



Preface

The writing of any textbook is a process that undoubtedly is filled with both the thrill and enjoyment of an author exploring and explaining a topic that is close to his or her heart, as well as the challenges and frustrations of presenting material in a way that allows others to understand and come to love a topic. Both of these extremes have been present in the writing of this text. As a corrections scholar and teacher for more than 20 years, I find the field intriguing, exciting, and something about which I always want to know more. When teaching corrections courses, I strive to instill in my students the importance of the topic and, hopefully, a desire to know more. These are the goals behind my approach to the writing of this text.

This is a textbook that focuses on presenting information in a straightforward, easy-to-understand, and hopefully interesting way. This is not a textbook that contains every single fact, statistic, or issue that is present in American corrections. Undoubtedly, after reading the text, students will have more questions come to mind, and will be interested enough to seek answers to these emerging questions, whether on their own or through the assistance of the instructor. Any good textbook should both provide the basic information about a topic and instill a curiosity in students that leads them to want to learn more. I hope I have achieved that in this text.

One of the challenges of a corrections textbook is deciding the order in which to introduce and discuss topics. There are a number of ways of doing this, and the approach in this text represents just one. First, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 highlight what corrections is, and where it fits into our criminal justice system and larger society. Following this, Chapter 4 introduces a discussion of historical developments in corrections, both in the Western world and in the United States specifically. This background should help students better understand the how and why of the issues presented in each of the subsequent chapters of the book.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on structural aspects of the prison, which is our primary institution for the conduct of corrections. These chapters highlight the organizational structure and administration of prison, characteristics of inmates

that are brought under the supervision of correctional administrations, and the legal rights of inmates, all of which serve to structure the organization and activities of day-to-day life and work in corrections.

Following these structurally focused chapters, the discussion moves to issues of two relatively unique and in some ways rare aspects of corrections: violence and corrections for women. Violence is given its own chapter, to examine the common assumption (largely thanks to media portrayals) that prisons are exceedingly violent and dangerous places. While violence is certainly present in prisons, Chapter 8 shows that this is not an overwhelming day-to-day or minute-to-minute concern for inmates or staff. Chapter 9 focuses on women, the “important minority” of prison inmates. In simple terms, women represent less than 10 percent of prison inmates, yet present as unique and different from men in a number of important ways. While it would be possible to integrate the issues of women’s experiences into all of the other chapters, this would undoubtedly lead to discussions of men’s experiences, followed by a “but on the other hand, with women . . .” approach. In my eyes, that is a marginalizing approach, and thus I consciously decided to discuss women as the important minority in a chapter devoted solely to them.

Following this are discussions of corrections outside of prisons: in jails (Chapter 10); community corrections (Chapter 11); in a programming focus, whether in prison, jail, or community corrections (Chapter 12); and from the experience and perspective of those who work in corrections (Chapter 13).

Finally, emerging operational and policy issues are addressed in Chapter 14, with a look to the future and the hope of encouraging readers to think about what could or should be the new issues to be tackled by corrections.

Writing this text has been an experience of exhilaration, frustration, excitement, stress, and accomplishment. Corrections is a topic to which I was first introduced as a young, budding scholar, and it grabbed my attention and interest from the outset. That was at least in part due to the excitement my first professor brought to the course and the way that the basic issues were explained by the first text I read. I hope I have done my part in this text to introduce a new generation of scholars, practitioners, and simply educated members of society to the special world of corrections.

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