

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347996843>

ARTICLE: The Life-Course of Juvenile Lifers: Understanding Maturation and Development as Miller and Its Progeny Guide Juvenile Life Sentence Release Decisions

Article · June 2020

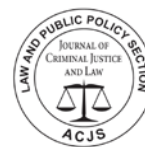
DOI: 10.21428/b6e95092.fc4dc182

CITATIONS

8

READS

228



The Life-Course of Juvenile Lifers: Understanding Maturation and Development as Miller and Its Progeny Guide Juvenile Life Sentence Release Decisions

Journal of Criminal Justice and Law: Official
Journal of the Law and Public Policy Section
of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
Volume 3, Issue 2, pp. 22-39 (2020)

Robert Johnson^I and Margaret E. Leigey^{II}

Abstract

The U.S. Supreme Court anticipated that most juveniles sentenced to life-without-parole prison terms might well “mature and develop” over the course of their lives in confinement. As a result, the Court maintained that they should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their changed characters and earn a chance at release from prison. In this article, we rely on the research on life sentence prisoner adjustment, together with our experience as experts in juvenile life-without-parole re-sentencing cases. We trace the maturation and development of juveniles sentenced to life terms, a multifaceted process that ultimately leads most juveniles sentenced to life to become solid citizens of the prison community who desist from misconduct, secure regular employment, participate in programs, and develop prosocial identities and reference groups that make them good candidates for release in due course. A caveat is that maturation in prison often entails a self-defensive hardening of emotions that will need to be addressed in reentry programs.

When discussing juvenile life-without-parole (LWOP) sentences, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) and related decisions anticipated that juveniles sentenced to life prison terms might well “mature and develop” over the course of their lives in confinement. The exceptions—the depraved, those beyond reform—would remain unregenerate and therefore deserving of permanent imprisonment. But nearly all juveniles, the Court presumed, could and

^I American University, Richardson, Washington, DC, USA.

^{II} The College of New Jersey, Ewing Township, NJ, USA.

Corresponding Author:

Robert Johnson, American University, Washington, DC, 20016

Email: robertjohnson@american.edu

The authors wish to express their appreciation to the blind reviewers of the original manuscript for their comments, which were helpful during preparation of the final version of the manuscript.

The authors wish to thank Talisa Carter for her helpful comments and suggestions.

might well change. These persons should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their changed characters and earn a chance at release from prison.

Maturation and development, when they occur, indicate that an individual today is not the person he or she was at the time of the crime. Juveniles who have matured and developed over the course of their lives in prison can say, with noted scholar Hans Toch (2010, p. 4), "I am not now who I used to be then." They become adults in both chronological and emotional terms and are no longer the impulsive adolescents whose rash behavior landed them behind bars for life. Maturation and development are central to U.S. Supreme Court juvenile LWOP decisions and are also primary themes in age-graded life course theory as it relates to desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993; for a recent literature review, see Weaver, 2019). This study bridges these bodies of criminological scholarship and judicial opinions to understand more deeply how these processes occur for juveniles sentenced to life terms, who will die in prison unless they are offered a revised sentence that allows them to demonstrate change and thereby earn a second chance at life.

MILLER v. ALABAMA AND ITS PROGENY

Before the 1980s, juveniles rarely received sentences of LWOP, sometimes called death by incarceration (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, 2005; Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008). The rise in juvenile LWOP sentences corresponded to the overall "tough on crime" movement that permeated U.S. criminal justice policies beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 21st century, which contributed to the overall increase in the number of individuals serving LWOP sentences (53,290 at last count; see Cullen & Jonson, 2017; Nellis, 2017). The expansion of juvenile LWOP sentencing was particularly pronounced from 1992 to 1999, during the height of the juvenile super-predator hysteria (Mills, Dorn, & Hritz, 2016).

The central holding in *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) is that juveniles cannot be sentenced to terms of LWOP on a mandatory basis. The Court reasoned that if judges were to impose mandatory life sentences, they would be failing to consider factors that distinguish juvenile offenders from adults, namely (p. 8):

Children have a "lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility," leading to recklessness, impulsivity, and heedless risk-taking. Second, children "are more vulnerable to negative influences and outside pressures," including from their family and peers; they have limited "control over their own environment" and lack the ability to extricate themselves from horrific, crime-producing settings. And third, a child's character is not as "well formed" as an adult's; his traits are "less fixed" and his actions less likely to be "evidence of irretrievable depravity."

While some states determined that this holding applied to juveniles who were already serving mandatory terms of LWOP, other states rejected that argument. In *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016), the U.S. Supreme Court clarified that *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) did in fact apply retroactively. Juveniles sentenced to life on a mandatory basis—the vast bulk of the population at the time of *Miller*—must be given the opportunity to establish that they have matured and

developed (Nellis, 2017). As articulated in Miller and Montgomery, juvenile LWOP arbitrarily presumes that juveniles are beyond reform and redemption; as a remedy, individual assessments must be made of each person's capacity to mature and develop over the course of his or her life before a sentence is passed. Across the country, parole boards and courts are now in the process of assessing the maturation and development of roughly 2,000 cases of juveniles sentenced to life terms on a mandatory basis. In these hearings, the deciding body must consider mitigating factors that, had they been examined at sentencing, would likely have reduced the culpability of juvenile defendants for the original crime. These factors include immaturity, susceptibility to negative influence, and the potential for rehabilitation. Central to our analysis, deciding bodies are enjoined to consider prison behavior that suggests maturation and development.

The presumptions underlying the Court's ruling in Miller (2012) and Montgomery (2016) are borne out by research on maturation in prison (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2020; Johnson, Rocheleau, & Martin, 2017; Maruna, 2001). As a general rule, prisoners cope better and mature over time: "with time and experience, there is a tendency among inmates to adopt coping strategies that contain the seeds of 'mature coping'" (Leban, Cardwell, Copes, & Brezina, 2016, p. 957; see generally, Zamble 1990, 1992). Improved coping over time is especially evident among life-sentence prisoners, colloquially known as lifers (Crewe et al., 2020; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Leigey, 2015); improved coping over time is a general finding in the body of work that comprises life-course criminology (Sullivan, Piquero, & Cullen, 2012). In this article, we will examine the maturation and development of juvenile lifers as an example of the general life-course adjustment of life-sentence prisoners.

