463,000 people—equal to a rate of 188 per 100,000 Americans. At that time, few policy makers would have dreamed that the rate would continue to rise to more than 600 per 100,000 in 2010, until it began to decline as a result of declining crime and changes in correctional policy. We also note the shift away from the goal of rehabilitation, dominant in the 1970s, to the primacy of crime control goals since the 1980s. During the past quarter-century, corrections has also seen the rise and fall of boot camps, the growth of privately owned and operated prisons, interest in community and restorative justice, and the present emphasis on evidence-based decision making. *American Corrections* has kept pace with these and countless other shifts.

Corrections is so rich in history, innovative in practice, and challenged by societal problems that it deserves to be taught in a way that is both interesting and accurate. Fortunately, our teaching and research cover different areas of corrections so that each of us can focus on our strengths while challenging the other to do his best work. We hope that this book reflects our enthusiasm for our field and the satisfaction we have found in it.

The looming economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has already placed great fiscal burdens on local, state, and federal governments, and their often severe budgetary deficits have greatly affected corrections. As criminal justice students know, corrections has little to no control over the inflow of people to community corrections, jails, and prisons; nonetheless, correctional budgets also often face cuts imposed by fiscally strapped governments. To operate with the resources mandated, some corrections systems have had to release prisoners, cut back rehabilitative programs, expand community supervision caseloads, lay off staff, and take other actions to save money.

To address these problems, correctional professionals and the public are increasingly focusing their attention on research by scholars who have demonstrated the shortcomings of correctional practices and have urged alternatives. In the thirteenth edition, we thus not only examine the history of corrections and the exciting changes that have occurred to make the field what it is today, but we also look to the future of corrections by examining research-based solutions to current problems.

In *American Corrections*, thirteenth edition, we offer an accurate analysis of contemporary corrections based on up-to-date research. By acknowledging the problems with the system, we hope that our exposition will inspire suggestions for change. We believe that when human freedom is at stake, policies must reflect research and be formulated only after their potential effects have been carefully considered. In other words, we hope

that any changes we inspire will be good ones. We also hope that a new generation of students will gain a solid understanding of all the aspects of their complex field.

THE APPROACH OF THIS TEXT

In learning about corrections, students gain a unique understanding of how social and political forces affect the way that organizations and institutions respond to a particular segment of the community. They learn that social values come to the fore in the correctional arena because the criminal sanction reflects those values. They also learn that in a democracy, corrections must operate not only within the framework of law but also within the boundaries set by public opinion. Thus, as a public activity, corrections is accountable to elected representatives, but it must also compete politically with other agencies for resources and “turf.”

Two key assumptions run throughout the book. One is about the nature of corrections as a discipline; the other concerns the best way to analyze correctional practices:

- **Corrections is interdisciplinary.** The academic fields of criminal justice, sociology, psychology, history, law, and political science contribute to our understanding of corrections. This cross-fertilization is enriching, yet it requires familiarity with a vast literature. We have structured our text with a strong focus on coherence to make this interdisciplinary approach comprehensive yet accessible.
- **Corrections is a system.** In our book the concept of a system serves as a framework for analyzing the relationships among the various parts of corrections and the interactions between correctional professionals and their clients. The main advantage of this perspective is that it allows for dispassionate analysis of correctional practices.

ORGANIZATION

Correctional officials and political leaders are continually asking “Where is corrections headed?” In this thirteenth edition of *American Corrections* we explore the context, practices, and special issues of corrections in three major sections. Each part opens with a guest perspective by a recognized expert who discusses correctional innovations and ideas related to the topics presented in that part. Marc Mauer, Executive Director of the Sentencing Project, opens Part 1: The Correctional Context by assessing criminal justice reform. Mauer notes that we are currently on the cusp of significant changes in corrections, changes that could result in a major policy reformulation for the entire corrections system. Part 2: Correctional Practices opens with a guest perspective by Glenn Martin, founder of JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA). Among the most respected correctional reformers in the nation, Martin explains why it is crucial to have people who have been affected by the justice system engaged in reform debates. To open Part 3: Correctional Issues and Perspectives, Fatimah Loren Muhammad, Director of the Trauma Advocacy Initiative, Equal Justice USA, describes the importance of understanding how trauma affects both the victims of violent crime and the people who engage in that violence. Each of these guest perspectives lays the groundwork for the chapters that follow.

In Part 1 we describe the historical issues that frame our contemporary experience of corrections. We examine the general social context of the corrections system (Chapter 1) and the early history of correctional thought and practice (Chapter 2). We also focus on the distinctive aspects of correctional history in the United States (Chapter 3), analyze current theory and evidence regarding methods of punishment (Chapter 4), and survey the impact of law on corrections (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 we portray the correctional client. We consider the correctional client in relation to criminal legislation, criminal justice processing, and larger societal forces that are associated with crime. Part 1 thus presents

the foundations of American corrections: context, history, goals, organizations, and correctional clients.

