

An Exploratory Study Derived From Interviews With American Reporters Who Cover Jails and Prisons

By Jeffrey Ian Ross

Although numerous studies have been conducted on how reporters cover crime in general (Cohen and Young, 1981), or police specifically (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989), other components of the criminal justice system have been relatively ignored. One area that is rarely explored is the news media's (specifically print) experience and efficacy to report on corrections (i.e., jails, prisons, community corrections, inmates, correctional officers, correctional administrators, and the policies and practices therein).¹

Why is this important? During the past four decades, America has experienced one of the largest expansions in its jail, prison and community corrections populations. In 2008, 7.3 million people were under the control of the U.S. criminal justice system. Approximately 2.2 million were behind bars in jails or prisons, 4.3 million were on probation and 828,169 were on parole (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010a). State and federal correctional facilities (not to mention private prisons) employ roughly 650,000 people who work as administrators, correctional officers, case managers, classification officers, probation and parole officers, counselors and social workers. It currently costs approximately \$68.8 billion a year to fund the U.S. correctional system (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010b) and the number of individuals entering jails and prisons is generally increasing. In short, reliable reporting on the field of corrections in the United States is necessary to draw attention to and understand this social issue.

In an effort to fill this gap, this article briefly reviews the scholarly research on the news media's portrayal of corrections and the challenges reporters face in covering this part of

the criminal justice system. It then presents results from interviews conducted with the handful of American print media reporters who specialize in or have focused a significant part of their careers on covering corrections.²

Literature Review

How newspapers cover the corrections field. Many empirical analyses explore the connection between the news media and crime/criminal justice. Only one study examines how stories on corrections are produced. Doyle and Ericson (1996) conducted interviews using open-ended questions with "correctional officials, various alternative news sources and media workers" in Canada. They found that "Officials are only intermittently successful in managing news coverage of prisons. Journalists can access a variety of alternative, critical news sources. Correctional officials are often engaged in damage control regarding 'bad news' from other sources." Although Doyle and Ericson provided a respectable beginning, few have built upon their study.

Content analyses. Research on the relationship between the media and corrections that examines newspaper coverage of specific topics is more abundant. None of these studies, however, looks at how news media other than newspapers treat corrections. Mahan and Lawrence (1996) examined the role of the press during the Attica (1971), New Mexico (1980) and Lucasville (1993) prison riots. They do so through a marshaling of "different kinds of documents published following each riot and included information from the criminology literature as well as media and investigative reports." The authors state that two key lessons can

be learned from an analysis of these riots. The first is to be cautious about the role of journalists when they cross the line from being reporters to acting in the role of negotiators, and the second is to be aware that reporters are caught in the middle of the public's right to know versus the prison authorities' need to control the violence.

Blakely and Bumphus (2005) selected a sample of 2,654 articles on prison privatization and randomly selected 151 for intensive analysis to determine if both the article title and content favored privatization or not. They concluded that: "Privatization is portrayed as a practice closely associated with profit, efficiency and overcrowding. Currently, the print media focuses on privatization's external characteristics rather than on those internal traits more closely associated with inmates, staff and issues of operational quality. Furthermore, the print media is portraying prison privatization more negatively now than at any time since its re-emergence nearly two decades ago."

The study does not argue why the years 1986-2002 and the number of articles were selected. Moreover, there is no mention of technical procedures used in the study that one would find in a content analysis such as controlling for intercoder reliability.

Cecil (2007) identified 195 articles on multimillionaire Martha Stewart's incarceration. Stories were culled from five newspapers whose circulations rank among the highest in the U.S. She concluded that "The messages show us that by highlighting [nonessential] elements and failing to offer comparisons, the press ... normalizes the unique experience of Martha Stewart as an inmate." Cecil argued, "The way most of the newspaper articles are written, and the images associated with them, make

Stewart's experiences appear routine, even though she is a famous person with privileges that most female offenders do not have."

Finally, an alternative approach was taken by Mason (2007) who examined "four [corrections-related] stories which appeared in several British newspapers in October 2005." He evaluated the reporting on these stories and the reality behind them, including media misrepresentations, failure to tell the complete story and inaccuracies in the articles.