A central premise of life- course theory is that "informal social bonds in adulthood ... explain changes in criminality over the life span" (Sampson & Laub, 1993, p. 7). At first glance, the theory might seem a poor fit to apply to life-sentence inmates. Often, life-course research focuses on pre- or post- punishment experiences; it rarely focuses on changes that occur while punishment is ongoing. Additionally, as Sampson (2016) notes, the traditional turning points that are associated with life-course criminology are not always or obviously applicable to released lifers (e.g., marriage, family, and employment), and these turning points may be even more cumbersome to apply to confined lifers as the informal social control exerted from these traditional sources of social control are more removed (i.e., prisoners are separated from their loved ones) or modified (i.e., employment opportunities in prison are limited). However, most lifers attempt to develop a meaningful and law-abiding life behind bars—as seen in a body of actuarial and statistical studies on prison rule infractions among life-sentence prisoners (Sorensen & Marquart, 2003; Sorensen & Wrinkle, 1998)—although the barriers they face are substantial and the resources at their disposal are meager. In our experience as experts in juvenile LWOP resentencing hearings, we see a growing commitment to work and programs as law-abiding careers evolve among lifers. As we shall suggest, available evidence allows us to apply life- course theory to confined lifers in ways that offer insight into rehabilitation, and, for some, redemption.

A key feature of maturation in prison is the ability to live a law-abiding and productive life, which as a practical matter, amounts to a low rate of infractions, a high rate of activity in prosocial activities and programs, and the acquisition of varying degrees of self-efficacy or autonomy so that one can deal directly and effectively with problems in daily living (see Johnson, 1987, 1996, 2002; Johnson et al., 2017). Lifers often start their confinement in a state of turmoil marked by high rates of rule violations, low rates of program involvement, and overriding impulsivity and anger that

result in frequent rule violations, some violent, and occasional stints in solitary confinement (see Crewe et al., 2020). Over time, lifers adjust, settling in and settling down, all the while growing in the process. In this essay, then, we describe what might be called the desistance process for life-sentence inmates. For many, this process reflects a profound metamorphosis in key areas of desistance: cognition, behavior, and ultimately identity (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; see generally, Weaver, 2019).

IN THE DEEP

The initial phase of confinement, whether it be in jail awaiting case outcome or upon prison admission, is a stressful time for most inmates, and especially for lifers, who are entering a new world from which there is no obvious escape. Wright, Crewe, and Hulley (2017, p. 226) offer a moving account of the “entry shock, temporal vertigo and intrusive recollections [emphasis in original]” that are common at intake. At the start of his life sentence, one individual described the difficulty in accepting his present situation (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 81): “I felt that the whole experience wasn’t real - like it was still a dream. ... I’m just sitting in this cell, and I’m looking at these walls, and it’s just not registering. Shock. Meltdown.” Shock gives way to a panoply of stresses that encompass “almost all of the problems of long-term imprisonment” with great severity at the outset of the sentence. “In particular, early-stage [life-sentence] prisoners struggled to absorb the fact that the futures that they had anticipated had, in effect, been cancelled” (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 90). And, indeed, significant others moved on with their lives. As one prisoner told Crewe et al. (2020, p. 93), “When you have a longer sentence, people do forget about you,” leaving prisoners alone to deal with “their initial sense of shock, numbness and dissociation,” which soon give way to “an avalanche of affective reactions, among which ‘anger’ was primary” (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 94).

In our experience, reinforced in the seminal research reported in Crewe et al. (2020), anger undergirds the early periods of imprisonment marked by rule violations and other disruptive behavior (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse), as well as the widespread suicidal ideation and social withdrawal found among juveniles serving life prison terms. Crewe et al. (2020, p. 110) see this as a “general sense of nihilism among many early-stage prisoners,” reflected in such declarations as “not giving a shit” or having “nothing to live for at all.” These relatively common early oppositional adjustments may explain why some young lifers build an impressive record of rule violations, which, in our experience, they later contemplate with something approaching shame once they have established more stable and constructive adaptations that allow them to make the most of the grim situation in which they find themselves.

The pressures associated with the early stages of confinement are especially magnified for juvenile lifers because of their age and corresponding developmental stage. These susceptibilities are compounded by the pressures experienced by juveniles serving life sentences in adult prisons; our interviews, and a body of research on adolescent development (see Scott & Steinberg, 2008), suggest that youth is associated with emotional and cognitive vulnerabilities that accentuate the standard pains of imprisonment, giving added weight to such stressors as loss of freedom (felt sharply as a consequence of adolescent impulsivity), separation from family (felt sharply because of dependency on family), and the accompanying risks associated with incarceration, such as vulnerability to predators, who are often on the hunt for young and inexperienced victims (see

George, 2010; Hassine, 1996; Paluch, 2004). The inability to appreciate the enormity of a life term, an indeterminate sentence with no fixed boundaries beyond death (itself incompressible to adolescents), may be the greatest pain that juvenile lifers face, especially during the early years of their confinement (Crewe et al., 2020; Leigey, 2015). The sentence, often working in tandem with the underlying conviction for a grave offense (usually murder), “compounded and intensified the standard ‘pains of imprisonment’” and comprise “a grave existential intervention into a biography in the making” (Bereswill, 2020, p. 60). The result is a “shattering experience for a person’s self-perception and orientations for actions” because the now-imprisoned juvenile has to “cope with the restrictive everyday world in a robustly authoritarian institution” that promotes widespread “feelings of anxiety, powerlessness, and rage” (Bereswill, 2020, p. 59).

