# Imperative for Inclusion of Long Termers and Lifers in Research and Policy

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**Research Summary**

*Although numerous studies have highlighted the negative consequences of mass incarceration, life-course and criminal career research has largely failed to document psychological, social, and behavioral changes that occur during periods of incarceration. This oversight is particularly noteworthy in the case of individuals serving long sentences, as they spend a significant portion of the life course behind bars. The policies and programs targeting prisoners are seldom tailored to long termers and lifers, and we know little about effective interventions, or even how to measure effectiveness, for this population. By drawing on the relevant empirical research, this article underlines the importance of reorienting some research efforts and policy priorities toward individuals serving life or otherwise long prison sentences.*

**Policy Implications**

*During the last 20 years, the prevalence of life sentences has increased substantially in the United States. We argue that there are various benefits to developing policies that consider the challenges and issues affecting long termers and lifers. In addition to the ethical and human rights concerns associated with the treatment of this population, there are several pragmatic justifications for this argument. Long termers and lifers spend a substantial number of years in prison, but most are eventually released. These individuals can play a key role in shaping the prison community and potentially could contribute to the development of a healthier prison climate. Investment in the well-being of individuals serving long sentences may also have diffused benefits that can*

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*extend to their families and communities. It would be advantageous for correctional authorities and policy makers to consider the potentially pivotal role of long termers and lifers in efforts to mitigate the negative consequences of incarceration.*

**Keywords**
*life sentences, lifers, long termers, prisoners*

Incarceration rates have generally been on the rise in most developed countries during the past few decades (International Centre for Prison Studies, World Prison Brief Online, 2015),[1] but this trend has been particularly pronounced in the United States (National Research Council, 2014). The United States is the world leader in incarceration with approximately 2.2 million people incarcerated in the nation's state and federal prisons and jails; these figures reflect a nearly 500% increase in the incarceration rate during the past three decades (National Research Council, 2014). As a result of tough-on-crime policies (i.e., Three-Strikes legislation, "truth-in-sentencing" policies, and a reduced or delayed recourse to parole), the length of imposed sentences and the average time served by prisoners in the United States have increased substantially since the mid-1970s.[2] Between 1990 and 2009, the average time served increased by 37% for violent offenses, 36% for drug offenses, and 24% for property offenses (Pew Center on the States, 2012). As a result of these longer sentences, it is not surprising that the United States is faced with an increasingly aging prisoner population (Human Rights Watch, 2012) with distinctive needs and high economic, social, ethical, and health costs (Osborne Association, 2014).

The United States also sets itself apart from other countries with its excessive use of life sentences (and particularly life without the possibility of parole [LWOP]), which are generally employed sparingly in other parts of the world (Nellis, 2013) or even deemed unconstitutional in some nations (such as France, Germany, and Italy; Nellis, 2010). In 1987, on the basis of a set of guidelines developed by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, Congress eliminated the possibility of parole for individuals serving life sentences at the federal level. The prevalence of life sentences has been on the rise in the United States during the last few decades (Nellis and King, 2009). Nellis (2013) reported that in 1984, 34,000 individuals, or approximately 1 in every 13 prisoners, were serving life sentences; this figure increased to 159,520 prisoners in 2012 (or one in every nine prisoners), illustrating

1. Correctional statistics are accessible by selecting the continent and country of interest at the left of the map.

2. This issue is complex because sentence length can be measured in different ways (e.g., pronounced sentence versus time served). The evidence presented in this section suggests that the number of years that individuals spend in prison has increased in the United States. However, this information only can be documented accurately after release, and few follow-up studies have focused on individuals serving long sentences.

a more than fourfold increase in the number of individuals serving life sentences between 1984 and 2012.[3] Consistent with general correctional trends, blacks are over-represented among those sentenced to life in prison, making up as much as three-quarters of lifers in some states (Maryland: 77.4%, Georgia: 72%, Mississippi: 71.5%; Nellis, 2013). The population of lifers has grown despite declining crime rates during the last two decades, as well as shrinking prison populations in some states. For instance, in New York, although the prison population decreased by 19.6% between 2000 and 2010, the number of individuals serving LWOP sentences increased by 249% (Nellis, 2013). These figures draw attention to the growing population of prisoners serving multiyear, multidecade, or life sentences, and they highlight the importance of reexamining how long-term imprisonment impacts the study of criminal careers and life-course patterns, policy responses, effective programming, and preparation for release.

The United States is one of the few countries that imposes life sentences on juvenile offenders. In fact, no other country is known to have applied these sentences in recent years (amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/juvenile-life-without-parole). Nellis (2013) offered the most recent U.S. figures on juvenile life sentences. Nearly 7,900 individuals are serving a life sentence (with the possibility of parole) for crimes committed before 18 years of age, and approximately 2,500 juveniles are serving LWOP sentences. The number of juvenile cases transferred to the adult system nearly doubled between 1985 and 1994, leading to an increase in the number of minors sentenced to life in prison. LWOP sentences grew increasingly prevalent among the population of juveniles convicted of murder between 1980 and 2000 (1980: 0.14% of juvenile murderers were sentenced to LWOP, 1990: 2.86%, 2000: 9.05%; Human Rights Watch, 2005: 32). Figures on the prevalence of juvenile life sentences are not collected on a regular basis, and little is known about more recent trends (Nellis and King, 2009).[4]

In this article, we wish to draw attention to the fact that researchers and policy makers have largely ignored the issue of long termers and lifers. We argue that there are various benefits to understanding more clearly and addressing the distinctive needs of this population. These benefits are not necessarily centered on the reduction of recidivism, although they may indirectly result in reductions in reoffending in the short and long

3. It is important to highlight that these figures are likely to underestimate the number of individuals who will spend most of their lives in prison because these analyses typically exclude sentences that would "equate to one's life (e.g., a sentence of 90 years, after which one might be eligible for parole)" (Nellis and King, 2009: 2). Mauer, King, and Young (2004) regarded these individuals as "virtual lifers."

4. Recent Supreme Court decisions stipulated that sentencing juveniles to life in prison without the possibility of parole constitutes cruel and unusual punishment and violates the 8th Amendment (*Graham v. Florida*, 2010; *Miller v. Alabama*, 2012). We do not yet fully grasp the impact of these decisions, and trends will need to be monitored in upcoming years. A recent briefing paper published by The Sentencing Project (Rovner, 2014) suggested that although the Supreme Court ruling struck down laws in 28 states, most states are yet to implement any statutory reform or have replaced the juvenile LWOP sentences with multiple-decade sentences.

term. The treatment of prisoners more generally is a question that raises key ethical issues, and these concerns are particularly relevant to long termers and lifers. As argued by Tonry (2011), this is primarily an issue of social justice and human rights, and we are highly sympathetic to these concerns. However, we do not believe that the normative argument is necessarily incompatible with pragmatic considerations. Our call to pay more attention to long termers and lifers also entails several practical ramifications. Long termers and lifers spend a significant portion of their lives in prison. Notwithstanding the assumption that individuals serving life sentences will never leave prison, most are eventually released.[5] These individuals can make important contributions to the prison community and may potentially help to develop a healthier prison climate. The well-being of individuals serving long sentences is likely to have diffused benefits that extend to their families and communities. We conclude by discussing some promising directions for policy and research involving this population.

## Long Termers and Lifers: A Neglected Population

Important developments have been made in life-course and criminal career research in recent years. Researchers have moved beyond static measures of criminal career parameters, and more thorough and sophisticated statistical methods have been developed to address some of the challenges in capturing changes in life-course patterns. One of these advancements includes the recognition of patterns of intermittency in criminal careers and the importance of adjusting for "time at risk" in criminal career estimates (otherwise known as "exposure time" or "street time," i.e., periods during which individuals are free to engage in criminal behaviors; see Piquero, 2004). Piquero et al. (2001) found that the failure to account for exposure time may lead to the false conclusion that some individuals have ceased offending. Piquero (2004: 119) cautioned researchers "not to confuse incarceration stints for intermittency." Periods of incarceration often are regarded as inconvenient events in analyses of life-course and criminal career patterns. Statistical models adjust for time at risk. These adjustments are based on the premise that individuals are inactive in offending while incarcerated.

As a result of these assumptions, life-course and criminal career research has failed to examine and document changes that occur during periods of incarceration. This neglected dimension of the life course is particularly noteworthy for individuals serving long sentences as they spend a substantial number of years behind bars. Prison is one of many life events that may occur during the life course. For some individuals, this event takes up a substantial portion of their lives; they may frequently transition in and out of prison or can spend extended periods of time incarcerated. Significant changes may occur in their lives, and in their development as human beings, during these periods. Although some studies have

5. It is difficult to determine the percentage of lifers who are released. Drawing on stock and flow analyses, Mauer et al. (2004) estimated an average time served of 29 years among lifers admitted to prison in 1997.

investigated prison behavioral misconduct (Cunningham and Sorensen, 2006; Flanagan, 1980; Siennick, Mears, and Bales, 2013; Sorensen, Wrinkle, and Gutierrez, 1998; Toch, 2008; Zamble, 1992), virtually no research has investigated these behaviors within a life-course or criminal career framework.[6]

Criminal justice policy makers also have largely overlooked the distinctive profiles of lifers and long termers. Interventions and prison programming have not traditionally been designed to address the needs of these individuals. Flanagan (1995a [1992]: 5) argued that "for most of the history of institutional corrections, correctional policy makers put long-term prisoners at the bottom of the list of priorities." Flanagan offered several explanations for this lack of interest in long termers. First, because of the serious offenses that have led to their long sentences, these individuals often are regarded as less than ideal candidates for intervention programs. The public is not particularly optimistic about the potential for change among these prisoners. Second, because correctional resources often are scarce, which has been increasingly true during the current era of budget cuts and limited services, priority tends to be granted to those individuals who are approaching release. As a result, services provided to long termers and lifers are not prioritized (Gottschalk, 2014).

