

Unit 4 Reading Assignment:
Please read Chapter's Nine, Ten and Eleven

Chapter 9
Corrections in America: A Portrait in Color

Learning Objectives

1-3

After reading this chapter:

LO 09-01: You will have a good picture of who is in prison, and of the racial and ethnic composition of the prison population.

LO 09-02: You will be able to discuss intelligently the differences between prison and jail, between probation and parole, and between federal and state prisons.

LO 09-03: You will understand the special problems involving Native Americans and the corrections system.

LO 09-04: You will be familiar with the unique issues related to women of color in prison.

LO 09-05: You will be able to discuss the challenges to offender reentry into the community

LO 09-06: You will be able to discuss what difference it makes when corrections personnel (prison guards, parole officers) are people of color.

LO 09-07: You will have a new perspective on the issues covered in Chapter Three.

Chapter Notes

The authors explore the vast overrepresentation of people of color in incarcerated populations. While many have explored this issue looking at the African American and white incarcerated populations, the authors emphasize the Latino overrepresentation in incarcerated populations as well. In addition to breaking down the incarcerated populations, they also explore the overrepresentation of people of color in new court commitments and population figures.

Explanations for this increasing overrepresentation are complex. The most obvious possibility is that African American criminality is increasing. This explanation has been soundly challenged by Tonry's work, which compares the stability of African American arrest rates since the mid 1970s to the explosive African American incarceration rates of the same period. He argues that a better explanation may be the racial impact of the war on drugs.

In addition to a review of the empirical studies exploring people of color and incarceration, the authors provide an in-depth discussion of prison gangs. They present the lay of the land of prison gangs as well as information concerning reforms, policies and legal challenges to prison gang management.

Chapter 10

Minority Youth and Crime: Minority Youth in Court

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter:

LO 10-01 You will understand the myths and realities about victimization of and crime by minority youth.

LO 10-02 You will be able to discuss the nuances of the relationship between the police and racial and ethnic minority youth.

LO 10-03 You will understand what recent research on racial disparities in the juvenile justice system tells us about the treatment of youth by the criminal justice system.

LO 10-04 You will be able to discuss the findings of recent research examining the reasons for racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Chapter Notes

The authors explore the empirical evidence of juvenile victims and offenders. They find that patterns in juvenile victimization and offending closely mirror patterns of adult victimization and offending. Juveniles of color, and particularly African American males, face a higher risk of victimization than white juveniles. This pattern is found for property crime, violent crime, and homicide. In fact, the homicide victimization rate for young African American females is higher than the rate for young white males. Although the common perception of the juvenile offender is that he or she is a person of color, the data discussed in this chapter indicate that whites constitute the majority of juvenile offenders for most crimes. The notable exceptions (among the more serious index offenses) are robbery, where more than half of those arrested are African American, and murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, where African American youth comprise nearly half of all arrestees.

Much of the racial and ethnic differences in juvenile victimization and offending rates can be attributed in large part to family and community characteristics. African American and Hispanic youth are more likely than white youth to be the victims of violent crime because they spend more time away from home, and are more likely to live in single-parent households and disadvantaged communities. Similarly, the higher rates of violent offending found among minority youth than white youth reflect the fact that minority youth are more likely to live in

disadvantaged neighborhoods, to be members of gangs, and to have weak bonds to social institutions such as schools.

The authors also explore disparities in juvenile justice processes. They provide an interesting overview of the current trend in law enforcement of gang databases. They also present a review of empirical data on disparate outcomes of the juvenile justice system. There is compelling evidence that racial minorities are treated more harshly than whites at various points in the juvenile justice process. Most importantly, minority youth are substantially more likely than white youth to be detained pending disposition, adjudicated delinquent, and waived to adult court. They also are sentenced more harshly than their white counterparts, at least in part because of the tendency of criminal justice officials to attribute their crimes to internal (personality) rather than external (environmental) causes.

Chapter 11

The Color of Justice

- I. Explaining Persistent Racial and Ethnic Disparities
 - 1. The criminal justice system is characterized by disparities based on race and ethnicity
 - 2. There are persistent patterns of racial and ethnic disparities in shootings, arrest, and sentencing
- II. Explaining the Disparities: Systematic Discrimination?
 - 1. Contextual discrimination
- III. Past and Present
 - 1. The worst forms of discrimination have been substantially reduced through new laws, court decisions, and political pressure
- IV. The Stubborn Persistence of Racial and Ethnic Disparities
 - 1. Despite the progress made in many areas, racial and ethnic disparities persist in the criminal justice system

Chapter Notes

This is the conclusion of the author's text. They recap the general argument of book, exploring persistent racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system. They return to the continuum presented in chapter one between disparities and systematic discrimination arguing, that neither those who contend that racial and ethnic discrimination has been eliminated from the criminal justice system, nor those who suggest that it still taints all interactions between criminal justice officials and the public they serve, are accurate in their claims. The state of the system lies somewhere between these two extremes. The heartening news is that the system seems to be improving, not regressing.

Despite significant advances, inequities still exist, and sometimes stunningly discriminatory actions still occur. The contemporary system does a better job now of addressing and resolving these anomalies, but it still has a long way to go.