Four more general-content analyses of corrections coverage exist. First, Jacobs and Brooks (1983) examined newspaper, periodical and television news broadcasts about prison that appeared in 1976. Although they acknowledged the problems with their data source, Jacobs and Brooks suggested that, "The daily newspapers provided the largest number of stories about prisons." The authors coded "98 percent of prison-related news into seven categories: penal policy and conditions, disturbances, litigation, human interest, celebrities, escapes and editorials." Penal policy garnered the lion's share of attention, and "Magazines gave more coverage (61 percent) to penal conditions and policy than to any other category." Although dated, the investigators noted that "These data refute the assertion that mass media prison coverage is dominated by accounts of violence," and that "There is more news on such topics as prison conditions and penal policy, legislative developments and prisoners' rights, than on brutality, violence and escape." They also note that, "These gross statistics seem to belie the assertion that the public is uninformed about prisons. Compared with other social issues — for example, nursing homes, mental health and welfare — the prisons fare well in the competition for news space."

Second, Freeman (1998) examined "the content of 1,546 newspaper articles concerning corrections that appeared through the United States between Sept. 8, 1994, and Nov. 24, 1995." He identified "11 categories of negative behavior and four categories of positive behavior ... and a frequency distribution of 105 staff and 22 inmate behaviors developed." Negative behavior was defined as "behavior that could be reasonably expected to create a negative impression in the readers' mind." Positive behavior was simply the opposite; it

"create[s] a positive impression in the readers' mind." Unfortunately, Freeman's identification concerning positive and negative behaviors is questionable, if not arbitrary, and lacks proper contextualization.

Third, Welch, Weber and Edwards (2000) conducted a sophisticated content analysis that examined the sources quoted in *The New York Times* articles (1992-1995) focusing on correctional issues. They found that the majority of sources that are quoted work for political and government venues, and that they unsurprisingly support state-level correctional policies. Although nongovernmental and criminal justice practitioners are quoted, they pale in comparison to the state-based sources.

This scholarly literature reveals some common patterns and trends of coverage and constitutes a respectable base of knowledge development, but these content analyses are disproportional snapshots and/or a thin slice of the overall picture of corrections reporting. They focus on the outcome of the reporting process — the published article — and not on the dynamics of the process. Moreover, none of the content analyses of corrections goes beyond print media into broadcast media. In short, there are more scholarly articles analyzing the final product of reporting on corrections versus the production of stories. There is also an implicit (but questionable) assumption that suggests that the final product (i.e., stories) says something about the construction of the articles.

Problems with the news media's coverage of corrections. Accurate and abundant news coverage of corrections is very difficult for several reasons: Crime/criminal justice is a low-status beat, thus few reporters specialize in covering jails and prisons; editors believe that the public is not interested in corrections-related issues and/or think that the costs of reporters covering jails and prisons will not be worth the expense, and thus are reluctant to have journalists cover this beat full time; it is difficult for reporters to gain access to correctional facilities; and the subject often is not emphasized as part of the curriculum in the country's journalism schools.

Few reporters cover corrections. In general, the larger the circulation, readership, listenership or viewership of a media outlet, the greater the number of reporters. The variability of reporters is then largely a

function of the newspaper's resources, which are determined by revenue and by editorial and management perceptions and reality of market share. Larger newspapers typically have a dedicated crime or police reporter on staff. Some, like *The New York Times*, can have more than 10 police or crime reporters. Such journalists often work out of police headquarters, as many police departments will provide a room and a desk and will allow reporters to pursue the stories they want (Ross, 2000).

Nevertheless, few crime reporters are assigned to cover prisons or jails on a full- or even part-time basis. Chermak (1998) states that the "news media do not have a corrections beat that fulfills the same function as a police or court beat." The reporters normally write articles/produce pieces on the seemingly endless slew of robberies and homicides that law enforcement officers deal with on a daily basis. One must also recognize that crime reporting is often an entry-level position in most large-scale news organizations. Reporters often spend some of their early careers on the crime beat before moving on to cover more prestigious beats like city hall, education or local and state politics. Eventually, if they are lucky or so inclined, journalists may cover national or international politics.

Editors' perceptions. Since editors believe the public isn't interested in corrections-related news or that it is not worth the investment of their reporters' time, there could be a self-fulfilling prophecy at work: The news media do not report on corrections, thus the public is not interested, and since a wider audience is not interested, neither are the media. According to Warren (2009), "With buyouts becoming commonplace at our nation's media outlets, it is unlikely most reporters will have the luxury of covering corrections as a full-time beat." An alternative perspective is that editors might feel that the expense of having one or more reporters cover corrections is not worth the investment. In other words, they may not be able to produce newsworthy items that result in one or more publishable articles.