Nellis (2013: 20) explained the importance of considering lifers in reentry efforts:

> The emergence of reentry as a criminal justice policy issue in the last decade has largely ignored persons serving a life sentence. Typically, reentry programs are provided to persons within six months of their release date and offer transition services in the community upon release. However, for persons serving a life sentence, their release date is not fixed and they are often overlooked as policymakers and correctional administrators consider reentry strategies. Additionally, persons serving a life sentence have unique reentry needs based upon the long duration of their prison term. The failure to design reentry strategies for persons serving a life sentence neglects one in nine persons in prison by denying them the opportunity to participate in valuable programming.

In his interviews with 59 long termers (i.e., incarcerated for at least 5 years), Flanagan (1979: 235) reported that the men felt unanimously neglected by the Department of Corrections, that they were denied access to programs, and that "the entire life cycle of correctional service programs and procedures revolves around the short-term prisoner. As a result, the long termer is left without any meaningful mechanisms to achieve progress." The long termers in Flanagan's (1979: 235) study regarded themselves as "forgotten men" within the correctional system.

6. Two exceptions are noteworthy. Toch (2008) conducted a study on the prison careers of disruptive inmates in Scottish prisons and offered a case history analysis of officially recorded incidents over several years. Siennick et al. (2013) investigated the association between prison visits and disciplinary infractions, as well as the changes in these incidents across an 18-month period.

Although it is reasonable to presume that some of the needs and issues affecting long-term prisoners are similar to those encountered by all individuals exposed to the experience of incarceration, it is likely that "the element of *time* exacerbates all of the deprivations in the case of long-term prisoners and transforms them from noxious characteristics of imprisonment that can be accepted over the short-term into major problems of survival over the duration of a long prison sentence" (Flanagan, 1981: 212). Some stressors that impact prisoners more generally may be amplified for lifers and long termers. These prisoners are particularly affected by the threat of a permanent loss of relationships with family or friends, the challenges in establishing friendship networks in prison because of the high turnover rates resulting from transfers and releases, their unknown release date, and prolonged exposure to harmful dimensions of prison life (Flanagan, 1995b [1991]). Despite these potential challenges, we argue that long termers and lifers may constitute a valuable resource in the prison environment and could play a potentially key role in the improvement of prison life.

## What Constitutes a "Long Termer"?

Various authors have offered different definitions of long-term incarceration, and these definitions have shifted over time. Cowles and Sabbath (1996) discussed the difficulties in defining and operationalizing the concept of long termers. They argued that these challenges are enhanced by the use of indeterminate sentences with discretionary release decision making, the lack of consensus on the variable to be measured ("total sentence length, the time actually served by the offender, or the time remaining to be served": 44), and the disagreement regarding the specific number of years required to constitute long-term incarceration. Cowles and Sabbath (1996) also showed the disparity in definitions of long timers in prior research, ranging from 5 years of continuous time served to a life sentence. In the 1990s, Flanagan (1995a [1992]: 4) noted:

> Nearly 15 years ago, I felt confident in adopting a criterion of five years of continuous confinement to define long-term imprisonment. Five years was more than twice the average time served in state prisons in the U.S., and only 12% of the state prisoner population in 1974 had actually served five years or more. . . . Ten years later, other investigators defined long-term incarceration as seven years. . . . Given that the average prison sentence for violent felonies handed out in American state courts in 1988 ranged from 90 to 238 months, one could argue that, today, an expected time served of at least eight to 10 years would qualify a U.S. prisoner as a long-term inmate.[7]

The minimum number of years set forth in definitions of long-term incarceration has gradually increased over time (MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985: 6 years; Cunningham

7. It is important to mention that Flanagan's publications rely on data that were collected in the 1970s, a period during which the prison population was only beginning to build up.

and Sorensen, 2006: 10 years; Crayton, 2012: 15 years), and this figure tends to be lower in European research when compared with American studies (e.g., Dudeck et al., 2011: 5 years). This trend is reflective of the significant shifts that have occurred in American correctional policy during the last four decades and suggests a higher threshold for what is regarded as excessive punishment.

Three other issues arise in the definition of a long termer. First, prisoners' definitions of long-term incarceration may differ from definitions developed by researchers (Flanagan, 1979). The effects of incarceration are likely to be subjective, to be dependent on a host of factors, and to vary from one individual to another. Similar sentences can have disparate effects on different individuals, and the threshold after which prison becomes increasingly harmful (or increasingly routine) may vary across different individuals. Second, even if we can reach a consensus on the number of years that qualify for a long sentence, several scholars have suggested that it may be erroneous to regard lifers and long termers as a uniform group; individuals within this group may be characterized by diverse backgrounds, needs, levels of risk, and coping abilities (Flanagan, 1982; MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985). Third, the actual outcome of pronounced sentences is uncertain. Some individuals sentenced to LWOP may receive a commutation and be released. In contrast, individuals sentenced to life with the possibility of parole, or not sentenced to life imprisonment at all, may spend their lives in prison. These latter two scenarios have become increasingly likely in recent years given that the number of state prisoners who die in prison has increased by 17% between 2001 and 2011 (from 2,869 deaths to 3,353 deaths); these figures reflect a 5% increase in the mortality rate per 100,000 state prisoners during this period (from 242 to 254; Noonan and Ginder, 2013).

From a practical viewpoint, it is easy to understand why it would be desirable to establish a specific threshold to define long-term incarceration. However, these efforts miss a larger point: Prison life needs to be examined within the life-course framework. Often, we presume that lives are halted when individuals enter prison, but this may be a flawed assumption; life-course transitions may occur, psychological well-being may fluctuate, criminal careers may persist, and the desistance process may unfold during periods of confinement.

To summarize, we know that there has been a significant rise in the number of individuals incarcerated in the United States, as well as a substantial increase in the average sentence length imposed on these individuals. The sentencing framework typically presumes that many individuals will spend their lives in prison. Resources tend to be allocated to individuals who are approaching release, which has led to the neglect of a rapidly growing population of prisoners. In the following sections, we argue that increased investment in the needs of long termers and lifers may entail significant short- and long-term benefits for life inside the correctional facility, for progress toward desistance, as well as diffused benefits to community members affected by the experience of incarceration. We also underline the importance of investigating changes in life-course and criminal career patterns during

periods of incarceration, as well as the need to understand more clearly how individuals can make progress toward desistance while incarcerated.

## Why Should We Pay More Attention to Long Termers and Lifers?

The most comprehensive studies conducted with long termers and lifers were carried out several decades ago. We wish to stress that most of the research presented in the next sections may be based on data that are now dated and that the issues that impact contemporary prisoners (and particularly long-term prisoners) may be drastically different from what they were in the 1970s and 1980s. Overcrowding is more common, mental health issues are more prevalent, and the prisoner population is more racially and ethnically diverse (National Research Council, 2014). Individuals serving long sentences have not been the focus of research for a long time, and this shortcoming again highlights the need to reorient some of our research efforts toward this population.

### *Sentences of Long Termers and Lifers Represent Many Life-Years in Prison*

For long termers and lifers, a prison sentence does not constitute a short absence from ordinary life in the community. First and foremost, these prisoners must be regarded as individuals who will spend a considerable portion of their lives in prison (Flanagan, 1982; Toch, 1977). By drawing on prison data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Mauer et al. (2004) estimated that of those lifers who are released, return to the community occurs after approximately three decades of incarceration. It may not be appropriate to expose long termers and lifers to the same programs and services intended for individuals serving short sentences (e.g., programs of short duration that target specific skills; see Flanagan, 1982). Flanagan (1982) argued that a more productive approach is to set out long-term goals for long termers and lifers. He discussed the importance of using prison time in a strategic way:

> [I]t is incumbent on the correctional system to work with the offender to plan a worthwhile career, one that will be beneficial to both the offender and others, and that will be transferrable and capable of supporting the offender upon his eventual release. Moreover, there is no reason why, during their long imprisonment, many long-term inmates cannot make a substantial contribution to society through help provided to fellow inmates. (p. 89)

The prison career approach is not a novel idea. It was raised by Hans Toch several decades ago (see Toch, 1977, 1995), although the evidence to suggest that this approach is frequently applied in our current system is limited. This paradigm encourages the prisoner to "pursue a meaningful life in prison" (Flanagan, 1995b [1991]: 114). Flanagan (1982) described the situation of prisoners who complete education or training programs in prison and who move on to becoming instructors to other prisoners. This transition from student to teacher is a prime example of a beneficial use of prison time, and it has the added advantage of eventually enabling prisoners to provide many of the services offered in the

facility (Toch, 1977). It would be strategic for long termers and lifers to make productive use of their time in prison by participating in various forms of education, training, and service. The opportunity to exercise a meaningful role can be highly rewarding for the prisoner. Also, it is likely to benefit fellow prisoners and staff as it promotes collaborative work with staff members (Toch, 1977). The feeling that one has made some form of contribution to the prison community also may be beneficial in preparing individuals for their eventual release. The benefits of involving long termers and lifers in the routine activities of the prison will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### *Many Long Termers and Lifers Do Not Pose a Distinctive Threat to Public or Prison Safety*

The type of risk posed by prisoners can be classified in two categories: (a) threats to the safety of the prison environment (correctional risk) and (b) risk posed to the outside community (community risk). Individuals serving long sentences do not necessarily pose a significant threat to either. Although correctional administrators pay more attention to correctional risk, politicians are more concerned with the community risk posed by former prisoners, particularly those convicted of violent offenses. The paucity of longitudinal studies documenting prison and community behaviors across several periods of the life course is noteworthy, and it has limited our understanding of risks posed by long termers and lifers.