A female lifer, who had been incarcerated for 13 years for a crime she committed at 16 years of age, recalled her initial lack of understanding of the ramifications of the punishment (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, pp. 4-5):

I didn’t understand “life without” ... [that] to have “life without,” you were locked down forever. You know it really dawned on me when [after several years in prison, a journalist] came and ... he asked me, “Do you realize that you’re gonna be in prison for the rest of your life?” And I said, “Do you really think that?” ... “For the rest of my life? Do you think that God will leave me in prison for the rest of my life?”

At the outset of the sentence, young people almost certainly do not fully appreciate the gravity of the punishment; the prospect of “doing life” for decades to come is, likewise, an almost incomprehensible challenge (Crewe et al., 2020). The following statement by a juvenile lifer articulates this sentiment: “[M]y life in prison has been like living in hell. It’s like living and dying at the same time, and with my sentence the misery never ends. Life in prison is no life at all. It is a mere existence” (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 53).

As a result of the austere existence during confinement, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation occur with regularity (Crewe et al., 2020). A lifer who entered prison at the age of 16, for a crime he committed 2 years earlier, shared the following recollection of his suicidal thoughts: “I can’t do no life sentence here at that age. And so I thought of that [killing himself]. Gotta end it, gotta end it. ... I’ve got so many cuts on me” (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 64). In addition to mental distress, inmate misconduct is another manifestation of stress. Lifers may act out and rebel against the institution’s rules and the officers tasked with enforcing them, and juveniles can be an especially unruly population to manage during the early years of their confinement. In the most comprehensive examination of juvenile lifers in the United States to date, Nellis (2012) surveyed 1,579 juvenile lifers, representing 68% of the entire LWOP population at that time, and found that nearly all (98.4%) had committed at least one disciplinary infraction since prison admission. Common infractions were failure to follow an order, possession of contraband, drug test failure, and fighting.

Juveniles may act out for many reasons. Usually, they arrive at an institution with anger that they do not know how to manage effectively. Alcohol and drugs, frequently used on the outside as flawed adjustment strategies, continue to prove ineffective in the face of the harsh realities of

prison life. A lifer convicted of felony murder for a crime he committed at 17 years of age explained (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 64):

I started doing drugs [when I first came to prison]. I mean I always smoked weed [marijuana], but then I started doing like heroin and stuff. Sometimes I try to escape. I went to mental health one time and they put me on a pain killer. I told them I was starting to have suicidal thoughts ... and they said that was normal and just go back to my cell. I cut my wrist [shows his wrist with multiple scars to a researcher]. ... Well, I thought that drugs helped me to escape. But then reality is still here when I wake up.

Younger individuals, including juvenile lifers, struggle to see how they can construct a semblance of a life in prison (Crewe et al., 2020). This theme is reflected in several interviews reported by Crewe and his associates and is vividly reflected in the following comment by a lifer who was 14 years of age at the time of the offense (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, pp. 57-58):

Because you know I couldn't deal with it, I couldn't deal with doing all that time, having that time, being so young, I couldn't deal with it. And it caused me a lotta problems when I first came to the penitentiary because I had the mentality, "I have a life sentence. I don't care about nothing, I got a life sentence, why should I care about anything?" So there wasn't nothing I wouldn't do. Wasn't no fight I would back down from. Even with the officers ... so that caused a lot of problems. [I] fought on officers, [I was] stabbing officers with knives. ... You know, fought on inmates, 'cause of that mentality, 'cause of having that time. ... I haven't [killed] but I've beat on inmates. ... Yeah, I used locks, knives, pipes, lead pipes, you know?

In the predatory prison environment, juveniles experience heightened confusion and fear. One lifer, who committed his offense at the age of 16, described his initial impressions of prison in the following terms: "It was disorienting and scary, like a fish thrown in water not knowing how to swim. Everyone seemed big and dangerous and threatening" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 79). In response to the fear of physical or sexual violence, juveniles may feel compelled to use violence to ward off victimization. A representative comment from a young lifer reflects how concern for safety could lead to violence: "I end up in prison and now, I got to fight my way through this food chain, the prison food chain. And immediately I'm getting subjected to sexual predators and what I did was I fought 'em off, literally, fought them off" (Irwin, 2009, p. 72). Many juveniles receive adult prison terms for perpetrating a crime of violence, and then they are at an increased risk for becoming victims of physical and sexual violence themselves as they serve out their punishments (Beck, Berzofsky, Caspar, & Krebs, 2013; Beck & Harrison, 2006, 2007; Forst, Fagan, & Vivona, 1989). In fact, nearly all of the juvenile lifers interviewed by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (2005) reported at least one instance of victimization since prison admission.

Juvenile lifers may be reluctant to report assaults because doing so could cause them to be labeled “snitches” or “rats” for life. These labels, in turn, will likely lead to subsequent attacks. Moreover, if they are placed in protective custody, essentially solitary confinement, they will experience a greatly reduced quality of life for years or even decades to come. An individual who was 16 years of age at the time of the crime described the pressures faced by a person who is victimized in prison: “On several occasions I have been physically assaulted. I reported the first assault, but from that point forward I deduced that it was best to remain silent as I cannot afford to be labeled [an informant] in my current circumstances” (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 74). Female juvenile lifers also experience victimization in the prison environment. One, who was also 16 years of age when the offense occurred, described the uncertainty and anxiety of not knowing when an attack might take place: “It’s scary to wake up every morning and not know what will happen ... I’ve gotten beaten up by women who just don’t like me for whatever their reasons” (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 75).