In Part 2 we look at the current state of the major components and practices of the system. The complexity of correctional organization results in fragmentation and ambivalence in correctional services. Jails and other short-term facilities are scrutinized in Chapter 7, probation in the community, by which most correctional clients are handled, in Chapter 8, and the new focus on intermediate sanctions in Chapter 9. Because imprisonment remains the core symbolic and punitive mechanism of corrections, we examine it in detail. We discuss incarceration (Chapter 10), the prison experience (Chapter 11), the incarceration of women (Chapter 12), institutional management (Chapter 13), and educational, industrial, and treatment programs in correctional institutions (Chapter 14). In being both descriptive and critical, we hope to raise questions about current incarceration policies. In Chapters 15 and 16 we examine the process of releasing people from incarceration and the ways that formerly incarcerated people adjust to supervised life in the community. In Chapter 17 we describe the separate system of corrections for juveniles. Thus, in Part 2 we focus on the development, structure, and methods of each area of the existing corrections system, portraying them in light of the continuing issues described in Part 1.

In Part 3 we analyze those current correctional issues and trends that deserve individual attention: incarceration trends (Chapter 18), race, ethnicity, and corrections (Chapter 19), the death penalty (Chapter 20), immigration (Chapter 21), and community justice (Chapter 22). In Chapter 23, “American Corrections: Looking Forward,” we take both a retrospective view of American corrections and a view of its future. These chapters are designed to raise questions in the minds of readers so that they can begin to grapple with important issues.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Several features make this book an especially interesting introduction to corrections. Each of these features has been revised for the thirteenth edition.

- **Opening vignettes:** Each chapter opens with a description of a high-profile correctional case. Taken from today’s headlines, each vignette dramatizes a real-life situation that draws the student into the chapter’s topic. Instructors find these “lecture launchers” an important pedagogical tool to stimulate interest. We have made special efforts to provide new vignettes for this edition. For example, Chapter 17, “Corrections for Juveniles,” describes Connecticut’s impending changes to its juvenile justice laws. This leads into a discussion of the distinctions applied to the juvenile corrections system.
- **Critical Thinking:** Each chapter includes critical-thinking boxes that pose questions linked to the opening vignette. We believe that this feature will prompt students to reexamine their initial thoughts about the vignette.
- **Focus on . . . :** In this feature the real-world relevance of the issues discussed in the text is made clear by vivid, in-depth accounts by correctional workers, journalists, formerly incarcerated persons, people on parole, and relatives of those who are in the system. In this thirteenth edition we have increased the number and variety of these features, which are placed into three categories: People in Corrections, Correctional Policy, and Correctional Practice. We believe that students will find that the material in each feature enhances their understanding of the chapter topic.
- **Thinking Outside the Box:** Corrections needs new ideas, and some of the most significant new ideas propose major changes to the way that the corrections system does its work. This feature draws attention to today’s most innovative evidence-based practices or programs, designed to get students thinking beyond traditional aspects

to new possibilities. Examining these new ideas provides fresh insight regarding the future prospects of corrections.

- **Do the Right Thing:** Correctional workers are often confronted with ethical dilemmas. In each of these boxes we present a scenario in which an ethical question arises. We then provide a writing assignment in which students examine the issues and consider how they would act in such a situation.
- **Evidence-based practice:** Correctional professionals are being encouraged to base decisions on research evidence. This is especially true in probation, intermediate sanctions, and parole. Implementation of this approach is presented in the relevant chapters.
- **Myths in Corrections:** Faculty have told us that they spend much of their classroom time debunking popular myths about corrections. In this new edition, most chapters contain a special boxed feature presenting research that challenges correctional myths.
- **Careers in Corrections:** In appropriate chapters throughout the book, students will find one or more boxes in which a particular correctional occupation is described. The material includes the nature of the work, required qualifications, earnings and job outlook, and a source of more information.
- **Glossary:** One goal of an introductory course is to familiarize students with the terminology of the field. We have avoided jargon in the text but include terms that are commonly used. Such indispensable words and phrases are set in bold type, and the term and its definition have been placed in the margin. A full glossary with definitions of all terms is located at the back of the book.
- **Graphics:** We have created tables and figures that clarify and enliven information so that it can be perceived easily and grasped accurately. For this thirteenth edition, tables and figures have been fully updated wherever possible.
- **Photographs:** The thirteenth edition contains an enlarged program of dynamic photographs spread throughout the book. These reveal many aspects of corrections ordinarily concealed from the public eye. The photographs provide students with a real view of correctional policies and practices.
- **Other student aids:** The beginning of each chapter includes an outline of the topics to be covered, followed by a set of learning objectives. These tools are designed to guide students as they progress through the chapter. Many chapters also offer brief biographies of people who have made an impact on the field of corrections. At the end of each chapter, students can find a summary keyed to the learning objectives, a list of any key terms presented in the chapter, discussion questions, and suggestions for further reading.