Concerns with community risks posed by lifers in particular are illustrated in parole board decisions. A study conducted by Stanford University researchers found that as of 2010, California lifers had less than a one-in-five chance (18%) of being approved for release by the parole board (Weisberg, Mukamal, and Segall, 2011). They also reported that this figure was less than 20% for most of the period between 1980 and 2010. In addition, the enactment of Marsy's Law (California Victims' Bill of Rights Act of 2008) resulted in greater delays for subsequent hearings when individuals were denied parole (Weisberg et al., 2011).[8]

To what extent do recipients of long sentences pose a threat to the outside community? Some research has suggested that lifers are not necessarily characterized by at-risk profiles and extensive histories of violence. Mauer et al. (2004) argued that California's Three-Strikes law resulted in life sentences for many individuals convicted of a nonviolent crime as the third strike (57.5%, $n = 4{,}225$, of all Three-Strikes cases). Although most lifers were convicted of a violent crime, 39% (at the federal level) and 4% (at the state level) were convicted of a drug offense. In addition, being convicted of a violent crime may not necessarily be indicative of a high risk of sustained violence (Gottschalk, 2014). Mauer et al. (2004: 13) provided several examples of scenarios involving lifers who were convicted

8. The Victims' Bill of Rights Act of 2008, otherwise known as Marsy's Law, is a legal measure that amended the California Constitution to expand the legal rights of victims. It also provided parole boards with additional powers to deny parole to prisoners.

of violent offenses but for whom the life sentence seemed "overly harsh and inappropriate" because of either doubts about their culpability or doubts about the limited risk of future violence posed by these individuals. These include battered women, mentally ill offenders, minors, and individuals sentenced under "accountability" policies (e.g., legal provisions that allow life sentences for participants who play a secondary role in a crime and who may not be aware of the primary offender's intent to use lethal violence).

Data and research examining the recidivism rates of released lifers and long termers have been limited, and existing studies on this topic tend to be dated, rely on small samples, use short follow-up periods, or present other methodological shortcomings. Mauer et al. (2004) found that the rearrest rate of released lifers was lower than that of other releasees; Mauer et al.'s results suggested that only one in five lifers (20.6%) released in 1994 was rearrested, compared with a rearrest rate of 67.5% for all individuals released from prison. They added that "lifers—90% of whom are incarcerated for a violent offense—are no more likely to be rearrested for a violent offense (18%) than property (21.9%) or drug offenders (18.4%)" (Mauer et al., 2004: 24). By drawing on release data from New York State between 1985 and 2008 and using a 3-year follow-up period, Kim (2012) reported the return-to-custody rate of individuals originally convicted of murder was much lower than that of other releasees (17.4% vs. 41.2%). In addition, most returns to custody among individuals originally convicted of murder occurred as a result of technical violations (86.2%; see also Crayton, 2012). In a Dutch study, Snodgrass, Blokland, Haviland, Nieuwbeerta, and Nagin (2011) found that when including relevant control variables, reoffending rates did not differ between matched groups having served short and long sentences. When excluding controls, individuals who served longer sentences were less likely to reoffend (Snodgrass et al., 2011). In a 5-year follow-up of 294 Canadian lifers and long termers (i.e., serving determinate and indeterminate sentences of 10 or more years), Weekes (1995) found that 58% of the released prisoners were not rearrested or reconvicted, approximately 20% were readmitted for a technical violation, and approximately 22% were readmitted for a new offense. Among the 75 releasees who had been incarcerated for murder, 14.6% ($n = 11$) were reconvicted of a crime, but none of these convictions entailed murder or manslaughter. Similarly, Weisberg et al. (2011) found the recidivism risk (measured by the recommitment rate to state prisons) of recently released California lifers to be minimal (1% recidivism rate for lifers vs. 48.7% for the overall prisoner population).

Crayton (2012: 80) raised the important question of "whether these lower rates of return are achieved at an earlier point—or points—during a person's long sentence." By drawing on release data from New York State between 2000 and 2004, Crayton (2012) found that the rearrest rates of individuals convicted of violent and nonviolent offenses became comparable after 10 years of prison time. She also failed to find significant differences in the survival rates (i.e., time to recidivism) between long termers (sentences of 15 or more years) and other prisoners, suggesting that time served was a poor predictor of recidivism. Crayton's (2012) analyses did, however, suggest that long termers were more likely to

return to prison as a result of parole violations. Overall, the findings from these studies suggest that individuals serving long sentences do not seem to pose a distinctive threat to the community when compared with other former prisoners.[9] However, methodological shortcomings (e.g., selection effects and a lack of comprehensive control variables such as age and criminal history) have made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the recidivism risk of released long termers and lifers (National Research Council, 2014). Furthermore, our understanding of the reasons explaining the lower recidivism rates of individuals serving long sentences remains limited. Is it a result of aging and increased rationality (Shover, 1996), improved social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993), shifts in self-identity (Maruna, 2001), or other cognitive changes such as the openness to change (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002)? Life-course research, namely long-term follow-ups of individuals serving long sentences, can provide some insight into some of these questions.

The main problem remains that it may not be possible to create a matched sample that would yield a suitable comparison with released lifers. We know that age is a particularly crucial control variable in these comparisons. Released lifers tend to be older at the time of release because of their long sentences. A comparison group matched on age would inevitably include one of two types of individuals: (a) individuals with convictions later in adulthood, indicating late onset offending or persistent criminality beyond the point where most offenders desist from crime, or (b) "virtual lifers," that is, long termers who have served sentences that are of comparable length to that of lifers. In the first scenario, matched individuals may present profiles that are starkly different from lifers; in the second, it may be inappropriate to regard those long termers who spend a similar number of years in prison as lifers as a distinct group. Thus, we ask: Are the efforts to compare the recidivism rates of released lifers with those of a matched sample futile?

In addition to the potential threat posed by lifers and long termers to public safety, some research has explored the correctional risk exhibited by this group. Although few empirical studies have contrasted the profiles of long- versus short-term prisoners, the limited studies that do exist have found that the former group does not seem to be characterized by more at-risk profiles. For instance, Weisberg et al. (2011) reported that 75% of lifers were classified as low risk by the California Static Risk Assessment instrument, a figure that is starkly different from that of the general prisoner population (28% were classified as low risk).

When focusing specifically on prison misconduct, Flanagan (1979: 131) found that "the median annual infraction rate of the short-term prisoner group is nearly double that of the long-term inmate group"; this trend persisted when controlling for the length

9. Similar findings emerge for juveniles. Little evidence suggests that juvenile lifers are "super predators" (Human Rights Watch, 2005); 59% of all juveniles sentenced to LWOP were first-time offenders, and 26% were involved in incidents in which the individual had minimal involvement (e.g., he or she lacked the knowledge or intent to engage in murder).

of incarceration period. Subsequent analyses showed that infractions committed by long termers were of a more serious nature, although this was found to be a weak association. Later research conducted by Toch and Adams (1989) suggested that prison misconduct was more prevalent among the younger long termers. One study contrasting the prevalence of prison misconduct between lifers with and without the possibility of parole did not find any significant differences between the two groups (Sorensen and Wrinkle, 1996).

Cunningham and Sorensen (2006) explained the rationale behind the increased security measures targeted at LWOP prisoners, namely, that these individuals are expected to engage in prison misconduct because they have "nothing to lose." By drawing on a sample of prisoners in Florida, the authors compared the disciplinary behaviors of nearly 2,000 LWOP prisoners with those of approximately 7,000 prisoners serving long sentences (minimum of 10 years). Overall, the prevalence of aggravated assault was low among LWOP inmates (0.6%). The results also showed that individuals sentenced to less than 20 years were more likely to be involved in prison misconduct and violence, whereas those sentenced to more than 20 years were less susceptible to violent behaviors; LWOP prisoners found themselves somewhere between these two extremes, even when controlling for other potential risk factors for prison misconduct. These findings prompted Cunningham and Sorensen (2006: 701) to assert that "there is no basis for concluding that LWOP inmates are "superpredatory" or would constitute a proportionally greater hazard to correctional staff than other long-term inmates."[10]

In short, although limited in scope, the available research has suggested that long termers and lifers do not pose a greater threat to the community or to the prison environment when compared with other prisoners. As such, the argument that these individuals would not be amenable to interventions is not substantiated by existing empirical evidence.

### *Limited State of Knowledge on the Developmental and Life-Course Changes that Occur Throughout a Prison Sentence*

It is remarkable to observe the important gaps in our knowledge regarding the impact of long-term incarceration on prisoners. In our view, contemporary life-course studies are needed to shed some light on this issue. Incarceration tends to be regarded as a homogenous experience, but conditions of confinement vary greatly across facilities, states, and countries. These divergences render the assessment of the impact of incarceration on prisoners particularly challenging. The National Research Council (2014: 200) concluded that "some poorly run and especially harsh prisons can cause great harm and put prisoners at significant risk."