Access. The news media's accounts of jails and prisons are seriously hampered by limited access to facilities, offenders, correctional workers and administrators (Yeung, 2003). The

amount of access reporters have to jails and prisons varies according to the type of facility, its policies and procedures, and the jurisdiction within which they operate (Talbot, 1988; 1989; Zaner, 1989; Hincle, 1996; Kirtley, 1998). Regardless, some jails and prisons are hesitant to allow inmates to be interviewed by reporters.

Many state departments of correction control the frequency with which journalists can interview inmates: "In the 1990s, as the politicization of crime increased and the resulting prison population boom began carving out of control, prison and government officials in the United States started tightening up on news media interviews and other contacts between prisoners and journalists — just as they had done in a previous period when prisons became politicized in the early 1970s (Sussman, 2002)."

Much of what is reported often comes from limited or biased sources such as the prison information officers themselves. In many cases, the news media have been denied complete access to certain facilities and inmates housed within. Nevertheless, each jail and prison has its own policies and procedures, and some are stricter than others. Moreover, correctional agencies, state departments of correction and individual correctional facilities rarely distribute press releases or conduct press conferences about prisoners who have been murdered or sexually assaulted by other inmates.

The U.S. Supreme Court has derived three major principles concerning prison access: The First Amendment "does not guarantee the public or the press a right to obtain information from prisons"; "Journalists have no greater rights of access than the general public"; and "The public's need for access to information will be balanced against other societal needs, such as law enforcement interests and personal privacy" (*Saxbey v. Washington Post*, 1974; *Pell v. Procunier*, 1974). In some prison systems, once access is granted, journalists are not allowed to use audio or video equipment (e.g., tape recorders), pens or paper or to conduct any interviews without correctional officers present (Vosters, 1999).

Covering corrections is not emphasized in journalism schools. Rarely are there stand-alone courses for reporters in U.S. journalism schools that teach students how to cover all

facets of corrections. This perception is buttressed by a review of the course catalogues of the major journalism schools throughout the United States.³

Method

In an effort to build upon both the scant scholarly literature on media coverage of corrections and the limited content analysis examining this subject, in the spring of 2008 and fall of 2009, five American newspaper reporters who have focused on or who currently specialize in covering corrections were identified and contacted. As research and theory in this area is limited, this study is best conceptualized as both exploratory and grounded research (e.g., Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Questions that were asked built upon the ones that have been used in previous studies of crime reporters (e.g., Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987), designed to better understand the relationship between news worker practices and content (e.g., Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Although this sample may appear to be small, readers are cautioned that, according to the author's extensive research, few journalists in the U.S. are assigned to a permanent corrections beat. These five journalists were identified through their well-known coverage of jails and prisons⁴ and/or via the snowball sampling technique.⁵ If reporters were recommended for the current study by word of mouth, then an online search of their reporting during the past three years was conducted. If it appeared that the bulk of their reporting (greater than 50 percent) covered corrections, they were contacted.

All interviewees were contacted via phone or e-mail; a 100 percent participation rate was achieved. Each reporter was asked a series of questions (see Appendix A) and, in the case of telephone interviews, conversations with each individual lasted approximately 20 minutes to an hour. During the course of these conversations, the interviewees were allowed to stray into other related subject matters they believed were important. This practice was encouraged by designing a series of open-ended questions that allowed interviewees to include their own interpretations of the questions posed. Answers were either recorded by hand or by the respondents via e-mail.

After completing the data collection, the transcripts were reviewed, with responses from each informant compared to identify both major themes as well as subthemes in the data. Also, differences among the respondents on the questions asked were noted, with a view toward identifying important issues that might not have been mentioned by other respondents, but were nonetheless determined to be valuable to the study.

Sample. In order to protect the identity of these individuals,⁶ they are referred to as Adam,⁷ Ida,⁸ Charlie,⁹ Mary¹⁰ and Nora.¹¹ Efforts were also made to disguise the names of the newspapers or news media sources for which they currently report. Almost all earned an undergraduate degree. Two have master's degrees, one of which is in journalism. Most have won awards for their reporting, though not necessarily because of their work on corrections. Two of the reporters were primarily free-lancers, while the other three worked full time for big-city daily newspapers with large regional circulations. The roster of reporters includes both men and women who have different kinds of formal training and whose geographical locations are spread throughout the country.