OTHER CHANGES IN THE THIRTEENTH EDITION

As textbook authors, we have a responsibility to present current data, provide coverage of new issues, and describe innovative policies and programs. Toward this end we have completely updated and rewritten this edition, line by line. We have been assisted by the comments of an exceptionally knowledgeable team of reviewers who pointed out portions of the text that their students found difficult, suggested additional topics, and noted

sections that should be dropped. Among the new or expanded topics found in this thirteenth edition are the following:

- **Death penalty:** Public support for the death penalty is declining, partly because the regular exonerations of people on death row erode public confidence in the accuracy of death penalty verdicts. Juries in many states now seem to prefer life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Still, 2016 saw 20 executions. But many problems with the death penalty remain, including difficulties with lethal injection, effectiveness of counsel, execution of people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities, execution for crimes not involving murder, and erroneous convictions (issues examined in Chapters 4 and 20). The death penalty continues to provide a major source of debate.
- **Incarceration trends:** After rising almost continuously for the past four decades, incarceration rates have dropped over the last seven years. This seems not to be related to a drop in violent crime—which for many years has been at 1973 levels—but rather because of doubts about the wisdom of mass incarceration and budgetary pressures at all levels of government. In many states, prisons have been closed, and judges are under pressure to incarcerate fewer people convicted of a felony. The potential long-term implications of correctional downsizing are only now starting to be felt.
- **Reentry:** Each year more than 600,000 people are released from prison and returned to their communities. Disturbingly, the largest group of new admissions to prison in some states is made up of recidivists. A concerted effort by both liberal and conservative policy makers is now focused on ways to reduce recidivism. Assisting people convicted of a felony in the reentry process has become a major focus of correctional policy, and a plethora of new programs are being proposed to make reentry more successful. The problems encountered by people on parole as they adjust to the community are dealt with extensively in Chapters 15 and 16.
- **Evidence-based practice:** There has been a growing movement for “evidence-based” practice in dealing with those under community supervision. Probation and parole officers are encouraged to make decisions based on methods that have been shown to be effective by well-designed research methods. Public statements by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the development of programs within the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Justice Programs have spurred this thrust. The Justice Department maintains a website called “Crime Solutions” that contains information and research on “what works” for all aspects of the criminal justice system.
- **Incarceration of women:** Reflecting important ongoing research on the impact of maternal incarceration on children, correctional administrators have revisited the importance of programs for women. In particular, several states have devised programs to provide opportunities for women to maintain contact with their children. Chapter 12 describes the “Achieving Baby Care Success Program” at the Ohio Reformatory for Women.
- **Privatization:** Since the advent of private prisons in the 1970s, questions have been raised about whether they are more cost-effective than public prisons. Until recently, research on this question has been lacking. As states deal with severe budgetary problems, the future of private prisons remains uncertain. However, the privatization movement has now carried over into nonprison areas, with proposals for private contracts for community-based correctional methods. Chapter 22 discusses the advent of social impact bonds, which attempt to create fiscal incentives for privately funded innovation in corrections.
- **Corrections as a profession:** With all these changes in correctional policy and practice, there is a need for a “new correctional professional.” Throughout this book we describe the challenges that the changes in corrections pose for people who work in

the field, and we offer new ideas about the skills and knowledge that correctional professionals will have to bring to their work in order to be successful.

- **Immigration justice:** No issue has been more at the forefront than problems related to immigration. The corrections system is called upon to deal with immigration issues, of course, but the response to immigration illustrates the systems aspect of all justice actions—we describe how law enforcement and adjudication interact with corrections to produce an immigration justice system. We also show how evidence bears on policies regarding immigration.
- **Language:** In this thirteenth edition we have made a shift in language. People who have been caught up in the corrections system—people whose voices we repeatedly turn to in this book—tell us that terms such as “inmate” and “offender,” even though they are commonly used, promote painful stereotypes and make reintegration to society harder. To the extent we can, we have edited our language in this edition to move away from these labels and refer to those caught up in the justice system as “people.”

ANCILLARY MATERIALS

For the Instructor

MindTap for *American Corrections* MindTap from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student’s learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides the student through the curriculum. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools for their students, allowing instructors to seamlessly introduce their own content into the Learning Path via digital applications that integrate into the MindTap platform. Additionally, MindTap provides interoperability with major learning management systems (LMS) via support for open industry standards, and fosters partnerships with third-party educational application providers to provide a highly collaborative, engaging, and personalized learning experience.

Online Instructor’s Resource Manual and Lesson Plans for *American Corrections* Revised to reflect new content in the thirteenth edition, the instructor’s manual includes learning objectives, key terms, a detailed chapter outline, a chapter summary, lesson plans, discussion topics, student activities, “what if ” scenarios, media tools, and a sample syllabus. The learning objectives are correlated with the discussion topics, student activities, and media tools.