Deterred from reporting victimization to prison officials, juvenile lifers may join prison gangs as a source of protection, but their involvement in these groups often leads to an escalation of misconduct (Fischer, 2002; Gaes, Wallace, Gilman, Klein-Saffran, & Suppa, 2002; Griffin, 2007; Griffin & Hepburn, 2006; Huebner, 2003; Krienert & Fleisher, 2001; Shelden, 1991; Sorensen, Cunningham, Vigen, & Woods, 2011). A Colorado prison official offered a biopsychosocial explanation of why juveniles join gangs and, as a consequence of misconduct, are placed in solitary confinement:

One [factor] is age—when you come in at a young age with life without [parole], there’s not a whole lot of light at the end of the tunnel. Also, it’s kind of a guy thing: The young ones come in with a lot of fear, anxiety, paranoia, and they want to make a name for themselves—so they have a tendency to act out. And if they are part of a gang, they are almost required to act out ... any of the young guys, they see it as a feather in their cap to work themselves to [a super-maximum facility] ... and they don’t think about the repercussions. ... They say [to themselves], “I’ve got to impress everyone with what a bad-ass I am.” (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 58)

Any affiliation with a gang—however reasonable that choice may seem in the face of prison adjustment pressures, and even if the individual has not been actively involved in years—is a formidable obstacle for lifers to overcome in the sentence modification process when they attempt to establish that they have developed and matured.

Some lifers remain in a loop of disruptive and violent behavior, and a few evolve into serious predators who continue to pose risks to other inmates and prison staff—the persisters. In the well-known study of Marquart and Sorensen (1988) of the prison and post-release behaviors of Furman-commuted inmates, one of the 47 commuted inmates in the sample was responsible for 29% of the sample’s serious rule violations. However, much of the research on life-sentence inmates indicates that serious misconduct, especially violence, is largely limited to the early days of incarceration (Crewe et al., 2020; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Sorensen & Wrinkle, 1996; Sorensen, Wrinkle, & Gutierrez, 1998; Zamble, 1992). Although it is difficult to identify a precise number, our research and field experiences, together with actuarial and other statistical studies of

life-prisoner behavior over time, have led us to believe that the great majority of lifers, after struggling through the haze of pressure that overshadows the early days of confinement, pressure that may last months or even years, come to reflect on their difficult and discouraging lives to date, and ultimately decide, with varying degrees of specificity and success, to seek a new and more promising course of adjustment for the future.

TURNING POINTS, AWAKENINGS, AND MATURATION

A turning point is an incident or idea that produces a new course of action enduring long enough to indicate that a stable change has taken place (Irwin, 2009; Liem, 2016). Retrospection is needed, a vantage point from which an individual looks back on his or her life in an attempt to pinpoint the impetus for change. In addition to the passage of time, self-awareness is also a necessary criterion. Irwin characterized this new self-awareness as the “awakening” that many lifers undergo: Awakening “begins when lifers fully appreciate that there has been something fundamentally wrong with their former behavior. They realize that their [emphasis in the original] actions have brought them to this disastrous end” (Irwin, 2009, p. 66). A single event, the “thunder strike,” as coined by Irwin, can precipitate the change.

Turning points that lead to personal evaluation and ultimately transformation, as seen in the research literature and in our clinical experience, can include the death of a loved one, the suicide of a fellow prisoner, exposure to an inspirational program or role model, or lonely stints in segregation that force prisoners to think critically about their lives. One juvenile lifer, who has served 30 years for fatally shooting a teenager when he fired a gun into a crowd, described the effect that a conversation with the victim’s mother had on him: “She asked me to promise her that when I was finally released that I wouldn’t let her and my family down. ... It was a turning point in my life” (Cohen, 2017, para 26). Since this meeting, he has completed college courses and served as a mentor to younger inmates.

Informal social control is the bedrock of life-course theory, and although it may take a different shape in prison, it is nonetheless a powerful motivator for change. Despite the fact that lifers have been separated from their families for years or even decades, the ties to their loved ones can encourage positive behavior. For Seb, one of the men featured in *Life Imprisonment from Young Adulthood* (Crewe et al., 2020), his realization of how his poor behavior was negatively affecting his mother brought him to the doorway of desistance. Lifers may also be motivated to change to honor the memory of a recently deceased loved one. They avoid misconduct, which leads to restrictions, so that they are able to maximize contact with their loved ones; with good behavior, they earn additional opportunities to connect with loved ones (e.g., family picnics), and thus a positive cycle is established in which good behavior promotes rewards that produce more good behavior. Nellis (2012) found that approximately half of her sample ($n=1,579$) of juvenile lifers (47.9%) reported that their families lived some distance from their prison. The geographical distance and challenges to remaining in contact with family serve to reinforce why juvenile lifers would want to behave well—to preserve their already limited opportunities to engage with their parents, siblings, and other loved ones.

In addition to the influence of informal social control, sheer self-interest is a powerful motivator of change. Although the amount of time it takes to appreciate where one’s self-interest lies can vary widely across individuals, the vast majority of lifers ultimately come to understand

that prison is home and that self-interest encourages them to create a new life for themselves in this involuntary home if they are to secure a life worth living behind bars (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Leigey, 2015). Stakes in conformity develop that make engaging in misconduct too costly. Lifers do not want to jeopardize a preferred housing assignment or a valued work assignment or to spend empty time in solitary confinement. Education and vocation classes, when lifers are eligible to participate in them, provide opportunities for learning, accomplishment, and a sense of purpose. In the study by Nellis (2012), two-thirds of juvenile lifers ($n=1,579$) earned a general education diploma (GED) or a high school diploma while they were incarcerated, and nearly all the remaining individuals reported plans to obtain a degree. Work gives structure to the day and is a source of pride; in time, many lifers become supervisors or advance to respected work assignments. Therapeutic and religious programs, when available, can allow self-awareness, insight into earlier behaviors, and expression of remorse and guilt for past crimes, and they can aid lifers to overcome widely shared traumas that mark and mar their lives. For example, approximately one-fifth of juvenile lifers ($n=1,579$) reported sexual abuse and one-half reported physical abuse in their lifetime, and fully three-quarters of girls and women in the sample reported physical or sexual abuse (Nellis, 2012).

