

suffer from mental disorders, and 20 percent of them are suicidal. Another 20 percent suffer from such serious mental illnesses as schizophrenia, major depression, and bipolar disorder. Over half of them suffer from conduct disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or substance abuse problems (Mears, 2002).

Juvenile offenders who are mentally ill rarely receive proper treatment and are often abused and neglected by corrections officers. Some have been restrained with shackles, placed in isolation for long periods of time, and harshly punished. Because mental illness is believed to be rare in the general population as well as in the prison population, social workers advocate for the right of seriously mentally ill prisoners to receive mental health treatment and for juveniles and adult prisoners to have access to rehabilitative services.

Overcriminalization and Privatization

Beginning in the 1980s, the "war on drugs" resulted in tremendous growth in the jail and prison populations largely due to the overcriminalization of and longer sentences for nonviolent drug-related and property crimes. Laws were also added that forced prisoners to serve more of their sentences before being released (Simon, 2010).

During the 1990s, many states tried to deal with overcrowding and rising costs by building more prisons and by privatizing many of the new prisons. Although some states are still actively building more prisons (e.g., Pennsylvania, California), in 2013, six states actually closed 20 correctional facilities, and since 2011, 17 states have reduced their prison capacity (Sentencing Pro-

In most jurisdictions, but not all, the "more prisons and privatization" strategy has failed to alleviate the intense pressure on the correctional system and has not reduced crime. According to Haditabar and Abdi (2013, p. 40), "Claims of significant cost-savings and improved efficiency from private prisons have not proven true. Furthermore, private profit interests in sentencing policy and limited public oversight of private facilities complicate the debate over expansion of private prisons." The social work profession promotes the idea that crime can be decreased significantly if the recidivism rate among offenders can be reduced through rehabilitation. In other words, no matter how many prisons or jails are built, if inmates are not rehabilitated, the rate of crime will not appreciably decline.

The Death Penalty

CASE EXAMPLE

Glenn Ford was released from a Louisiana prison in 2014, after having been on death row for 30 years. Ford was the 144th inmate released from death row in the last 40 years. At least 43 of the men were acquitted of all charges. In other cases, charges were dismissed.

Box 13.7 The Case of Cameron Todd Willingham: Is the System Too Failible?

in 2016, there were 20 executions in the United States. Seven of these, or 35 percent, were carried out in the state of Texas. Texas has executed 474 people since 1976. But the most controversial execution in Texas may have occurred in 2004, when Cameron Todd Willingham was the first and only man executed in the United States by suspected arson after his three children were killed in a fire. His children were all under the age of three. They burned to death at their home in Corsicana, Texas, in December 1991. When Mr. Willingham was executed in 2004, his final words were, "The only statement I want to make is that I am an innocent man, convicted of a crime I did not commit," he said. "I have been persecuted for 12 years for something I did not do."

Williamgram testified at his trial that he narrowly escaped the fire himself, that he tried and failed to rescue children, and that he then made repeated attempts to call for help and reenter the building at one point smashing a window with a pool cue in the hope of reaching the children's bedrooms. Mr. Williamgram was convicted primarily on the testimony of the Deputy State Fire Marshal Manuel Vasquez. "The fire tells a story, I'm just the interpreter," Vasquez said. "I'm looking at the fire, and I'm interpreting the fire. That's what I know. That is what I do best. And the fire does not lie. It tells the truth." Mr. Vasquez went on to testify that the fire was intentionally started.

In 2004, Project Innocence commissioned a report completed by four nationally known arson experts who used all the most recent advances in the understanding of arson evidence. Their conclusion in December 2004

(about 10 months after the execution). Willingham's conviction was based on bad science, and none of the evidence should have ever led investigators to believe the fire was set deliberately. "While we have no doubt that . . . witnesses believed what they were saying, each and every one of the indicators relied upon have since been scientifically proven to be invalid," the report says. In other words, Willingham likely did not commit a crime, and his execution was just one more ghastly element in an inescapable family tragedy.

The Innocence Project claimed that the release of their report "marked the first time in the nation that scientific evidence showing an innocent person was executed."

Perhaps most poignant for Williamson's surviving relatives is that, at the time of his execution, a similar case was going through the Texas legal system: that of Ernest Willis, who had been sentenced to death for the alleged role in setting a fatal fire in West Texas in 1987. One of the arson experts examined his case; he too found the forensic evidence similarly flawed, and said he saw no evidence of arson. Willis was able to have his case reopened and dismissed. He walked out the fatal row a free man seven months after Williamson's execution.

The Project Innocence lawyers have been instrumental in forcing courts to take new DNA-testing technology into account when reviewing convictions. Since 1992, when the Innocence Project first began, over 350 prisoners have been exonerated, including 20 who had spent time on death row. Texas continues to lead the nation in exonerations (Innocence Project, 2017).

The death penalty is very controversial (see Box 13.7). Those who are against it point to the lack of reliable evidence that it decreases murder rates (Jures, 2016). In addition, carrying out the death penalty costs taxpayers three times more than keeping an offender in a maximum-security prison for 40 years (Logan, 2008). The United States is one of the few industrialized nations that still employs the death penalty. Other countries that employ the death penalty include Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

death penalty, others include Japan, Egypt, and Iran. Nineteen states—Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—and the District of Columbia do not have the death penalty (Death Penalty Information Center 2017). Thirty-two states, mostly in the south and mountain west, still have the death penalty. The death penalty