Online Test Bank The expanded test bank includes 30 percent more questions than the prior edition. Each chapter of the test bank contains questions in multiple-choice, true/false, completion, essay, and new critical-thinking formats, with a full answer key. The test bank is coded to the learning objectives that appear in the main text and includes the section in the main text where the answers can be found. Finally, each question in the test bank has been carefully reviewed by experienced criminal justice instructors for quality, accuracy, and content coverage so instructors can be sure they are working with an assessment and grading resource of the highest caliber.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero This assessment software is a flexible, online system that allows you to import, edit, and manipulate test-bank content from the *American Corrections* test bank or elsewhere, including your own

favorite test questions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

PowerPoint® Lectures for American Corrections Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your visually oriented students, these handy Microsoft PowerPoint® slides outline the chapters of the main text in a classroom-ready presentation. The PowerPoint® slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text, are tagged by a chapter learning objective, and feature additional examples and real-world cases for application and discussion.

For the Student

MindTap for American Corrections MindTap from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student's learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides the student through the curriculum. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools for their students, allowing instructors to seamlessly introduce their own content into the Learning Path via digital applications that integrate into the MindTap platform. Additionally, MindTap provides interoperability with major learning management systems (LMS) via support for open industry standards, and fosters partnerships with third-party educational application providers to offer a highly collaborative, engaging, and personalized learning experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this thirteenth edition of *American Corrections*, we were greatly assisted by people who merit special recognition. Instructors and students who used prior editions were most helpful in pointing out strengths and weaknesses; we took their comments seriously and hope that new readers will find their educational needs met more fully.

We have also been assisted in writing this edition by a diverse group of associates. Chief among them is Michael Wors, Product Manager, who supported our efforts and kept us on course. Aiyana Moore, Content Manager, reviewed our efforts and made important suggestions in keeping with the goals of this revision. Mark Linton, Senior Marketing Director for Criminal Justice, has skillfully guided the presentation of *American Corrections*, thirteenth edition, to faculty and students. The talented Felicia Bennett and Chris Doughman designed the interior and cover of the book, respectively. Many other people worked hard on the production of the thirteenth edition of *American Corrections*, including Production Manager Greg Hubit, Copy Editor Donald Pharr, and Proofreader Debra Nichols. Ultimately, however, the full responsibility for the book is ours alone.

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Correctional Context

Part I of *American Corrections*—“the Correctional Context”—describes the corrections system, its history, the way people are punished for crimes, the law as it relates to prisons and corrections works, and the clients of corrections. As you study these chapters, consider the approach from Square One, that emphasizes the importance of the social and historical context for a just correctional system. What do you think of this approach to correctional reform? What obstacles must be overcome if it is to work?

GUEST PERSPECTIVE

Square One Thinking

JEREMY TRAVIS
BRUCE WESTERN
KATHARINE HUFFMAN



Katharine Huffman

It is now well-documented that the American penal system is the largest in the world. With more than two million people incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails, one out of five of all incarcerated people on the planet resides in the United States. Although only a minority of the U.S. population, over half of the incarcerated population is Black or Latino.

Since 2008, the U.S. incarceration rate has fallen slightly, reversing 35 years of uninterrupted increase. The policy conversation has also begun to change. Crime rates have been low by historical standard since the early 2000s, and community representatives and policymakers have begun to look beyond the era of mass incarceration to reimagine a different kind of justice system that does not rely on harsh punishment concentrated in low-income communities of color.

What ideas could guide a different kind of justice system? The past decade has seen a variety of incremental changes that have reduced sentences for drug crime, restricted a system of cash bail that incarcerates poor people, and elected a new slate

of prosecutors who are open to criminal justice reform. These are steps in a new and better direction, but to what end?

Despite these advances, recent reforms will not fundamentally change mass incarceration. People convicted of drug crimes account for less than 20 percent of the state prison population. Bail reform mostly reduces the number of very short jail stays, and leaves long prison sentences untouched. Even a new generation of more progressive prosecutors still must operate in a legal context that imposes very long terms of imprisonment.

Some advocates, scholars, and policymakers say it is time to go both deeper and broader—to go to a new square one on justice policy. Going to square one means reimagining the very foundations of the system in an effort to design something that makes a break with our ugly and racist history of overpolicing and overincarceration.

CHAPTER 1

The Corrections System

CHAPTER 2

The Early History of Correctional Thought and Practice

CHAPTER 3

The History of Corrections in America

CHAPTER 4

Contemporary Punishment

CHAPTER 5

The Law of Corrections

CHAPTER 6

The Correctional Client

Square one thinking is built on three big ideas as a way of addressing the challenges of crime and violence—individual, state, and structural—that arise in contexts of poverty and deep racial inequality: reckoning with history, empowering communities, and placing the value of human dignity at the center of doing justice.

This undertaking is about much more than how to run a safe prison or supervise people in the community or deal with the challenges of jail administration. Properly understood, “going to square one” requires engagement with fundamental questions of the purposes of the criminal law, the appropriate limits on human liberty, the role of the state in exercising control over the polity, and the potential for human thriving and transformation.