The potential harmful effects of imprisonment have been discussed by many researchers. According to Sykes (1958: 286–292), the "pains of imprisonment" include the deprivations of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. The

10. The lower rate of violence among LWOP prisoners may result from the tendency of other prisoners to avoid conflict with these individuals because of the perception that they have "nothing to lose."

constant feeling of loneliness can cause significant distress among prisoners (Johnson and McGunigall-Smith, 2008). Liebling (2011: 536) describes a "new and distinctive kind of 'prison pain' . . . consisting of a kind of existential and identity crisis brought on by both the length and uncertainty of contemporary sentences, but also by the restricted facilities available." Most empirical studies and meta-analyses that have investigated the impact of incarceration (and length of incarceration) on recidivism have found that imprisonment has either no impact or undesirable effects on subsequent offending (Bales and Piquero, 2012; Gendreau, Goggin, and Cullen, 1999; Nagin, Cullen, and Jonson, 2009; National Research Council, 2014; Villetaz, Killias, and Zoder, 2006; Weatherburn, 2010). Gendreau et al. (1999: 7) concluded that prison may promote offending behavior by damaging the "psychological and emotional well-being of inmates" (see also Maruna and Toch, 2005). Clemmer (1958) introduced the concept of *prisonization*, which refers to the process by which prisoners adopt the customs, values, and norms of prison, some of which may be inappropriate for life on the outside. One of the major concerns of long termers relates to the maintenance of a positive self-image and self-esteem despite the challenges posed by the prison setting over long periods of time (Flanagan, 1981).

***Trauma and mental health.*** The significant prevalence of traumatic experiences and mental health disorders among the prison population has been underlined in various studies (e.g., Fazel and Danesh, 2002; Haney, 2006; James and Glaze, 2006; National Research Council, 2014; Wolff, Shi, and Siegel, 2009). Deterioration of mental health during the course of a prison sentence has been linked to overcrowding and solitary confinement (Haney, 2006; National Research Council, 2014). Others have drawn attention to the fact that individuals serving life sentences are characterized by distinctive mental health needs (Dye and Aday, 2013; Liem and Kunst, 2013; Taylor, 1986, Yang, Kadouri, Révah-Lévy, Mulvey, and Falissard, 2009). Mauer et al. (2004) drew on data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics to underline the greater prevalence of mental health problems among lifers when compared with the general population of prisoners; nearly one in five lifers had a mental illness versus one in six in the general prisoner population. Dudeck et al. (2011) also found that the prevalence of trauma is significantly higher among long-term prisoners when compared with the general population and with short-term prisoners. Long termers are likely to experience the repercussions of trauma more intensely than other individuals exposed to traumatic incidents in part because of the heightened risk of exposure to new traumatic experiences (Dudeck et al., 2011). Liem and Kunst (2013: 336) reported a "specific cluster of mental health symptoms" among 25 released lifers, including "chronic PTSD . . . , institutionalized personality traits (distrusting others, difficulty engaging in relationships, hampered decision-making), social–sensory disorientation (spatial disorientation, difficulty in social interactions) and social and temporal alienation (the idea of 'not belonging' in social and temporal setting)."

Although these studies emphasized the greater prevalence of mental health impediments and trauma among individuals serving long sentences, little is known about whether

prison time leads to the development of these problems or whether it merely exacerbates a preexisting condition (Schnittker, Massoglia, and Uggen, 2012). When controlling for health problems prior to incarceration, Massoglia (2008) found that incarcerated individuals were more likely to suffer from infectious diseases and stress-related illnesses, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia. These results compelled Massoglia to conclude that imprisonment exerted a negative impact on health outcomes. Similarly, Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney's (2012) results suggested immediate and persistent effects of incarceration on major depression. Schnittker et al. (2012) found that individuals with histories of incarceration had a higher rate of exposure to early risk factors such as substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and childhood poverty. Although incarceration was found to be linked to mood disorders, some psychiatric disorders that were prevalent among former inmates emerged earlier in the life course, prior to incarceration. Perhaps most relevant to the case of long termers and lifers, some significant associations between incarceration and lifetime disorders dissipated when focusing on disorders that had occurred in the previous 12 months, suggesting an attenuated relationship between incarceration and psychiatric disorders over time. These findings draw attention to the complexity of the incarceration–mental health link and stress the need to further investigate the long-term effects of incarceration.

Despite the important contributions of these recent studies, our understanding of how psychological well-being and other health outcomes vary over the course of long periods of incarceration remains limited. Some prisoners report having *been* in prison before *coming* to prison, highlighting thinking styles that may promote offending behavior. We know little about whether prison reinforces these cognitions or breaks them down over extended periods of time. Although we know that prison is a highly stressful environment (Hassine, 2004; Johnson and Toch, 1982; National Research Council, 2014), no study has, to our knowledge, conducted systematic and regular assessments of changes in cognitions as well as physical and mental health indicators during the course of a prison sentence with a reasonably sized, generalizable sample of prisoners. This shortcoming of prison research has particularly limited our understanding of the progress or relapses exhibited by long termers and lifers throughout their sentences.

***Prisoner coping and adaptation strategies.*** Not all research has suggested deterioration in the well-being and adjustment of prisoners over the course of extended periods of incarceration. In a comparison of forensic–psychiatric examinations conducted with a sample of 87 long-term German prisoners at the beginning and end of their sentences (with an average sentence length of 14.6 years), (2012) found a decline in the prevalence of psychiatric disorders over time. Emotional stability improved between the first and last assessments, and depression and aggressiveness decreased. Dettbarn concluded that "there was no evidence that longer duration of sentence per se led to physical illness or a diminution of cognitive capacity" (2012: 238). This study is, however, limited by the absence of a control group, as well as by the fact that the analyses are mainly descriptive, do not include any control

variables, and draw on only two data collection points. In addition, the German prison setting is quite different from that of American correctional facilities.

In their comparison of the profiles of short- and long-term prisoners, MacKenzie and Goodstein (1985) found that prisoners who had recently arrived in the facility and who were anticipating a long sentence were most susceptible to stress, anxiety, fear, and depression, whereas long termers and lifers who had already spent several years in prison developed coping mechanisms to adapt to the incarceration experience (see also Leigey, 2010; Zamble, 1992; Zamble and Porporino, 1988). The negative effects of incarceration (and particularly long-term incarceration) can be moderated through the conditions of detention and the varying adaptation techniques employed by different prisoners. For instance, Flanagan (1981) found that increased maturity and interactions with other long termers led to a distinct outlook among long-term prisoners, who were characterized by specific attitudes and behaviors designed to facilitate survival in prison. Examples of such attitudes and behaviors included conflict avoidance inside the prison and a desire to use prison time in a fruitful manner in contrast to merely "serving time." These findings also highlight the erroneous assumption that all long termers and lifers constitute a uniform group (MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985).

Similarly, in a comprehensive longitudinal follow-up of 25 long termers, Zamble (1992) found that some prisoners learned to adapt to the circumstances of long-term incarceration. These individuals maintained contacts with the outside world, showed reduced emotional problems as well as "stress-related medical problems," and were involved in fewer incidents involving disciplinary action. While making clear that these findings should not be used as a justification for increased recourse to long-term incarceration, Zamble (1992: 423) concluded that "the special conditions of imprisonment for long and indefinite periods may actually promote the development of more mature ways of coping and behaving."

Liebling (1999: 287) argued that research that has found minimal effects of incarceration on prisoner well-being is partly biased by issues of operationalization of harm, and "the failure of research on the effects of prison life to ask the right questions or to ask in an appropriate kind of way how imprisonment is experienced." Because long-term follow-ups of prisoners are infrequent, the body of knowledge on the impact of incarceration on long termers and lifers is particularly lacking. Although many of these studies are characterized by methodological shortcomings (e.g., small sample size) or are dated, they suggest that periods of incarceration, if used adequately, can promote positive change. Once prisoners have come to terms with the fact that they will be incarcerated for a significant number of years, they may seek a new meaning to their lives (Carceral, 2006; Hassine, 2004). Significant cognitive and behavioral changes may occur with adequate support from staff, as well as access to programs and activities that stimulate personal development (Toch, 2010).

Sampson (2011) argued that there has been an ideological shift in incarceration research during the course of the last few decades, from a focus on the potential benefits of imprisonment (e.g., the deterrence and incapacitation paradigms) to the undesirable or

criminogenic effects of incarceration. He argued that although we have gained a great deal of knowledge from these two approaches, it has come "at the price of complexity and a kind of stalemate of dueling advocates that view incarceration either as 'good' or 'bad'" (p. 824). This dualistic view may not capture the intricacies of the prison experience and its consequences. More importantly, it limits our understanding of how prison time can be used strategically to produce desirable outcomes.