Findings

How long have the reporters been covering the corrections beat? Reporters ranged anywhere from nine to 27 years covering corrections with an average of 17.9 years on the jails and prisons beat. Adam has been a freelance writer since 1994. Only in the past 10 to 11 years has he focused disproportionately on corrections. Mary has been a freelance writer since 1985. When Mary began her career, she primarily focused on writing about music and wrote only a few stories on the criminal justice system and on prisons in particular. Now, about 85 percent of her published articles focus on jail and prison conditions and on inmates with unique circumstances.

Charlie has been covering prisons since 1991-1992. Ida, who has covered corrections the longest among the reporters interviewed, started reporting on prisons in 1978 when the Georgia State Prison "was in a lot of turmoil." "That summer, more than 12 men were killed, including a [correctional officer]." Ida took a break from corrections reporting from late 1982 through the fall of 1987 when

she moved out of state; she resumed covering prisons in 1987 with the riots at the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta. "Prisons stopped being a beat for me about four years ago," she said. "It is no longer a beat at all under the new newsroom organization." According to Nora, she spent the last decade of her 23-year career at a high-circulation newspaper with national circulation covering corrections while working out of the state capitol bureau.

Why do the reporters cover the corrections beat? Reporters who answered this question point to a sense of interest and to a duty to cover corrections. Adam describes the corrections beat as "an interesting issue to report on because it ties into so many other themes — poverty, public health, mental illness, drugs, unemployment, etc." This beat also provides a respectable challenge, he added. "It's also a challenging issue to navigate: access sometimes is restricted, there's a mountain of data to work through and verification of stories isn't always easy," Adam said. "So, overall I'd say it's a hard area to report on but a fascinating one." Moreover, this beat gives reporters an exclusive identity inside their news organization and among other reporters. Other themes that emerged in the responses to this question include the idea of a personal connection; selected reporters have had some sort of personal experience with the corrections industry.

Mary has a particular affinity for her subject matter. "When I jumped into the profession I was inspired by the muckraker journalists," she said. "They gave me hope about this country. Writing was my calling. I started looking around for issues that were crying out to report on." As an immigrant to the United States and as an ethnic studies major, she recognized how certain groups seemed to be written out of the textbooks and public discourse. When Mary found subjects that were covered in the press from a one-dimensional angle, she knew she could do better and portray them better in a three-dimensional fashion.

One of the most dominant themes Mary found was the lack of critical coverage of criminal justice issues, particularly the stigmatization of people behind bars. Part of Mary's interest comes from her background; during her teenage years, she grew up as one of two children in a post-

divorce, low-income, single-parent household in Los Angeles. Her friends were arrested several times before she turned 18. Mary got to see firsthand how early contact with the criminal justice system just "ate up peoples' lives and contributed to their cycle of reincarceration."

"[I] covered corrections because I thought it was a critical beat," Mary said. "Prisons are holding people in the name of citizens and those citizens should know that they are operated safely and humanely," Ida adds. Charlie admits that "No one else was covering it back in the mid-1990s when prisons were rapidly growing, and many changes were being made such as the end of parole in Virginia." According to Nora:

The media have a special duty to cover corrections and the prison system. When society locks up and becomes guardian of its citizens, journalists have an obligation to keep the spotlight on to ensure that basic and constitutional protections are provided to inmates and the public's money is being well-spent on programs and policies that deliver true public safety. Corrections also represents a fascinating intersection between politics, government policy and the public passions enflamed by crime. There is human drama, along with potential for great investigative pieces targeting abuse of power, the exertion of political influence through campaign donations and other topics.

What are the biggest obstacles that corrections reporters have had to overcome, and how did they deal with them? The interviewed reporters cited three areas in which they encountered the most obstacles: access, convincing editors to let them cover corrections and "getting to the truth of the matter."

First, some of the biggest obstacles Adam cited as a part of working the corrections beat include: "information access, gaining entry into prisons and getting to talk to specific inmates. Beyond that, emotionally it can be a draining theme to continually return to." Ida stated, "Over the years a certain amount of hostility developed between me and employees of [her state's] Department of Corrections." These issues can be quite exhausting for reporters. She

concedes that she had minimal problems obtaining access to inmates and to DOC personnel. In general, she said that access to the prison system varied based on who served as commissioner at any given time. One of the commissioners gave Ida a letter that she could give to any warden, giving her permission to enter any facility in the state unannounced. Ida also said that:

During the administration of the commissioner who gave me the letter, one of his deputy commissioners put a systemwide block on my phone number so inmates could not call me. Under a previous commissioner, the department had put my number on each inmate's approved calling list without using one of the allowed spots. Once the block was put on, the only way to remove it was to do this inmate by inmate. Of course they did not do that claiming there were too many inmates.

