
PREFACE

The criminal justice system in the United States is currently experiencing extreme pressure to make serious and profound social changes. Much of this is motivated by social justice movements, but the system has needed dire restructuring for a number of decades in response to societal and political upheaval outside of jails and prisons, as well as changing attitudes towards existing drug laws. The push for reform extends to demands for changes in corrections. This textbook looks to bridge the traditional views in corrections with those that are rapidly emerging, even as this book goes to press.

One way that I am addressing this push for criminal justice reform is to include discussions of social justice issues as they relate to problems in corrections. For example, instead of merely presenting the sterile facts of Death Row and the death penalty from the perspective of prison administration, I have also included extensive discussions of the moral and ethical ramifications of capital punishment in Chapter 13. In order to offer balanced viewpoints, I have also included separate chapters on the prison experience from the perspective of prisoners and that of prison administration, staff, and officers.

It is important to note that as in the case of any less advantaged group in today's society, the labels we use are changing as well. Whereas the offensive label "mentally retarded" has been relegated to the uninformed past, more kind and better descriptive terms are now in use, including "intellectual disability" or "learning disability." There is currently a push to soften the terminology that we use to describe those who have been convicted and have served their sentence and their debt to society. For example, the Humanity First Movement has suggested that instead of using the term "convict," to alternatively use "formerly incarcerated person" to describe those who have spent time in prison. I have purposely not used that label in this textbook and have instead retained the terminology that is most commonly in use today within the Criminal Justice System so as to not confuse the reader, as there has not been a wholesale acceptance of some of the new terminology. I wholeheartedly support reform in a number of aspects of corrections, including overturning stigmatizing vocabulary, as long as any reform does not jeopardize the safety of staff or prisoners and detainees. However, I strongly feel that students should familiarize themselves with the terminology commonly used in criminal justice professions, however outdated it may be to those in social justice circles.

Included in vocabulary reform over the years in corrections that has been widely accepted are the terms we now use for those who directly are in charge of detainees

and prisoners. Whereas prison staff were historically called “jailers” (from the old Norman French term *gaolers*) or guards, jail and prison personnel are now more commonly called corrections or correctional officers in the United States, with the exception of some states that use the term “correctional police officer.” Of course, there are a number of colorful terms used by prisoners that are far less flattering, including “turnkey” and “hack,” along with names that include profanity. Wherever it is historically accurate to use the term “prison guard,” we will include it in this text. Whereas in any discussion of modern correctional systems, we will use “correctional officer.”

No matter which form of “officer” is used in jails and prisons, it is indicative of the continued push to further professionalize the vocations of those who work directly with prisoners. However, as we will note within this book, there are still jurisdictions in the United States where prison officers as young 18 years old with no experience can apply for positions in jails or prisons, as in the example of the New Mexico Department of Corrections (See <https://cd.nm.gov/divisions/training-academy/recruiting/correctional-officers/>). There is also the question of the professional standards in private jails or prisons, discussed in this book.

Another difference that sets this book apart from a standard corrections textbook is the extensive discussion of *penology*, the study of punishment and prison management. Though this is not a book on the courts and sentencing, it is not only instructing students on the practicalities of jail and prison administration, but also examines the social and psychological effects of the correctional system on those who occupy space within jails and prisons.

It also provides a peek behind the curtain of systems of punishment in other countries. This is done so as to allow the reader to critically think about how corrections in the United States, as imperfect as it may seem, is more humane (if that is possible in punishment) or less humane, as compared to other places in the world. Of course, it would be an impossible task to include all countries, and the ones chosen here, in some cases, are the most extreme examples on one end or the other of the spectrum of punishment. Most importantly, throughout this book, the reader should be asking themselves, whether examining corrections in the United States or abroad, what are the long term effects of incarceration on individuals, hence inhibiting efforts in rehabilitation and contributing to unacceptably high rates of recidivism. Or as Michel Foucault proposed¹, has contemporary punishment shifted from eroding the body to extinguishing the soul?

¹*Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The textbook chapters are designed to offer the richest reading experience for the different styles of learning students have today, including those with various learning disabilities. The organization of the chapters is as follows:

- **Chapter Objectives** to guide the reader to the most important goals of the chapter.
- **Key Terms** to define vocabulary that is commonly used in corrections. Instructors will note that we have also included definitions to some words that we cannot assume students are familiar with that are not related to corrections but will help them better grasp their relevance in the course.
- **Chapter Summaries** that very briefly give a quick overview of the chapter and direct the student to the more important general information contained in them.
- **A Stories from Behind Bars** feature to offer biographical or autobiographical tales of what it is like to be a guard, a detainee, or a prisoner. These are mostly first-hand accounts and so we should approach them as subjective truths of the writers, but their truths nevertheless.
- An **International Perspectives on Punishment and Corrections** feature that will offer cross-cultural, cross-national views, as well as a peek behind prison walls in countries around the world.
- **International Perspectives on Juvenile Justice** in Chapter 9 gives cross-cultural and cross-national views on treatment of juvenile offenders.
- **References and Suggested Readings** at the end of each chapter that are not only intended to cite the sources used but to encourage students to research topics further, as well as give them a start for their research papers in their class.
- **Resources** in some chapters with recommended videos, films, websites, or fictional stories that will offer different ways to understanding the textbook materials and lectures, as well as provide help for those who may be personally affected, as in the example of a list of children's books in Chapter 6 for the offspring of incarcerated parents.

Though it is not the main focus of this book, topics on social justice and criminal justice reform are included. Like other areas in criminal justice, criminology, psychology, social work, and sociology, there are a number of topics that require a closer look, as the public and practitioners increasingly are demanding answers. And our students who take this course will increasingly be asked to come up with solutions to social justice issues when they leave the university and enter their chosen profession, if it is in any field that is even remotely connected to the criminal justice system.

You will note that I have included “trigger warnings” in some chapters. Though we expect students in criminal justice, sociology, and social work to be able to handle the harsh realities of criminals and criminology, I do not want to

limit this textbook to those students. In the last several years, I have included a statement in my syllabi that there might be some materials discussed in the course (e.g., juvenile delinquency, child abuse, punishment and corrections) that might be more than unpleasant—they might trigger anxiety in students, particularly those who have been victimized. We cannot talk about corrections and punishment without diving into the unpleasant and disturbing underbelly of society. Nor should we want to avoid these topics, as besides policing, corrections has some of the biggest controversies that we can find in criminal justice. However, we have to present these materials with heightened sensitivity to those that might be affected by them.

Laura Pinto Hansen, Ph.D.

Instructor in Criminal Justice
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice
New Mexico Highland University

Professor Emerita in Criminal Justice
Department of Criminal Justice, Sociology, and Social Work
Western New England University