In short, although much of the research that has examined patterns of change among prisoners across time has not shown strong evidence of deterioration among those serving extended sentences (and have, in some studies, shown improved coping and reduced recidivism rates), these conclusions must be interpreted with caution. This research is limited in scope. Many of these studies were conducted outside of the United States, where the prison populations differ in both size and racial composition. Varying definitions of long-term incarceration have been employed in these different studies. The measurement of harm has been less than ideal (Liebling, 1999). In addition, most of this research has relied on data collected several decades ago. To our knowledge, no contemporary U.S.-based study (i.e., conducted in the last 25 years) has found positive effects of incarceration. However, for this same period, we do not know of any systematic longitudinal study of long-term prisoners. The contemporary prison setting is quite different from what it was 30 or 40 years ago. The significant increases in the number of individuals incarcerated and the length of prison sentences have led to a new set of problems associated with the management of the prison population, namely, issues of overcrowding, scarce resources, and limited access to programs and services. If the psychological well-being of prisoners deteriorates over time, then it is crucial to find ways to counter these negative repercussions and to use prison time as a means of stimulating positive change. Furthermore, if it is true that lifers may "act as a stabilizing rather than disruptive force in the prison environment" (Cunningham and Sorensen, 2006: 683), then these individuals have the potential to play a key role in minimizing the negative consequences of incarceration.

### *Long Termers and Lifers: Potentially Valuable Leaders in the Prison Environment*

Because they will spend many years in prison, long termers and lifers are important assets to the prison community and can become influential leaders in this environment. Leadership is a quality that shapes and enriches any given community, and the prison community is no exception. Given their prolonged presence in prison, long termers and lifers are ideal candidates for positions of leadership and mentorship in this environment. The changes that occur as a result of adopting a leadership position may lead to cognitive restructuring, attitudinal changes, improved behavioral outcomes, and an enhanced prison climate. The leadership role also may, inadvertently, lead to good behavior and early release. One example of the significant influence that can be exerted by prisoners engaged in a leadership role was observed by Lila Kazemian in a French jail. In this particular facility, the prison director selected prisoners to act as mentors in their wing. The responsibilities of these individuals

were comparable with that of a resident advisor in a dorm; prisoners in the wing were encouraged to consult with these mentors with any concerns prior to contacting the prison director or other staff members.

Sixty years ago, Cressey (1955) highlighted the value of involving prisoners and former prisoners in the rehabilitation process of fellow inmates and former inmates. He discussed the importance of group interventions in the correctional setting. Riessman (1965) later underlined the benefits of the "helper therapy principle," namely the positive individual outcomes that emerge as a result of being in the "helper role." These benefits include greater self-esteem, improved mood and psychological well-being, an enhanced sense of purpose, the development of a new identity, and modified (and positive) reactions and treatment that occur as a result of the new role (see also Piliavin, 2003; Skovholt, 1974).

The body of research investigating the impact of mentoring on offending outcomes is limited. Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) argued that these studies often have employed flawed research designs (i.e., small-scale studies with limited generalizability or lack of inclusion of a control group). In their review of research on the effectiveness of mentoring programs on offending outcomes, Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) found that mentoring may reduce recidivism but that these programs are most effective when integrated into a broader multimodal intervention. Maruna's (2001) study of desistance suggested that the desisting self-narrative frequently involves adopting a mentoring role. Desisting offenders in Maruna's study were more susceptible to adopting the role of a helper. By drawing on a sample of 228 formerly incarcerated individuals in New York, Lebel (2007) found that the helper role was incompatible with criminal attitudes and behaviors. More than half of the individuals in Lebel's sample (58.2%) expressed the desire to engage in initiatives that would enable them to take on the role of a helper. Lebel (2007) also found feelings of remorse to be a strong predictor of the helper orientation, suggesting that coming to terms with the consequences and harm caused by past offenses may be required before an individual can engage in the role of helper. Lebel (2007: 20) concluded that the helper orientation "appears to transform individuals from being part of 'the problem' into part of 'the solution.'" Similarly, Toch (2010) found that "altruistic activity" (i.e., activities that are designed to help individuals in need) resulted in many psychological benefits for the helpers, including improved self-esteem, a greater sense of purpose, and a sense of accomplishment (see also Roberts et al., 1999). Overall, assuming a mentor role has the potential to empower prisoners in an environment where they often may feel that their power has been taken away.

In addition to the potential positive effects on the helpers, interventions guided by long termers and lifers also benefit fellow prisoners. The helper is more likely to establish stronger bonds with participants if they share common past or current experiences. In this regard, other prisoners may perceive long termers and lifers as having more standing and integrity than practitioners who have not experienced incarceration. As such, long termers and lifers may be in a better position to exert a profound impact on their fellow prisoners.

The therapeutic community model is a good example of the type of intervention that serves both helpers and helpees (De Leon, 2000).

In short, as argued by Toch (2010: 276), "prisons have a great deal to gain—and little to lose—in multiplying the opportunities for inmates to engage in altruistic activities that add a human face (or a humane face) to corrections." Toch also advocated for the creation of special groups for lifers, "for whom altruistic activities can become the valued core of an in-house career" (p. 277). It may be that long termers and lifers are already contributing to the enhancement of the prison community, but to our knowledge, virtually no data (other than anecdotal) exist to verify this claim.

Beyond the effects on the prisoners' well-being, leadership roles granted to individuals serving long sentences also may contribute to an improved prison climate, which may entail benefits for both staff and prisoners. Because long termers and lifers have longer and more sustained exposure to the prison environment, they can play an important role in shaping the prison climate. It is reasonable to presume that prisoner maladjustment problems and other behavioral issues (mental health, substance use, violence, confrontational attitudes, etc.) would adversely affect the prison climate and create a more stressful work environment for correctional staff. Crewe, Liebling, and Hulley (2011) suggested that the links between prisoner and staff perceptions of prison quality of life need to be understood more fully, and more research is needed on this topic.

### *Mitigating the Long-Term Collateral Consequences of Incarceration: Impact on Families and Communities*

The effects of incarceration extend beyond the prison walls. Scholars have highlighted the collateral consequences of incarceration (National Research Council, 2014; Travis, 2005; Travis and Waul, 2003), which are likely to be amplified with longer prison sentences. The undesirable consequences of imprisonment expand beyond the prisoners to their intimate social networks (family and friends) and communities. Inspired by Clemmer's (1958) work, Comfort (2008) introduced the concept of "secondary prisonization," which refers to the process by which the prison world infiltrates and transforms the personal lives of the families of prisoners. The collateral effects of incarceration can be classified into three broad categories: (a) the disintegration of family ties, (b) the adverse impact on the children of prisoners, and (c) the destabilizing effect on communities. Virtually no research has examined whether these effects are distinct for prisoners serving life or otherwise long sentences, and little is known about whether these collateral consequences are amplified over time or whether families, children, and communities adapt to the permanent absence of the incarcerated individual.

***Deterioration of family ties during long periods of incarceration.*** Prior work has underlined the negative impact of incarceration on social bonds (family, work, school, and the community; see King, Mauer, and Young, 2005; National Research Council, 2014;

Sampson and Laub, 1997; Travis, 2005; Travis and Petersilia, 2001).[11] Gust (2012) summarized the ways in which imprisonment impacts the family. It exerts an adverse effect on family structure and living arrangements, strains family relationships, creates a financial burden, causes significant emotional stress, and leads to stigma, which impacts the prisoner as well as his or her family members. Mothers with incarcerated partners are more likely to experience economic and housing insecurity (Geller and Franklin, 2014; Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, and Mincy, 2009; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, and Garfinkel, 2011). They are more likely to be exposed to increased levels of stress and to develop mental health issues (Wildeman et al., 2012). Changes in caregiver and living arrangements (which tend to be more common among children with incarcerated mothers; see Mumola, 2000) can cause significant disruptions in the lives of children. Marriages are more likely to dissolve among incarcerated than nonincarcerated men (Western, 2006), although it is unclear whether this association is more pronounced for individuals serving long sentences. Some studies have highlighted the heterogeneous effects of incarceration on partners and children, which partly result from variations in family systems, parenting styles, and individual propensities (Giordano, 2010; Turanovic, Rodriguez, and Pratt, 2012; Turney and Wildeman, 2015).

How much is known about the deterioration or reinforcement of family ties over time? We know little, given the scarcity of longitudinal follow-ups of prisoners and their families across various periods of the life course. Flanagan (1979: 234) explained that "the basic problem is this: [F]amily members and friends who can (and often do) wait for three years cannot (and often do not) wait for thirteen years." Some authors have suggested that although family members and friends often are perceived as a "source of strength" for prisoners, many of these relationships do not survive long prison sentences (Bales and Mears, 2008; Flanagan, 1982).

Some research has indicated that more frequent visits during the course of a prison sentence are associated with a reduced likelihood of recidivism (Bales and Mears, 2008), as well as other outcomes linked to a successful reintegration into the community after release (Wooldredge, 1999). The importance of maintaining family ties in reentry efforts is emphasized in numerous studies on the desistance and reintegration processes of formerly incarcerated individuals (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Travis, 2005; Travis and Petersilia, 2001). However, the knowledge base on the short- and long-term effects of family visits on prison behaviors is limited. In an analysis of the link between visitations and prison infractions, Siennick et al. (2013: 435–437) found that the probability of prison misbehaviors declined before visits, increased immediately after the visits, and progressively dropped again to average levels of infractions, suggesting that although visits may reduce the "pains of imprisonment," they "may not have the lasting effects needed to produce sustained

11. Some studies have highlighted the caveats of this relationship. For instance, Edin, Kefalas, and Reed's (2004) study suggested that incarceration was not necessarily detrimental to relationships that were harmed by the incarcerated partner's lifestyle choices prior to prison.

improvements in behavior." More longitudinal analyses are needed to assess whether prison visitations and frequent contacts with the family exert a lasting effect on prisoner misbehaviors and adjustment after release. Although Siennick et al. controlled for sentence length, the analyses did not distinguish the impact of prison visits on the behaviors of short- versus long-term prisoners.