Another commissioner, on the other hand, barred her from conducting interviews with inmates who were on death row.

Reporters' difficulties can easily stretch to editors. According to Adam:

Back in the late 1990s, very few journalists were looking at corrections from a systemic and a critical perspective. That was both good and bad for me as a writer. On the one hand, it meant I was navigating virgin territory; on the other hand, it involved a lot of education work; getting editors to understand why these were important issues. Since then, more attention has been focused on the prison system's growth and the implications of that growth. So now it's less necessary to educate editors; on the other hand there are more people covering the same terrain.

The major difficulty Charlie faces in the course of his job is "getting to the truth." Charlie said, "Often it's hidden pretty well by the folks on both sides of the bars." He believes that his work experience serves as a bonus in overcoming some challenges. After a few years, he said he

became better at determining if people were telling the truth. He said, "Sometimes the most plausible, truthful-sounding story turns out to be nonsense — on the other hand, some of the most incredible stuff turns out to be true. Talking to as many people as possible and getting all sides to a story helps." He added: "Everyone inside prisons — inmates and staff — are human beings with good sides as well as bad. It's important [to] not see anyone as one-dimensional or paint them that way."

In many respects, Mary's greatest difficulty is convincing editors, even those from progressive (i.e., left-leaning) publications, about the importance of jail- and prison-related topics. "In the beginning, getting these kinds of stories contracted was very infrequent," she said. Editors would incredulously say, "We covered prisons last year." They would tell her that their publications' readership comprised primarily middle- and upper-class individuals and that the problem of jails and prisons was too remote for that kind of audience.

Mary feels that considerable background research is crucial to convincing an editor about the merits of a corrections-related story; she refers to this practice as "going to battle." "My pitches often exceed the length of the story. I have much of the story prepared in order to convince a skeptical editor, she said." Knowing the correctional jargon, especially the acronyms, is also important both with sources and editors. Otherwise, access to prison is sometimes difficult for her. The only correctional institution where she was denied entrance was a women's federal correctional institution that, during the 1990s, endured a "sex-slave" lawsuit. Predictably, said Mary, the administration was wary of journalists. Despite these obstacles, and unlike some of her colleagues who write about corrections, she never wanted to throw in the towel.

Nora narrows her difficulties down to three obstacles: "government reluctance to allow access to prisons and prisoners; editor and public interest in inmates and the importance of wise correctional policies; and inability to obtain records and other solid data to document stories on individuals and on correctional system trends (i.e., prison gang prevalence, use of lockdowns, administrative segregation, etc.)."

How do they describe the kind of reporting they do on corrections? Ida has written profiles of inmates and commissioners to put a human face on those who live or work inside state prisons. As a result of her reporting, Ida has received a handful of death threats concerning a series of stories on sexual assault back in the early 1990s. Charlie said that his reporting can be divided into breaking news and features. Nora said that she "tried to mix hard news/investigative work with more human interest pieces (profiles, feature on women inmates and their particular challenges, exploration of restorative justice told through one woman's tragic loss) that hopefully helped readers get beyond stereotypes and think more broadly of corrections and inmates."

Is covering the corrections beat enough to sustain the reporters and/or have they moved on to other subjects/beats? In addition to covering jails and prisons, Ida has reported on parole and other criminal justice issues. Her work has garnered national and state awards for reports on inmate abuse, ethics at the state legislature and problems with her city's criminal court system. Now Ida rarely covers corrections; about three years ago, due to newsroom restructuring, she stopped reporting on the topic, and a colleague took over that beat. Ida now is mainly a general assignment reporter. Nevertheless, about 90 percent of her beat involves law enforcement issues, including recent stories about gun control.

During the past few years, Adam has done considerably less corrections reporting. He agrees with other corrections beat reporters that "There's only so much you can say on a given theme. I've said much of what I want to say, both in my articles and in my books. It's an area that continues to interest me, and I'll always come back to it periodically, but I also am interested in covering a host of other issues as well."

These journalists are the exception to the average crime beat reporter. They encounter similar kinds of obstacles, and all developed certain techniques to gain access and sell their stories to their respective editors. These methods require both creativity and a strong connection to their subject matter. Each has his or her own unique reasons for covering jails, prisons and community correc-

tions. They also admit that a little bit of luck along the way helps. After a review of the transcripts, it did not appear that gender or age had a significant impact on their motivation or the way they went about doing their job. That being said, readers must be cautious about overgeneralizing from this nonrandom, small sample.