Prisons, jails, police, and courts are powerful institutions, rooted in inertia, and often staffed by those with a strong stake in the status quo. Ultimately the transformation of these institutions will depend in significant part on the leadership of newcomers to the field and the contributions of embedded change-makers who are seeking to make a break with the past and chart a new vision of the future.

People who have leadership positions in the criminal justice system, whether running government agencies or in the private sector, have an opportunity to grapple with the challenge of institutional change. In the larger enterprise of creating a just society, incarceration is intertwined with systems of health, education, housing, and civic life. A new generation of leaders needs a larger vision for justice that encompasses the work being done in these adjacent

fields. For those working within existing agencies, each interaction with a person under some form of correctional control presents an opportunity to reinforce human dignity, to demonstrate fairness and respect, and to advance the cause of justice broadly defined.

Being a “reformer from the inside,” always risks strengthening the status quo. Professionals in the field have an opportunity—an obligation we would say—to challenge that status quo, and to continually ask hard questions of themselves and all around them. Why do we do things this way? Are we contributing to foundational change, even if in small steps, or are we simply rearranging deck chairs on a titanic system that has become the largest and farthest reaching tool of racial oppression in our society? Do we know the role of police and prisons in a long history of racial oppression? Are we building stronger communities rather than dividing and exploiting them? Are we promoting the dignity and human potential of all, including those who have come into conflict with the law?

The project to reimagine justice from square one requires the creation of a big table with a wide range of perspectives represented in the decision-making process. Beyond traditional stakeholders, this table must be led by those who are under state control, their families, those harmed by crime, those historically marginalized by the operations of the justice system, and the communities that serve as the wellsprings of safety and justice. Doing the hard work of reimagining justice in this inclusive way will not only bring us closer to thriving, equitable communities, but also honor the imperative that our democracy serve as the ultimate guarantor of justice.

CHAPTER 1

The Corrections System



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What can be done with a prison that has been closed down? Here, weeds are overtaking Mid-Orange Correctional Facility in Warwick, NY, closed in 2011 because the state's prison population had dropped so much it was no longer needed. Vacant for nearly a decade, it was set up for recreation with a nearby bike path. It finally found an investor to refurbish its old buildings for the state's expanding hemp industry.



A PROFOUND CHANGE IS HAPPENING TO THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OF THE UNITED STATES.

It started at year end of 2008, when, for the first time in nearly 40 years, the total number of people under correctional control—either in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole—was smaller than the year before. At the time, many thought it was an anomaly. After all, the growth of the corrections system had been continual for over a generation. But what happened in 2008 has now repeated itself every year for a decade. What seemed at the time like a quirk turned out instead to be a true turning point. By the time a decade had passed, the system had declined by about 1 percent, and the total corrections population was down by almost 10 percent. The number of people in prison is down 7 percent.¹

These changes have come after nearly *four decades* of uninterrupted correctional growth (see “The Great Experiment in Social Control”). The scope of America’s long-term commitment to a big corrections system has been described as one of the greatest policy experiments in modern history. In 1973 the prison incarceration rate was 96 per 100,000 Americans. For 38 consecutive years after that, the number of people in prison increased—during periods when crime went up, but also during periods when crime declined; during good economic times and bad; during times of war and times of peace. (See “Myths in Corrections.”) By 2010, the U.S. prison incarceration rate had grown to exceed 500 per 100,000 Americans—more than a fivefold increase—and many people thought that this generation-long pattern had become a more or less permanent feature of U.S. penal policy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to . . .

- 1** Describe the range of purposes served by the corrections system.
- 2** Define the systems framework and explain why it is useful.
- 3** Name the various components of the corrections system today and describe their functions.
- 4** Identify at least five key issues facing corrections today.
- 5** Discuss what we can learn from the “great experiment in social control.”



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Great Experiment in Social Control

About two-thirds of the members of the current U.S. population, including most of the readers of this book, were born after 1971. For them it has been entirely normal to see yearly increases in the number of Americans in prison, in jail, and under correctional supervision. This group of citizens has seen corrections grow every year—in good economic times and bad, during periods of rising crime and of dropping crime. This growth trend began with the “baby boom” generation: When Americans born in the two decades after World War II hit their twenties and thirties, the peak crime-prone age, they clogged the criminal justice system.

The large and growing correctional populations that seem so normal have not always been so. From 1900 until about 1970, U.S. prison populations were quite stable, hovering between 90 and 120 per 100,000 citizens. After more than 35 years of steady growth, the rate of incarceration is now five times as high as it was in 1973. In 2007 the correctional population reached its highest point in U.S. history—by most accounts the largest correctional population in the world, with the United States putting more people in prison than China, which has four times more citizens.