Hope of release—a chance to leave prison one day, however remote in objective terms, and however grim an individual's prison life may be—also encourages good behavior. One lifer explained how such hope allowed him to keep going in his self-described cage:

The only reason I don't kill myself is 'cause there's still hope. I mean at least if you got a dog that you know is never going to get adopted, that's never going to live free again, I mean they kill it. They put it to sleep. That's more humane than keeping him in this cage the next twenty years, making him live with his own shit and his own piss. I came in here at seventeen years old and what are they going to do, keep me for sixty or seventy years? I mean c'mon now ... that's a long time!
(Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 64)

Lifers hope to be released so that they can reunite with their families, atone for previous bad decisions, and once again be a part of society. As one lifer explained, "I would like to be able to live again and see all those things I miss from being lock [sic] up because the world has grown up so fast and I mess [sic] out on it" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 62). Consequently, lifers who nurture hope set their sights on the improbable outcome of one day earning release.

As a result of the interplay of the informal social control exerted by loved ones, self-interest, and hope of release, a new identity is established that shapes behavior. Lifers can live for decades as the now decent, law-abiding persons they believe themselves to be, associating with like-minded prisoners, eschewing former friends associated with disruptive behavior, avoiding infractions, and staying out of trouble. In her national sample of juvenile lifers ($n=1,579$), Nellis (2012) found a clear pattern of desistance. Among the respondents who had served less than a decade in prison, most (81.5%) had received a disciplinary write-up in the previous 3 years. Among those who had served at least 10 years, the proportion decreased to approximately two-thirds (65.4%). Among those who had been incarcerated for at least 30 years, the percentage dropped to 29% (Nellis, 2012). It is notable, and perhaps even remarkable, that lifers not only desist while

confined but also adopt improved coping styles to negotiate life's stressors while incarcerated, showing the hallmarks of mature coping: "dealing with life's problems like a responsive and responsible adult, one who seeks autonomy without violating the rights of others, security without resort to deception or violence, and relatedness to others as the finest and fullest expression of human identity" (Johnson, 1987, as cited in Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005, p. 8).

In conjunction with a mature coping style, many individuals are able to carve out a life for themselves and report improved mental health and functioning, even if the pressures of long-term incarceration are never fully surmounted and some problematic adjustments, notably the hardening of feelings central to definitions of toughness and savvy in the prison community, linger on (Crewe et al., 2020; Leigey, 2015; MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Zamble, 1992).

At the point of resentencing in their cases, juvenile lifers under consideration for release are in actuality juveniles in name only. Over the years, they have grown into men and women who have spent more than half their lives incarcerated. Montgomery, the petitioner in the eponymous juvenile LWOP case, was 17 at the time of his crime. He is now in his seventies. In their final years in the carceral environment, lifers lead a more solitary existence. No programs in which they can participate may be left, either because they have exhausted them or because they are ineligible as a result of their sentence (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005; Leigey, 2015; Nellis, 2012). A female lifer remarked, "[S]ince I am serving LWOP, I'm not eligible. I guess they think since I am going to die in prison anyway, why educate us?" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 70). Involvement in formal prison activities is further reduced as lifers may be forced to retire from their prison jobs because of medical issues. Through the years, their ties to the outside world weaken. They grieve for loved ones who have died while they continue to be imprisoned. One lifer, who entered prison at the age of 17 and had served 29 years, stated: "My situation for the last twenty some years has been very hard on me because I have seen most of my family members pass away on me ... just last year I lost my mother" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 62). Instead of release to live their final days free and in the company of surviving loved ones, many lifers remain incarcerated. For some, after numerous rejections of appeals or commutation applications, the hope of release that sustained them is exhausted, and a few take their own lives (see Johnson & Tabriz, 2010). Others succumb to medical conditions. A good death, however we wish to define it, is rare among lifers in the United States (Fleury-Steiner, 2015).

ON SECOND CHANCES

"All I want is a chance," pleaded a juvenile lifer, who was 15 years of age at the time of his crime. "I've come a long way as far as who I am and what I want in life. ... I've really changed" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 84). Because of Miller (2012) and Montgomery (2016), this individual and many others will get that chance. As the Court acknowledged in these decisions, the imposition of an LWOP sentence should be rare. More common, the Miller Court reasoned, was "that children who commit even heinous crimes are capable of change" (p. 21). In point of fact, Miller's case illustrates the substantial changes that many lifers undergo, from troubled teens to victimized inmates and on to honors prison housing with a panoply of possibilities (Smith, 2016, 2017). Currently, Miller is awaiting a decision in his resentencing case. His case also reveals a conflict between correctional policy and judicial

principles. The Montgomery Court offered several criteria that judges and correctional officials could use to evaluate rehabilitation, among them were disciplinary history and program participation. As previously explained, desistance from institutional misconduct is the common path for most lifers, including juveniles. However, because of their sentences, lifers may be barred from participating in certain programs or have to join long waiting lists to secure a program placement. This creates an irrationality—lifers may face formidable barriers to participating in programs, yet the Court recommends involvement in programs as evidence of rehabilitation (Nellis, 2018).