Conclusion

Most news stories are written to inform and/or entertain the public. Thus, it is hard to overlook the fact that crime and criminal justice matters are a staple of the news media (Kappeler, Blumberg and Potter, 1996; Barak, 1995a; 1995b; Surette, 1998; 1999). Unfortunately, jails, prisons and other correctional facilities and practices are covered by the news media primarily when negative events occur and when sensational stories surface (e.g., riots, crowding, escapes).

Why is corrections coverage often avoided by the print media? There could be a self-fulfilling prophecy in operation. The news media rarely report on corrections, and when they do, it is rarely about something positive. As a result, the public is typically not interested in the subject; since the public is not interested, the media is not either. Much of the public also believes that inmates are getting their appropriate or deserved punishment, so the old adage "out of sight, out of mind" prevails.

It takes a serious, dedicated and experienced reporter (and a supportive editor and news organization) to maintain an exclusive interest/specialization in the field of corrections and regularly produce accurate stories on the topic. Five reporters makes for a limited sample, and perhaps — with more digging — additional reporters can be tracked down, especially those who cover the field on only a part-time basis. As this was both exploratory and grounded research, future studies could benefit from interviews with newspaper editors, publishers and owners to learn why publications shy away from covering the topic of corrections. This sample could also be extended to other countries; however, the perceived benefits may not accrue taking this direction. Future research might determine what differences exist among journalists who cover policing, the criminal courts

and juvenile justice compared with the patterns identified in this study.

The field of corrections is embedded with numerous myths. Unfortunately cultural industries (i.e. businesses, organizations and institutions that derive income by producing products and services that are important in reflecting and shaping public opinion and popular culture) perpetuate many of these misconceptions. Few individuals attempt to deconstruct these myths or provide information that challenges them. Besides scholars who conduct research on corrections, which have limited audiences, and news reporters who cover corrections, there are few others who perform this function.

ENDNOTES

¹ This article does not review the vast research and theory (i.e., media effects theory) on the public's perception of crime, some of which deals with corrections. Although the news media are an important factor in this process, the author believes this specific topic is sufficiently distant from the core purpose of the current study.

² Finer level distinctions in the types of corrections (i.e., institutional versus noninstitutional corrections) subjects are not made. Moreover, this study does not stray into sentencing issues such as the death penalty. Keep in mind that the focus of this study is on the reporters who occupy this beat and not the influence of these journalists. Although some reporters besides the ones identified, either self-directed or assigned by their editors, periodically cover jails and prison may have a greater impact (i.e., garner more attention) than the reporters identified, this is not the focus of this study. Finally, although important, this article is not interested in jailhouse journalists (i.e., inmates who write for prison-based newspapers or periodically contribute articles to newspapers and magazines).

³ Despite an exhaustive search of the top 10 journalism programs in the United States, the only course that is taught on a semiregular basis is one that introduces students to reporting on the criminal justice system.

⁴ Searches of articles were run on LexisNexis using the key terms "jails" and "prisons" during the past five years in order to see if there were any reporters' names that frequently reported on corrections.

⁵ A request was sent through a corrections-related list serve, but no responses were received.

⁶ Names were selected based on the police phonetic alphabet, using male names for male reporters and female names for female re-

porters. Unfortunately, concealing the identity of the reporters removed some of the contextual details of the data.

⁷ E-mail interview with Adam, Friday, July 25, 2008.

⁸ Telephone interview with Ida, Thursday, June 12, 2008, and follow-up e-mail interview on Sept. 24, 2009.

⁹ Two interviews were conducted with Charlie. The first was a telephone interview which occurred May 6, 2008, and the second was a follow-up e-mail interview on Oct. 3, 2009.

¹⁰ Telephone interview with Mary, Wednesday, June 4, 2008.

¹¹ E-mail interview with Nora, Tuesday Sept. 29, 2009.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Participating Corrections Reporters:

1. Can you provide a brief current bio? (no more than 250 words; this can be cut and pasted from some other venue).
2. How long have you covered/did you cover the corrections beat? (When did you start?)
3. Why do you cover the corrections beat?
4. What are the biggest obstacles that you have to overcome, and how did you deal with them?
5. How would you describe the kind of reporting that you do on corrections?
6. Although you specialize in corrections, is this enough to sustain you, or have you moved on to other subjects/beats?
7. Can you suggest any other reporters who specialize in corrections and who might be interested in speaking with me?

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