This period of U.S. history could be called the “great experiment in social control,” for it has defined a generation of Americans who have witnessed the greatest expansion in government control ever undertaken by a democratic state. Researchers have tried to explain the sources of this growth. Some of it stems from increases in crime, but most of this crime growth occurred during the first half of the “experiment.” Some is because of increased effectiveness at apprehending, arresting, and convicting criminally involved people. But this aspect of the “experiment” is minor compared with changes in punishment policy. In the United States the chances of a person convicted of a felony getting a prison sentence instead of probation have increased steadily for several decades, to the point where the chance of getting a probation sentence is now a fraction of what it used to be. One reason prison sentences became more common is that the drug war increased the number of arrests in defendants’ criminal histories, which led judges to impose more severe sanctions.

Therefore, more people are going to prison, and they are serving longer terms as well. Further, the strictness of postrelease supervision has also increased so that more people on probation than before are being sent back to prison because of a failure to abide by strictly enforced rules. This triple whammy—less probation, longer prison terms, and stricter postsentencing supervision—has fueled a continuing increase in correctional populations, especially prison populations, even when crime rates are dropping.

Some scholars have tried to explain the unprecedented punitiveness of the late-twentieth-century U.S. policy (see “For Further Reading”). They discuss the importance of U.S. politics and culture, and they expressly point to the effects of two decades of the “war on drugs.” This is certainly a part of the explanation, but nationally less than 15 percent of people in prison are there

for a drug crime.² Yet *why* this punitiveness occurred is far less interesting than *what* its results have been. Today, researchers, scholars, and intellectuals will begin to try to understand what we have learned from this great experiment.

The effects of this experiment in social control fall into three broad categories: its effects on crime, on society, and on the pursuit of justice. First, and most important, how has the growth of corrections affected rates of crime? Because so many factors affect crime, we cannot easily distinguish the effects of a growing corrections system from those from other factors, such as the economy or times of war. Researchers who have tried to do so have reached divergent conclusions, but even the most conservative scholars of the penal system agree that further growth will have little impact on crime. Others note that because the crime rate today is about the same as it was in the early 1970s, when the penal system began to grow, the corrections system has not likely had a large effect on crime.

Second, there is a growing worry that a large corrections system—especially a large prison system—damages families and communities, and increases racial inequality. For example, as many as six million children have a parent who has been to prison or in jail.³ How do these experiences affect their chances in life? And what does it mean that more than one in four male African Americans will end up in prison?

Third, how does a large penal system affect the pursuit of justice? Do people feel more confidence in their justice system? Is it right to have people who break the law end up punished the way that America punishes them? In this great experiment in social control, have we become a more just society?

One theme in this book is that things are not as simple as they look. New laws and policies seldom achieve exactly what they were intended to do, and they often have unintended consequences. In this text we explore the most important issues in penology, from the effectiveness of rehabilitation to the impact of the death penalty, with the knowledge that each has more than one side.

We begin with a seemingly simple question: What is the purpose of corrections? In exploring the answer to this question, you will discover a pattern that recurs throughout the book. Any important correctional issue is complicated and controversial. The more you learn about a given issue, the more you will see layers of truth, so your first findings will be bolstered by evidence and then challenged by further investigation and deeper knowledge.

In the end, we think you will see that there are few easy answers but plenty of intense questions. Near the beginning of each chapter we present questions for inquiry that each chapter will explore. We hope that these will help focus your exploration of corrections and serve as a study guide, along with the summary at the end of each chapter.

Sources: Ryan D. King, “Cumulative Impact: Why Sentences Have Increased,” *Criminology* 57 (no. 1, 2019): 157–180.

It was not only the prison systems that were growing. Counts of people on probation, parole, or in jail grew at a similar pace. By 2006, one American in every 31 was under some form of correctional control—more than 3 percent of the population.⁴

During this time, correctional budgets grew by over 600 percent. The United States now has almost 3,000 people on death row⁵ and another 206,000 serving life sentences, nearly a third of them ineligible for any parole.⁶ Counting **prisons** and **jails**, almost 2.2 million citizens are incarcerated, making the adult incarceration rate 860 per 100,000 adult citizens—nearly 1 percent.⁷ When all forms of corrections are taken into account—including probation, parole, and community corrections—more than one out of every 40 adults are under some form of correctional control.⁸ The extensive growth of the correctional population since 1980 is shown in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2.

Some say that when prison populations grow, crime rates decline because prisons prevent crime. But between 1973 and the early 1990s, we saw both imprisonment growth and increases in crime. Most observers concluded that when more people commit crime, more people end up behind bars. This suggests that as crime declines, so will correctional caseloads. But studies show that, aside from the 1970s, there has been little relationship between the nation’s crime rate and the size of its prison population. Between 1990 and 2007, for example, the swelling prison population seemed to be entirely caused by tougher criminal justice policies, since crime rates were falling.

But now the long-lasting period of correctional growth has ended, replaced by a decade-long period of declining numbers of people under correctional control. To be sure, the current pace of decline does not come close to matching the pace of growth over the preceding 38 years. But it is clear that we have entered a new era. For the first time in more than a generation, it seems that the long-term pattern of correctional growth may be changing. And by any measure, the U.S. corrections system has seen a sustained period of remarkable, steady growth for more than a generation.