A central premise of life-course theory is that offenders are capable of change (Sampson & Laub, 1993). History does not always repeat itself. However, a life- sentence, in which an individual's criminal record is heavily weighted in any release decision, does not recognize offender transformation. A lifer in New York, who had served 40 years for a crime he committed as a juvenile, remarked on how criminal history is prioritized over more recent indicators of behavior (in his case, few disciplinary infractions and the obtainment of a college degree):

Because you committed a crime when you were an adolescent, this means you are prone to criminality for the rest of your entire life? You're saying that that this person is beyond redemption, beyond change, that you can somehow read this person's entire mind and foretell his future like you've got a crystal ball. (Quandt, 2018, para 22)

Another juvenile lifer in New York, at the time 54 years of age, described to the parole board how he had changed in his nearly 40 years of confinement: "Today, I'm compassionate. ... I'm more able to think. I'm educated. I'm able to distinguish exactly what I couldn't distinguish then." He implored the parole board to "please consider my application for the person I am today and not the kid I was then. I hope I can give back" (Quandt, 2018, para 5). Failure to recognize the maturation and development of juvenile lifers expressly contradicts not only the tenets of life-course theory but also the sentiments of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Since Montgomery (2016), major reforms have occurred. Before Miller (2012), only four states prohibited juvenile LWOP. Now, 22 states and the District of Columbia have abolished the punishment, most recently Washington and Oregon (The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth, 2019). Other states—for example, Pennsylvania, which at the time of Miller had the highest population of juvenile lifers—have increased the standards required to impose the penalty. Per *Commonwealth v. Batts* (2017), Pennsylvania courts will presume that a sentence of juvenile LWOP is unlawful, and to impose the punishment, prosecutors must demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the juvenile cannot be rehabilitated (Associated Press, 2017). As of October 2019, of the 521 individuals who had been serving juvenile LWOP in Pennsylvania, 450 had been resentenced and 216 had been released (Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2019). Importantly, only one of the released individuals has been convicted of a new crime, contempt (Ewing & Melamed, 2018). In many of the remaining states, legislation has been proposed or passed that would provide juvenile lifers the opportunity to be released after serving a specific number of years, typically 25 to 30 (Associated Press, 2017). Efforts are underway to avoid "de facto" life sentences—that is, term sentences that amount to a life sentence because they extend beyond a juvenile's life expectancy (Ripper & Johnson, 2020). Further, in blurring the legal

distinction between a child and an adult, some states and lower-level federal courts are extending the legal provisions provided to minors in *Miller* to young adults. In Illinois, mandatory LWOP sentencing is prohibited for defendants who are 18 or 19 years of age. A federal judge in Connecticut determined that mandatory LWOP sentencing should be prohibited for 18-year-olds (Schwartzapfel, 2018). As of January 2019, the juvenile LWOP population has declined to about 1,100, and approximately 400 juvenile lifers across the country have been released (J. K. Lavy, personal communication, January 25, 2019).

These trends are encouraging and important, but they seem remote and unreliable to many lifers. On the worst part of being a juvenile serving life in prison in America, one man remarked, "It's like you never get to the place where other people are at" (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2005, p. 82). The "place where other people are at," to explore this lifer's observation, is a justice system marked by a universal appreciation of the transitory nature of adolescence and the folly of making permanent judgments about lives that are works in progress. The United States, which now stands as the only country in the world to allow juvenile LWOP sentencing in any form—a permanent judgment of breathtaking proportions—continues to grapple with how to punish juveniles. Recent court decisions and a growing appreciation of the lives and life-course experiences of juveniles serving life sentences suggest that more juvenile offenders once sentenced to terms of LWOP will now get a second chance. This second chance, we have argued, is well- deserved, as the culmination of what we have described as a growth process marked by changes in identity, behavior, and relations with others. We can hope that few, if any, will be condemned to die in prison for crimes they committed in their youth.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Patterns of maturation and development among juveniles sentenced to life prison are in most cases pronounced and consistent, but they may be missed or misunderstood by decision makers because they unfold over time, sometimes very long periods of time, requiring a close look at the prison adjustment history and personal development of each individual. The general pattern, as seen in the research and in our case work, can be summarized as follows: The initial phase of confinement, a stressful period evidenced by increased institutional misconduct, chronic anger, and assorted mental health problems, gives way to turning points that lead to changed identities and behaviors. These turning points and associated changes can occur months, years, or even, in one case, decades into the person's prison life. Change typically occurs as the consequence of incidents or cumulative experiences that spark cognitive transformations. Those transformations, in turn, open up a new view of one's self and one's prospects; a changed self then leads to what are seen as rational and even self-evident decisions to make changes in one's peer group, one's social routines, and one's daily behavior (in particular, conforming to prison rules and regulations and staying out of trouble). Note that this sequence is very much in line with the work of Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) and culminates in act-related, identity-related, and relational desistance (see Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). In time, then, most life-sentence inmates transform into persons who, utterly unlike the persons they were when younger, are able to lead law-abiding, responsible, and productive lives in prison. Consistent with recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions and the tenets of life-course theory, courts and correctional bodies entrusted with release decisions should prioritize these indicators of maturation and development over the troubled lives

and troubling criminal behavior that led these young offenders to prison (Haney, 2020; Johnson, 2017).

Although the changes in conduct and character that we have reviewed are typically substantial, prisoners granted release must be offered transitional support to translate hard-won maturity in the prison world into constructive lives in the free world. As with all transitional support efforts with former prisoners, attention must be paid to the residual effects of incarceration, seen among even the best-adjusted inmates. In the case of lifers, evidence provided by Crewe and associates suggests that prison maturity comes with two relational deficits that will complicate reentry. First, prisoners who had coped maturely with prison life clearly lacked the “life progression” one sees over the life-course of individuals in the free world and, critically, “the kind of emotional growth that occurs through relational intimacy” in the free world—evidenced, for example, by marrying and raising a family, key life-course events for which we are aware of no credible evidence pointing to substitutes available in prison (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 317; Jewkes, 2005). Second, prison maturity was shown to feature an almost universal hardening of emotions, an adaptation that is common and effective in the prison world but is likely to be an impediment to adjustment in the free world (Crewe et al., 2020).