Some have argued that the maintenance of contacts with an imprisoned parent during the period of confinement is effective in reducing the negative consequences of incarceration on children (e.g., see La Vigne, Naser, Brooks, and Castro, 2005), but others have found that these visits may exert negative effects (e.g., stress, anxiety, humiliation, etc.) on family members and particularly children (Comfort, 2008; Hairston, 1998). Despite the growing literature on this topic, much remains unknown about the mechanisms underlying the effects of incarceration on families (Dyer, Pleck, and McBride, 2012), both positive and negative. Specifically, it is unclear whether findings from this body of research would differ if we shifted the focus to long termers and lifers. We know little about whether family ties disintegrate after a certain number of years, particularly among individuals who have little hope of release. The potential role of lifer peer networks in helping to cope with these emotional challenges needs to be understood more fully.

***Negative effects of incarceration on the children of prisoners.*** In 2007, 1.7 million children (2.3% of the population of children in the United States) had a parent in a state or federal facility (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Between 1991 and 2007, the number of incarcerated parents with children younger than 18 years of age increased by 79% (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). A 2004 survey suggested that a substantial number of state (52%) and federal (63%) prisoners reported having at least one minor child (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Unsurprisingly, parental incarceration has been found to be a stressful experience for children (National Research Council, 2014). What remains unknown is whether these detrimental effects are amplified over the course of long periods of incarceration or attenuated as a result of the children adapting to the parent's absence. Life-course studies are needed to address this gap in knowledge. Such research would allow for a better understanding of the "intergenerational transmission of offending," as argued by developmental criminologists (e.g., Farrington and Welsh, 2007).

Children of incarcerated parents have been found to be at higher risk of developing inadequate self-esteem, issues relating to cognitive functioning, difficulties at school, behavioral problems and delinquency, as well as later incarceration (Hanlon et al., 2005; Huebner and Gustafson, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Johnson and Easterling, 2012; Kinner, Alati, Najman, and Williams, 2007; Murray and Farrington, 2005, 2008; Murray, Loeber, and Pardini, 2012; National Research Council, 2014; Poehlmann, 2005; Roettger and Swisher, 2011; Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011; Walker, 2011; Wildeman, 2009, 2010). Parental incarceration has been regarded as a traumatic experience for children (Arditti, 2012; Travis and Waul, 2003), and some authors have suggested that the strains of the incarceration experience often are transferred to children (Comfort, 2008; Hairston, 1998).

The incarceration of a father may result in turnovers in the mother's romantic partners, which can lead to poor parenting practices (Arditti, Burton, and Neeves-Botelho, 2010). Murray et al.'s (2012) systematic review and meta-analysis suggested that parental incarceration increased the risk of child antisocial behaviors but was not significantly associated with mental health issues, drug use, and performance in school. Because of data limitations, Murray et al.'s (2012) analyses did not make the distinction between short and long prison terms, and thus, it is unknown whether these findings are equally applicable to long termers and lifers.

***Impact of incarceration on communities.*** In addition to the impact of incarceration on families, Clear (2008) argued that incarceration also exerts a significant effect on the infrastructure of communities, the types of relationships established among residents of the neighborhood, and the safety of the community. Because of the spatial concentration of crime and incarceration, the destabilizing impact of imprisonment disproportionately affects specific communities (Lynch and Sabol, 2004). The removal of a large number of residents, and for extended periods of time, impacts social networks and controls in the community (Bursick and Grasmick, 1993; Lynch and Sabol, 2004). It deprives the community of the contributions of these individuals to the local economy (Venkatesh, 2006). Communities that lose a disproportionate number of residents to incarceration are characterized by a reduced number of adult men who may have links and contacts to the employment world, resulting in limited opportunities for legitimate employment in given neighborhoods (Roberts, 2004); this disadvantage disproportionately affects minorities (Sabol and Lynch, 2003). The skewed male-to-female sex ratio in a neighborhood has been linked to a higher rate of family disruption (Sampson, 1995). The incarceration of a large number of males in a community creates more competition in the pool of eligible partners, which may add to the mothers' reluctance to end unstable relationships and to the men's reduced motivation to remain committed to their parenting and partner roles (Clear, 2008). Thomas and Torrone (2006) also found that communities characterized by high incarceration rates had higher subsequent rates of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies. Despite these findings, the National Research Council (2014) cautioned against drawing definite conclusions about the impact of incarceration on particular neighborhoods, arguing that the evidence remains inconclusive as a result of the methodological challenges in establishing causality and the lack of reliable data.

The permanent or long-term removal of a large number of individuals (mostly males), as is the case for long termers and lifers, can be paralleled to a system of exile or a process of mass migration. Just as we know little about whether prisoners and their families adapt to long sentences, our knowledge of the deterioration (or adaptation) of communities to the long-term absence of individuals serving long sentences is equally underdeveloped. More research is needed to assess the impact of intermittent versus permanent removal of residents on the welfare of communities.

***Prison Career Approach and the Desistance Process***

Time in prison is assessed through two main indicators of success or failure: behaviors in prison (correctional risk) and postrelease outcomes (community risk). The concept of desistance, which we regard as a process involving a series of cognitive, social, and behavioral changes leading up to the cessation of criminal behavior, cuts across these two dimensions. Yet, the desistance literature has largely ignored changes that occur during periods of incarceration. The effectiveness of prison is usually assessed on the basis of postrelease behavior, principally the absence of recidivism. This practice poses important caveats. Because long termers and lifers spend a substantial number of years in prison, an emphasis on postrelease outcomes overlooks the important changes that occur while these individuals are incarcerated. Few studies have documented the progression (or disintegration) of criminal careers, of the desistance process, and of other social and cognitive changes that take place over the course of a prison sentence. This research is particularly scarce with samples of long termers or lifers. Liebling (2012) rightfully argued that theories of desistance may not take into account the full context of the prison experience.

Irwin (2009) described the desistance process of 17 incarcerated men serving sentences of 20 or more years. He found that most lifers changed drastically during the course of their prison sentence. Irwin described a process of awakening, the point at which individuals understand that their actions have led them to their current situation. This step in the desistance process is crucial, and it occurs at different points in time depending on a host of factors, such as maturity level, commitment to crime-promoting beliefs and values, and adherence to the prison lifestyle. Many authors have highlighted the importance of identity transformation in the process of desistance (Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes, and Muir, 2004; Burnett, 2004; Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001). Most prison environments might not be conducive to the development of a reformed, positive self-image and identity. To reduce and eventually abandon harmful behaviors and attitudes, individuals need to be exposed to socially acceptable alternatives. We need to more clearly understand the identity shifts that occur among long termers and lifers, and how these shifts impact their attitudes, behaviors, and relationships over time.

We know that individuals who serve long sentences tend to be older at release when compared with those who serve shorter sentences (Crayton, 2012) and that recidivism rates are lower among older individuals when compared with their younger counterparts. Toch (2010: 8) argued that "age is a proxy for whatever transformations have occurred among dedicated middle-aged prisoners that we do not fully understand." This does not imply that long termers or lifers will spontaneously desist or age out of crime, or that they are a lost cause and that it would be wasteful to invest resources to promote their process of self-transformation. All individuals do not age out of crime at the same rate. Blumstein, Cohen, and Hsieh's (1982) work suggested that individuals who remained active in crime in their early 30s had the most prominent residual criminal careers. Kazemian and Farrington

(2006) also noted that the decline in the residual number of offenses was not as linear as the decline in the residual number of years remaining in criminal careers, suggesting that offending rates do not decline at the same rate for different individuals.

Policy makers and researchers alike favor a result-oriented approach and fixate on recidivism as an indicator of success and failure. A recidivism-focused approach disregards changes and progress exhibited in other behavioral, cognitive, and social outcomes. Studies have found that criminal careers are characterized by a great deal of intermittency, and several researchers have acknowledged the relevance of perceiving desistance as a gradual process (Bottoms et al., 2004; Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffman, and Mazerolle, 2001; Bushway, Thornberry, and Krohn, 2003; Kazemian, 2007; Laub and Sampson, 2001, 2003; Le Blanc and Loeber, 1998; Maruna, 2001). As a result, the complete abandonment of offending activities is unlikely to occur suddenly, especially among individuals who have been highly active in offending from a young age; criminal career researchers have consistently established the strong link between early onset and persistent offending (see review in Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003). Therefore, focusing solely on the final state of termination provides limited guidance for intervention initiatives and neglects to offer support and reinforcement during periods when they are most needed (i.e., periods of reassessment and ambivalence toward desistance or persistence; see Burnett, 2004). The time for reflection and potential scope for change is particularly significant for long termers and lifers, who spend extended periods of time in prison.