Why is the U.S. correctional system contracting? One answer is that crime has been declining: between 2007 and 2015, violent crime dropped by almost one-fourth. But the drop in crime is not enough of an explanation. Between 1991 and 2007, violent crime

prison An institution for the incarceration of people convicted of crimes, usually felonies.

jail A facility authorized to hold pretrial detainees and sentenced misdemeanants for periods longer than 48 hours. Most jails are administered by county governments; sometimes they are part of the state government.

MYTHS in Corrections

High U.S. Crime Rates

THE MYTH: The United States has such a large prison system, compared with the prison systems of other countries, because it has much more crime.

THE REALITY: Using rates of homicide and rape reported to the police in the United States and in Europe, as the basis of comparison, the United States imprisons its citizens between two and four times higher than any of those countries. While the European nations have somewhat less violent crime, their incarceration rates are much lower than that of the United States.

Sources: M. F. Aebi and Tiago MM. *SPACE-2018: Prison Populations* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2019), http://wvp.unil.ch/space/files/2019/06/FinalReportSPACEI2018_190611-1.pdf; World Population Review. 2020. *Crime Rate by Country 2020*, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/crime-rate-by-country/#dataTable>; Jennifer Bronson and E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2019* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2020).

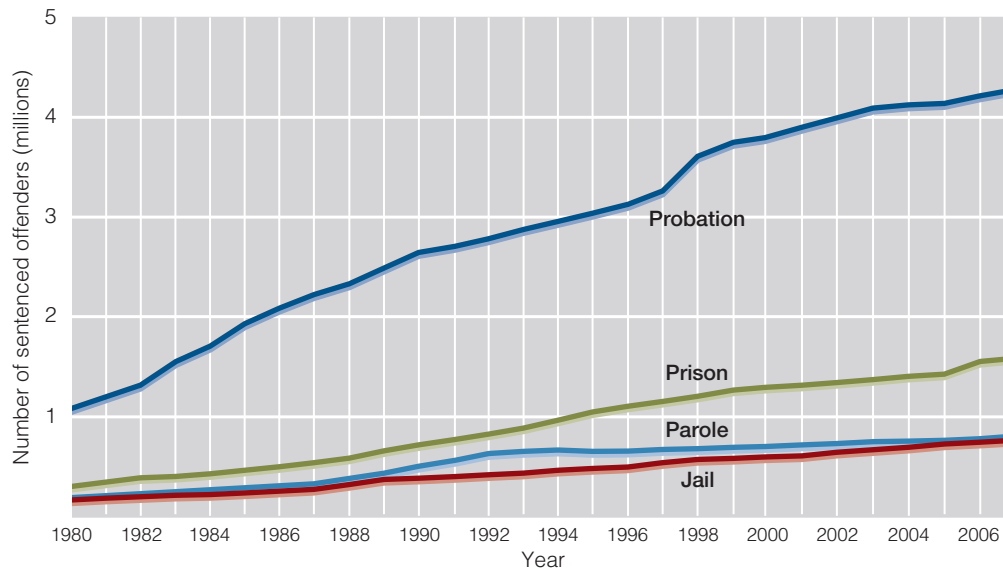


FIGURE 1.1 Correctional Population Growth in the United States, 1980–2007

Although the increase in prison population received the most publicity, a greater proportion of correctional growth occurred in probation and parole.

Sources: Latest data available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics correctional surveys, www.ojp.usdoj.gov: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Probation Survey, Annual Parole Survey, Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jail Inmates, and National Prisoner Statistics Program, 2000 and 2005–2007.

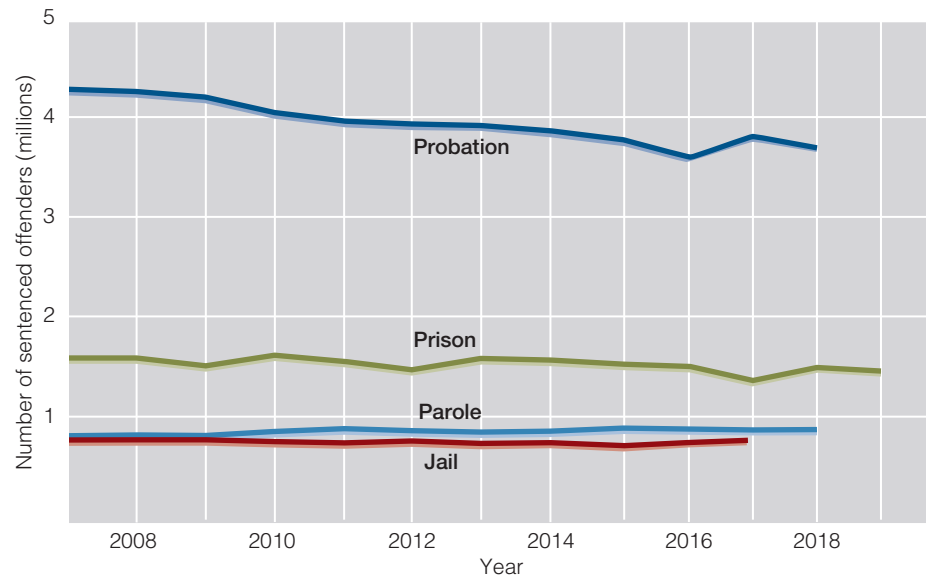


FIGURE 1.2 Correctional Population Contraction in the United States, 2008–2019

After a generation of growth, the correctional system has been declining.