Hans Toch (1975) long ago reminded us that stunted emotions are collateral damage wrought by notions of manliness found in prison, where facades of toughness and imperviousness to feelings have currency with all prisoners to some degree (see also Johnson, 1979). These quintessential prison-bred distortions of good character are almost certain to be dysfunctional in most free-world situations. The subjects of the research of Crewe et al. on young prisoners serving long prison terms showed an awareness that “their maturity was contextual” and hence that “maturity and development meant different things in prison and in the community” (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 310). (We saw some of this awareness in our cases, in which apprehension about successful reentry was often quite pronounced.) The key deficit, the subjects of Crewe et al. understood, has to do with the control of feelings so essential to daily prison adjustment, which comes at a high price: “to avoid being overwhelmed with distress, and to deal with the enduring demands of the environment, prisoners learnt to ‘shut down’ and ‘detach their feelings’ ... in ways that reshaped them significantly” (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 314). This is seen in the key finding that lifers at all stages of their sentences “talked of having become ‘numb,’ ... ‘hardened,’ ... ‘desensitized,’ and ‘distanced from their emotions’” (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 314). This defensive hardening of emotions must be acknowledged in reentry plans and addressed in reentry programs that promote the emotional enrichment necessary to establishing and maintaining fulfilling relationships. That said, if the dynamics of the adjustment of juvenile lifers tells us anything of enduring value, it is this: upon release, they will continue to grow and mature in society, slowly but surely adapting themselves to a world more open to feelings of trust and acceptance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Sources Cited

Cases

- Commonwealth v. Batts*, No. 45 MAP 2016, 2017 WL 2735411 (Pa. June 26, 2017)
Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460 (2012).
Montgomery v. Louisiana, 577 U.S. ____ (2016).

Articles, Books, and Reports

- Associated Press. (2017). A state-by-state look at juvenile life without parole. *Statesman Journal*.
- Beck A. J., Berzofsky, M., Caspar, R., & Krebs, C. (2013) *Sexual victimization in prisons and jails reported by inmates*, 2011-2012. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Beck A. J., & Harrison, P. M. (2007). *Sexual violence reported by correctional authorities*, 2006 Report, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, DC.
- Beck A. J., & Harrison, P. M. (2006). *Sexual violence reported by correctional authorities*, 2005 Report, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, DC.
- Bereswill, M. (2020). Between authoritarian provocations and promises of development: Imprisonment as a profound biographical experience of conflict. In H. Albrecht, M. Walsh, & E. Wienhausen-Knezevic (Eds.), *Desistance processes among young offenders following judicial intervention* (pp. 59–73). Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth. (2019). *States that ban life without parole for Children*.
- Cohen, S. (2017). A victim, a lawmaker, a judge: Voices in juvie reform debate. *Statesman Journal*.
- Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: Adaptation, identity and time*. London. UK: Palgrave.
- Cullen, F. T., & Jonson, C. L. (2017). *Correctional theory: Context and consequences* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles. CA: Sage.
- Ewing, M., & Melamed, S. (2018). A prison lifer comes home. *The Atlantic*.
- Fischer, D. R. (2002). *Arizona Department of Corrections: Security threat group (STG) program evaluation, final report*.
- Fleury-Steiner, B. (2015). Effects of life imprisonment and the crisis of prisoner health. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 14, 407–416.
- Forst, M., Fagan, J., & Vivona, T. S. (1989). Youth in prisons and training schools: Perceptions and consequences of the treatment-custody dichotomy. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 39, 1–13.
- Gaes, G. G., Wallace, S., Gilman, E., Klein-Saffran, J., & Suppa, S. (2002). The influence of prison gang affiliation on violence and other prison misconduct. *The Prison Journal*, 82, 359–385.
- George, E. (2010). *A woman doing life: Notes from a prison for women*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). *Gender, crime, and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation*.
- Griffin, M. (2007). Prison gang policy and recidivism: Short-term management benefits, long-term consequences. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 6, 223–230.

- Griffin, M. L., & Hepburn, J. R. (2006). The effect of gang affiliation on violent misconduct among inmates during the early years of confinement. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 33, 419–448.
- Haney, C. (2020). *Criminality in context: The psychological foundations of criminal justice reform*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- Hassine, V. (1996). David: A sexual victim. In T. J. Bernard & R. McCleary (Eds.), *Life without parole: Living in prison today* (pp.71–76). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Huebner, B. M. (2003). Administrative determinants of inmate violence: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 31, 107–117.
- Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. (2005). *The rest of their lives: Life without parole for child offenders in the United States*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.
- Irwin J. (2009) *Lifers: Seeking redemption in prison*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jewkes, Y. (2005). Loss, liminality and the life sentence: Managing identity through a disrupted life course. In A. Liebling & S. Maruna (Eds.), *The effects of imprisonment* (pp. 366–388). Oxfordshire, UK: Willan Publishing.
- Johnson, R. (1979). Manliness myths: The high price of prison survival. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 4(2), 1–15.
- Johnson, R. (1987). *Hard time: Understanding and reforming the prison*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Johnson, R. (1996). *Hard time: Understanding and reforming the prison* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Johnson, R. (2002). *Hard time: Understanding and reforming the prison* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Johnson, R. (2017). Murder most human: A case for a categorical ban of life-without-parole sentences for all juvenile offenders with guidelines for release decisions for former juvenile life-without-parole cases. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Law*, 1(1), 57–66.
- Johnson, R., & Dobrzanska, A. (2005). Mature coping among life-sentenced inmates: An exploratory study of adjustment dynamics. *Corrections Compendium*, 30(6), 8–9, 36–38.
- Johnson, R., & McGunigall-Smith, S. (2008). Life without parole, America's other death penalty: Notes on life under sentence of death by incarceration. *The Prison Journal*, 88(2), 328–346.
- Johnson, J., Rocheleau, A. M., & Martin, AB. (2017). *Hard time: A fresh look at understanding and reforming the prison* (4th ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Johnson, R., & Tabriz, S. (2010). Life without: Opening reflections on living and dying in prison today. In R. Johnson & S. Tabriz (Eds.), *Life without parole: Living and dying in prison today* (5th ed., pp. xvi–xxv). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Krienert, J. L., & Fleisher, M. S. (2001). Gang membership as a proxy for social deficiencies: A study of Nebraska inmates. *Corrections Management Quarterly*, 5, 47–58.
- Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2003). *Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Leban, L., Cardwell, S. M., Copes, H., & Brezina, T. (2016). Adapting to prison life: A qualitative examination of the coping process among incarcerated offenders. *Justice Quarterly*, 33(6), 943–969.
- Leigey, M. E. (2015). *The forgotten men: Serving life without parole*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