How can we study desistance in the prison context? Future research needs to determine whether the knowledge base about desistance is applicable to prisoners. Life-course and criminal career research often has turned a blind eye to offending that occurs during periods of incarceration. Individuals can and do engage in offending behaviors while incarcerated, albeit at a lower rate and in different forms; this fact has been evidenced in research on institutional misconduct (e.g., Cunningham and Sorensen, 2006) and stands in contrast to the assumptions made in the life-course and criminal career literature. If offending can occur while in prison, it follows that significant changes in the desistance process also may ensue during periods of incarceration. Consequently, it is imperative to integrate prison time into analyses of criminal career patterns to understand how the desistance process operates during these periods, particularly during long sentences. Despite their growing presence in American prisons, a narrow body of research has been dedicated to individuals serving life sentences, and our understanding of prison lives remains inadequate. The National Research Council (2014) is correct in stating that prison is often regarded as a "black box" and that the state of knowledge on the changes that occur during extended periods of incarceration is limited.

## Suggestions Going Forward

Based on the research presented in this article, we wish to offer some recommendations for future research and policy.

***Differential Treatment and Interventions for Long Termers and Lifers***

Most prisoners are eventually released, but a growing number of U.S. inmates spend a considerable portion of their lives in prison. We know little about whether long termers and lifers are characterized by distinctive psychological, social, and health needs when compared with other prisoners, but it is clear that sentence planning is likely to be distinctive for this population. We have suggested that it may be highly beneficial to encourage long termers and lifers to engage in leadership positions in prison. Such initiatives may help both the helpers and those that they are seeking to help, and may lead to an improved prison climate. In addition, the preparation for the release of an individual who has spent a large part of his life in prison is likely to be quite different from the release of a short-term prisoner. We need to reassess, with contemporary samples of prisoners, the effectiveness of differential release preparation programs and other intervention strategies for long termers and lifers.

Participation in prison programs and prisoner-led groups can contribute greatly to the transformation process of lifers (Irwin, 2009). According to Toch (2010: 8), "programs can make a difference not only because they teach skills, but also because they can instigate or facilitate personal transformation . . . program involvements permit prisoners who are ready and willing to change to demonstrate that they have done so." The National Research Council (2014) highlighted the need to develop and invest in prison programs that may minimize the harmful and criminogenic effects of incarceration, which include extreme idleness and boredom, mental health deterioration, disintegration of family ties, and increased risks of recidivism. Promising programs include interventions based on the risk–need–responsivity model (Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge, 1990), substance use treatment with postrelease follow-up services, and cognitive-behavioral programs. French and Gendreau's (2006) meta-analysis suggested that intervention programs that draw on behavioral strategies (i.e., focusing on the criminogenic needs of high-risk offenders) are the most effective in reducing subsequent misconduct in prison and recidivism rates in the community.

Interventions targeting long termers and lifers would ideally assist individuals as they transition to life in prison for a long sentence. Some programs have specifically targeted lifers, and two examples are noteworthy. *Coming to Terms* is a 15-week group-based program, which was written by Kathy Boudin and Cori Chertoff and developed by the Osborne Association. The core objective of the program is to promote self-assessment, responsibility, remorse, and apology, as well as to encourage individuals to make amends with their past selves and behaviors. The intervention draws on group exercises, writing assignments, and various other activities that enable participants to grasp the harm that they have caused to others as a result of their past behaviors (see full description on the Osborne Association website, osborneny.org). A pilot version of the program was implemented in two correctional facilities in New York State, and preliminary analyses reveal promising outcomes. The second program, *Lifeline*, was first developed in Canada. It involves lifers who have successfully returned to the community (i.e., who have remained crime free for at least 5 years and

who are regarded as positive role models). These individuals serve as mentors to prisoners who are to be released, help them cope with the adversities of detention, and assist them in preparing for the pending challenges after release. The program was found to have positive effects on the successful reintegration of lifers after release (Correctional Service of Canada, 2009).

***Developing Research in Prisons***

Prison research is a complex endeavor partly as a result of the difficulties in gaining access to correctional facilities for research purposes. We have stressed the need for the research community to study life-course and criminal career patterns during periods of incarceration. We need contemporary, prison-based longitudinal studies to reassess the effects of incarceration during prolonged periods of time in prison (National Research Council, 2014). Such studies would involve systematic and regular assessments of the changes that occur throughout the course of a prison sentence by drawing on a generalizable sample of prisoners. Empirical tests of the potential benefits of investing in the needs of prisoners serving long-term sentences also are lacking. Ideally, experimental or quasi-experimental longitudinal designs (or, minimally, matching procedures) should be employed to compare the short- and long-term effects of needs assessments and programming on subsequent attitudes, behaviors, and expectations for release for those serving short and long sentences.

This type of research poses many challenges. It would require longitudinal data collected at several points during the period of incarceration with questions of a potentially sensitive nature (i.e., offending, mental health outcomes, etc.). This might pose problems with institutional review boards, which are highly sensitive to research involving vulnerable populations (for an account of the tedious IRB process involved in prison research, see Kazemian, 2015). In addition, research of this nature requires the cooperation of the Department of Corrections and the willingness to provide additional staff and resources when researchers are present in the facility, which can be a tall order when resources are limited. The reluctance of correctional administrations to collaborate with researchers may stem from the perception that academics can be overly disparaging of prison practices and of the correctional system as a whole. Correctional administrators may feel that they have little to gain from research inside their facilities and that it is likely to lead to a great deal of criticism. We believe that this divide can be best reconciled if we attempt to reach a more balanced view of correctional institutions and to develop our knowledge base on how to improve these environments, as opposed to simply take a stance on whether we regard prisons as "good" or "bad." These are significant barriers, and better partnerships between academics and correctional officials are crucial to addressing these challenges.

Of course, it is expected that correctional authorities should exercise some control over who is granted access to facilities for research purposes to ensure that the presence of researchers does not compromise security concerns inside the facility and that the research makes a useful contribution to both research and practice. Because of the heavy burden on

correctional systems and relatively limited resources, access to prisons for research purposes is inevitably selective, and it is incumbent on the researcher to demonstrate that a given study is of practical value to the correctional authorities and prisoners.

***Transparency***

We have drawn attention to the relatively limited knowledge base on the progression of prison lives over time; these data are lacking because we do not consistently document the perspectives of prisoners and because prisons are closed environments. In the United States, few initiatives are in place to promote transparency in prisons, such as governmental oversight measures, independent commissions, access to prisons for judges, the publication of prisoner newspapers, and other similar resources. Other countries have adopted measures to uphold accountability in their correctional systems. For instance, since the enactment of a correctional law in 2009, the French legal system includes a provision that occasionally allows ordinary citizens to enter prisons and provide feedback on the disciplinary sanctions imposed on prisoners. Given the more limited contacts of long termers and lifers with the outside world, such practices are especially valuable for this population.

Increased exposure to prisons and prisoners, for ordinary citizens as well as politicians and key decision makers in the criminal justice system, may shatter the perception of social and moral distance with inmates and the perspective that these individuals constitute a distinct class of human beings. Johnson and McGunigall-Smith (2008: 337) explained that "outsiders find it hard to put themselves in the shoes of prisoners." This view was expressed by Mark Earley, the former Attorney General of Virginia (R-VA) at the 10th Annual H.F. Guggenheim Symposium on Crime in America, held at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in February 2015. Earley explained that he was supportive of tough-on-crime policies (e.g., Three-Strikes laws, truth-in-sentencing legislation, abolition of parole, prison building programs) at an earlier point in his career. He changed his outlook as a result of his work with the Prison Fellowship organization, which took him inside prisons and, in his own words, made him realize that prisoners were not inherently different from him:

> For most of my life, I viewed them as something other than myself, someone with whom I could not identify with, had little empathy or compassion for . . . then as you begin to talk to the actual people who are there, at least for me, I realized there was only a few degrees of separation between them and myself, between my children and some of these young people.

This former politician's perspective highlights the potential ideological shifts that may occur as a result of greater exposure to adjudicated populations, although these shifts are most likely to stimulate significant change if they occur while individuals are in office and in a position to exert a direct impact on policy. Gottschalk (2014: 189) argued that the reluctance of politicians to endorse more sensible penal policies does not stem from the

threat posed by long-term prisoners to the outside community, but rather from the fact that these individuals "pose a potential risk to political careers."

***Parallel Universe***

The commitment to reassess the incarceration experience from the perspective of long termers and lifers is heightened. For this population, the immediate priority may not be related to preparation for release, but it is linked to how time in prison can be used in a productive manner during long periods of incarceration, which may indirectly impact release outcomes.

The current prison environment tends to be incompatible with the outside world, and these differences are most felt by individuals serving long sentences. How can prisoners be expected to be prepared for a regular work schedule if they have remained inactive during the day for several years or decades, or be expected to interact in a socially acceptable manner and to trust others when the prison environment thrives on mistrust and displays of masculinity and aggressiveness? The nature and structure of the prison system may result in individuals losing the ability to make plans and decisions after long periods of incarceration (Haney, 2006). The problem-solving solutions adopted in prison may be incompatible with strategies promoted in the outside world (Jamieson and Grounds, 2005). This disconnect is not necessarily reflective of the individual characteristics of prisoners; the prison environment may be inherently conducive to such responses, even among individuals who do not display at-risk profiles. Although some individuals may present inadequate conflict resolution skills prior to their arrival in prison, the prison system can be structured in a way to either enhance or help to break down these undesirable attitudes and behaviors. Just like exposure to environmental risk factors may have differential effects on offending behavior depending on a person's genotype (i.e., gene–environment interaction; see Caspi et al., 2002), the prison environment may enhance the influence of individual traits linked to violent and other problem behaviors. The knowledge base examining how individual characteristics interact with features of the prison environment to impact behavior is, to our knowledge, nonexistent.