Sources: Latest data available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics correctional surveys, www.ojp.usdoj.gov: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Probation Survey, Annual Parole Survey, Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jail Inmates, and National Prisoner Statistics Program, 2008–2019.

dropped by more than one-third, yet the corrections system increased by more than 50 percent.⁹ A much bigger factor than the drop in crime is that policy makers have been busy reforming the correctional system with the goal of reducing its size. Political leaders all over the country, once the loudest voices for ever-tougher penal policies, are suddenly instead looking for ways to control the size, scope, and costs of the corrections system. One census of prison-related reforms found that 46 of the states have passed legislation designed to reduce the number of people going to or returning to prison and jail.¹⁰ This pattern is true in traditionally conservative states, such as Texas, which has actually closed three prisons,¹¹ to more-liberal states such as Michigan, which reduced the prison population by 23 percent and closed more than 20 prisons.¹² During 2019, almost two-thirds of the states in the United States had actual reductions in the number of people in prison.¹³ Since 2010, in fact, more than half the states have reduced both their imprisonment rates and their crime rates.¹⁴

These changes reflect a new liberal–conservative consensus that most people who are convicted of nonviolent crimes need not end up in prison. There is a growing idea that the penal system, especially prisons, has grown too much. People all across the political spectrum believe that “mass incarceration” has become a problem in its own right. Concerns about burgeoning probation caseloads and high jail counts have arisen as well. Both liberals and conservatives rightfully worry that the expansion of corrections has affected some groups more than others. African Americans are five times more likely to be in prison than whites; in some states, 5 percent of all black men are in prison.¹⁵ Nearly 12 percent of all African American men 20–40 years old—the age of most fathers—are now locked up. One in six male African Americans has been to prison.¹⁶

Both liberals and conservatives also share a concern that the cost of corrections, nearly \$80 billion per year, is out of line. Prison budgets—by far the most expensive portion of the penal system—grow even when monies for education and other services lag.¹⁷ Probation caseloads and daily jail populations have also grown, and they cost money, too. With growing public concern about the quality of schools and health care, people of all

political persuasions are tempted to ask if so much money is needed for corrections. They are especially leery about continuing to invest in what many political leaders, especially conservatives, see as a system that is not as effective as it ought to be.¹⁸

Corrections, then, is a topic for public debate as never before. A generation ago, most people knew very little about corrections. Prisons were alien “big houses,” infused with mystery and located in remote places. The average American had no direct knowledge of “the joint” and no way of learning what it was like. Most people did not even know what probation and parole were, much less have an opinion about their worth.

However, more than 6.6 million Americans are now in the corrections system. This number includes one-third of all African Americans who have dropped out of high school; in fact, 70 percent of this group will go to prison during their lifetime.¹⁹ Add to these numbers the impact on fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and husbands, wives, and children, and you have an idea of how pervasive corrections is today—especially for poor Americans and people of color.

Further, crime stories dominate our news media. Read any local newspaper or watch any local nightly newscast, and you will encounter a crime story that raises questions about corrections: Should the person have been released? Is the sentence severe enough? Should laws for this type of crime be tougher? In short, corrections now maintains a profound place, not only in the public eye, but also in the public experience. But are the images we form—based on media reports and our own experiences—accurate? Do they tell us all we need to know about corrections?

The coming years will be an exciting period for people interested in corrections. After decades of “get-tough” corrections, today we find ourselves in a new era, characterized by a search for innovative strategies to deal with crime that are more effective and less costly—financially and socially—than the policies that had dominated the landscape for almost 40 years. This is a time when those who study corrections can help shape a new generation of policies and practices. The demand for correctional professionals will continue to grow, but openness to new ideas will be greater than ever before.

People who study corrections want to learn more about the problems that rivet attention. They want to see beyond the three-minute news story, to understand what is happening to people caught in the system. And they suspect that what seems so simple from the viewpoint of a politician arguing for a new law, or from the perspective of a news reporter sharing the latest crime story, may in fact be far more complex for the people involved.



◀ Clara, aged 8, visits with her mother in Maryland Correctional Institution for Women as a part of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars. Programs such as this help bridge the gap between the community and people in prison.

Algerina Perna/Baltimore Sun/TNS/Spa USA