- Liem, M. (2016). *After life imprisonment: Reentry in the era of mass incarceration*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- MacKenzie, D. L., & Goodstein, L. (1985). Long-term incarceration impacts and characteristics of long-term offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 12, 395–414.
- Marquart, J. W., & Sorensen, J. R. (1988). Institutional and postrelease behavior of Furman-commuted inmates in Texas. *Criminology*, 26(4), 677–693.
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mills, J. R., Dorn, A. M., & Hritz, A. C. (2016). Juvenile life without parole in law and practice: Chronicling the rapid change underway. *American University Law Review*, 65(3).
- Nellis, A. (2012). *The lives of juvenile lifers: Findings from a national survey*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.
- Nellis, A. (2017). *Still life: America's increasing use of life and long-term sentences*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.
- Nellis, A. (2018). For Henry Montgomery, a catch-22. *The Marshall Project*.
- Nugent, B., & Schinkel, M. (2016). The pains of desistance. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 16(5), 568–584.
- Paluch, J. A., Jr. (2004). *A life for a life*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing.
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. (2019). *Juvenile lifers information*.
- Quandt, K. R. (2018). Juvenile offenders in New York find parole a distant hope. *The Village Voice*.
- Ripper, B., & Johnson, R. (2019). Liveable term sentences as alternatives to juvenile life without parole. A sentencing framework based on *United States v. Grant*, 887 F.3d 131 (3d Cir. 2018). *Journal of Criminal Justice and Law*, 3(1), 58–74.
- Sampson, R. J. (2016). *After life imprisonment: Reentry in the era of mass incarceration* (pp. vii–viii). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schwartzapfel, B. (2018). The right age to die? *The Marshall Project*.
- Scott, E. S., & Steinberg, L. (2008). *Rethinking juvenile justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Shelden, R. G. (1991). A comparison of gang members and non-gang members in a prison setting. *The Prison Journal*, 71, 50–60.
- Smith, M. (2016). *Alabama inmate Evan Miller awaits resentencing four years after landmark decision*. AL.com.
- Smith, M. (2017). Evan Miller offers apology as resentencing hearing wraps. *Juvenile Justice Information Exchange*.
- Sorensen, J. R., Cunningham, M. D., Vigen, M. P., & Woods, S. O. (2011). Serious assaults on prison staff: A descriptive analysis. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39, 143–150.
- Sorensen, J. R., & Marquart, J. W. (2003). Future dangerousness and incapacitation. In J. R. Acker, R. M. Bohm, & C. S. Lanier (Eds.), *America's experiment with capital punishment: Reflections on the past, present and future of the ultimate penal sanction* (pp. 283–300). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Sorensen, J. R., & Wrinkle, R. D. (1996). No hope for parole: Disciplinary infractions among death-sentenced and life-without-parole inmates. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 23(4), 542–552.

- Sorensen, J. R., Wrinkle, R. D., & Gutierrez, A. (1998). Patterns of rule-violating behaviors and adjustment to incarceration among murderers. *The Prison Journal*, 78(3), 222–231.
- Sullivan, C. J., Piquero, A. R., & Cullen, F. T. (2012). Life before, but better: The lessons of developmental, life-course criminology for contemporary juvenile justice. *Victims and Offenders*, 7, 450–471.
- Thomas, J. (2018). *Youth transfer: The importance of individualized factor view*. Washington, DC: Campaign for Youth Justice.
- Toch, H. (1975). *Men in crisis: Human breakdowns in prison*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Toch, H. (2010). “I am not now who I used to be then”: Risk assessment and the maturation of long-term prison inmates. *The Prison Journal*, 90(1), 4–11.
- Weaver, B. (2019). Understanding desistance: A critical review of theories of desistance. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 25(6), 641–658.
- Wright, S., Crewe, B., & Hulley, S. (2016). Suppression, denial, sublimation: Defending against the initial pains of very long life sentences. *Theoretical Criminology*, 21(2), 225–246.
- Zamble, E. (1990). Behavior and psychological considerations in the success of prison reform. In J. W. Murphy & J. E. Dison (Eds), *Are prisons any better?: Twenty years of correctional reform* (pp. 129–145). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zamble, E. (1992). Behavior and adaptation in long-term prison inmates. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19(4), 409–425.

Authors' Biographies

Robert Johnson is Professor of Justice, Law and Criminology at American University, editor and publisher of BleakHouse Publishing, and an award-winning author of books, book chapters, and journal articles on crime and punishment, including works of social science, law, poetry, and fiction. He has testified or provided expert affidavits in capital and other criminal cases in many venues, including U.S. state and federal courts, the U.S. Congress, and the European Commission of Human Rights. He is best known for his books, *Hard Time*, *Condemned to Die*, and *Death Work*, the latter of which won the Outstanding Book Award of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Johnson holds a BA degree in psychology from Fairfield University and MA and PhD degrees in criminal justice from the School of Criminal Justice, Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York, where he has been designated a distinguished alumnus. He is the corresponding author (Department of Justice, Law, and Criminology, Kerwin 270, American University, Washington, DC, Robert.johnson@american.edu).

Margaret E. Leigey is Professor and Chair of the Department of Criminology at The College of New Jersey in Ewing, New Jersey. Her research focuses on the carceral experiences of special populations of prisoners, including long-term and older prisoners, women, and minors. Published by Rutgers University Press in 2015, her book, *The Forgotten Men*, examines the experiences of aging inmates serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. Her research has also been published in *The Prison Journal*, *Women & Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, and *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. She received a BA degree in criminology/pre-law from

Indiana University of Pennsylvania and MA and PhD degrees in criminology from the University of Delaware.