It would be worthwhile to initiate a discussion about setting up prisons as alternative societies in which individuals live according to standards that are not starkly incompatible with the outside world. The concept of a "parallel universe" was introduced in 2000 by Dora Schriro, the director of the Missouri Department of Corrections at the time. This new strategy was "premised on the notion that life inside prison should resemble life outside prison, and that inmates can acquire values, habits, and skills that will help them become productive, law-abiding citizens" (Schriro, 2000: 1). Schriro promoted a system that encouraged prisoners to make decisions and to be held accountable, that stimulated personal responsibility, and that enabled individuals to understand community expectations and make them compatible with their personal attitudes. In essence, Schriro suggested that prisons should parallel the outside world.

The growing emphasis on prisoner reentry, although largely constructive, may have had one major unintended consequence: By shifting the focus to life after prison, it has taken some attention away from life inside the prison and from individuals who are not approaching release. The reentry discourse has emphasized outcomes related to the return of prisoners to the outside community (e.g., preparation for release and the prevention of recidivism) and may have inadvertently resulted in a diminished focus on the quality of life inside prisons. This oversight particularly impacts long termers and lifers, who will not be released for several years or even decades. As a result, many long-term prisoners "are being denied access to programs and activities that might make their days without end more bearable" (Gottschalk, 2014: 170).

## Conclusion

A life sentence seldom means life in prison. Most individuals (93%, according to Petersilia, 2009) sent to prison are eventually released. No similar estimate has been provided for lifers. Good behavior, the possibility of parole, and overcrowding may lead to the release of individuals serving life sentences or to early release for individuals serving long sentences. Nonetheless, for a growing number of prisoners, the reality is that a prison sentence does not constitute a short absence from ordinary life in the community. In this article, we sought to draw attention to the fact that long termers and lifers are a unique population that requires special consideration. These individuals have been largely neglected by both researchers and policy makers. Among researchers, this neglect is caused in part by the common belief that criminal careers are halted during periods of incarceration and that it is irrelevant to study the process of desistance from crime among individuals who are removed from the community. In addition, research has been hampered by the lack of comprehensive data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics in this area, despite the increasing presence of lifers in prisons in recent decades. We argued for the need to document more accurately the changes that occur during periods of incarceration, particularly among individuals serving long sentences. We know from the body of research on institutional misconduct that some prisoners continue to engage in offending behaviors while incarcerated. As a result, we highlighted the importance of integrating prison time in analyses of criminal career patterns, which would enable us to better grasp the shifts in the desistance process during periods of incarceration and to reassess the effects of long-term imprisonment.

Because of the central importance granted to recidivism as an outcome measure and the distant release date of long termers and lifers, criminal justice policies do not prioritize the needs of long termers and lifers. Correctional officials and policy makers are particularly concerned with the threat posed by prisoners after release, and any harmful behaviors in which they may engage while incarcerated are not deemed to pose a direct threat to the outside community. As such, there is no perceived sense of urgency in investing in the needs of this population. Moreover, because of the gravity of their convictions, long termers and lifers may be regarded as "irredeemable," resistant to change, and unresponsive

to interventions. Notwithstanding the unrealistic expectation to undo, in a few months, habits that have been developed over several years, reentry programs are typically only offered within 6 months of release.[12]

We have argued that long termers and lifers may constitute a valuable resource in the prison environment, that they may help to mitigate the negative consequences of incarceration, and that their well-being is likely to entail diffused benefits for concerned families and communities. Because of their prolonged presence in the prison setting, long termers and lifers represent important assets to the prison community; they can be influential leaders in this environment and may serve as a stabilizing force. Prior studies have suggested that these individuals do not pose a distinctive threat to public or prison safety when compared with other prisoners. Our suggestion to pay more attention to long termers and lifers has little to do with risk. As argued by Johnson and McGunigall-Smith (2008: 332), lifers are "manageable prisoners, some are even model prisoners, but their decent adjustment does not change the fact that their lives are marked by suffering and privation." It is our view that the deprivation of freedom is in itself a severe punishment, and that imprisonment is most detrimental to the development of individuals when it promotes values, norms, and behaviors that are too harshly incompatible with the outside world.

Although this article has underlined the practical value in considering the needs of individuals serving long sentences, the treatment of this population remains a largely normative issue (Tonry, 2011). We have argued that moral arguments are not inevitably incompatible with pragmatic considerations. Increased investment in long termers and lifers is, first and foremost, an issue of human rights and decency, but it also serves the interests of correctional facilities. Such efforts may promote potentially valuable contributions of long-term inmates to the prison community, enable a productive use of the years spent in prison, and speed up the desistance process. Our call to grant more attention to long termers and lifers does not necessarily emphasize the ultimate measure of "effectiveness" (i.e., the absence of recidivism), but it entails practices that may improve the quality of life inside prisons and for the families of prisoners, which may lead to better behavioral outcomes. Although we do not know whether such practices would have a significant impact at the aggregate level, they are nonetheless compatible with principles of justice. The perceived sense of injustice is a powerful feeling that can foster anger and resentment (Matza, 1964). Although the

12. The United States is not alone in delaying reentry programs until just prior to release. For instance, Spain has a three-tier inmate classification system in which first-degree offenders are regarded as those who pose the most serious threats to the community or who have committed the most serious offenses (institucionpenitenciaria.es/). Intervention programs are not generally available for these individuals until they progress to the second or third levels (which most do). In a research study conducted by Kazemian in a maximum-security facility in Paris, the limited availability of intervention programs was a frequent concern expressed by the prisoners. Such programs, as well as employment opportunities, become increasingly available as prisoners progress to the next level of security and facility.

effects of individual intervention efforts may not be discerned at the aggregate level, failure to offer such services may reinforce preexisting beliefs about the lack of social justice.

We agree with Tonry (2011) that large-scale and lasting change can only occur at the systemic level. However, this does not imply that we need to cease attempts to improve the situation of the justice-involved population. Although many social policies do not target the root causes of inequality, they constitute attempts to restore equity and balance. For instance, we do not cease to implement affirmative action policies simply because they do not tackle the source of the problem or fail to address the systemic inequalities that may occur at earlier stages of progression through the system. We continue to adopt these policies because it is the just thing to do. A similar argument can be made about prison-based programs. Even if we establish that the explanatory power of many intervention programs on subsequent offending behavior is not overwhelmingly high, especially as they are currently implemented (Lipsey and Cullen, 2007), ceasing to offer these programs would send a strong message about the priorities of decision makers and the importance granted to the well-being of the prisoner population.

This article has not emphasized the financial costs associated with long-term incarceration, but it is evident that maintaining a large population of long termers and lifers exerts a great amount of financial strain on the system (for a more detailed discussion of correctional costs, see National Research Council, 2014). Largely driven by a desire to reduce the financial burden on state budgets, there is currently bipartisan support for reductions in the prison population. A promising new reform movement, funded by large national foundations, has coalesced around the goal of making significant reductions in the nation's prison population (Travis, 2014). These efforts to reduce the prison population will have a limited impact unless the recourse to life sentences is reconsidered. Gottschalk (2014) reminds us that focusing on low-level offenders will not lead to significant reductions in the prison population, and we need to reevaluate our sentencing practices beyond the "low-hanging fruit" that represent nonviolent offenses. Tonry (2014) offered 10 concrete steps to reduce mass incarceration in the United States, including the elimination or significant reduction of LWOP sentences (see also Nellis, 2013). In his testimony before the Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections, Mauer (2015) called for a 20-year cap on federal prison sentences, with provisions to extend these sentences in exceptional cases. Although all of these recommendations, if implemented, offer promising outcomes, they are unlikely to be adopted swiftly, and it would take some time to observe marked reductions in the prison population.[13] Our call to invest in the needs of individuals serving long sentences should be interpreted not as an endorsement of current incarceration trends but as a reminder to remain cognizant of issues that impact the daily lives of individuals who are currently

13. For a detailed discussion of the political and legal challenges involved in the reassessment of the extensive use of life and otherwise long sentences, see Gottschalk (2014).

incarcerated while these sentencing reforms are under way and until they lead to significant reductions in imprisonment rates.

All evidence suggests that we have gone too far with the use of incarceration in the United States, far beyond the point of effectiveness and human decency. In our view, the dichotomous view of prison as either beneficial or harmful has stagnated our efforts to understand how this environment can be modified to produce positive change and to promote desistance during extended periods of incarceration. In some circumstances and for particular individuals, prison may be inevitable. We need to understand more fully how prison time can be used in a strategic manner to develop an environment that stimulates personal transformation, minimizes the potentially growing individual and collateral harms caused by confinement over time, ensures an improved well-being of prisoners, and maximizes the likelihood of a successful return to the community. It may indeed be true that "with longer periods of incarceration, individuals are likely to become less like they were in the community, less like the people they knew in the community, and more like the prisoners with whom they live" (Wolff and Draine, 2004: 462). In the words of an incarcerated individual, prisoners have lost their "personhood" and their humanity in the process of incarceration, and we often underestimate these individuals' potential for change. Liebling (2012) asked a question that still requires an answer: Is it possible to develop a prison structure that promotes the desistance process? Other countries have made great progress on this front, but this would require a drastic shift in American punishment philosophy, correctional practices, and political will to change the *status quo*, and not merely a desire to reduce strain on correctional budgets.

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