



# **Reforming Punishment: Psychological Limits to the Pains of Imprisonment (Law and Public Policy: Psychology and the Social Sciences)**

*Craig Haney*

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In *Reforming Punishment: Psychological Limits to the Pains of Imprisonment*, author Craig Haney argues that the United States has pursued fundamentally flawed prison policies that have crossed the line from imposing punishment to doing real harm. His carefully reasoned argument suggests that—by ignoring the social contextual causes of crime and minimizing the potentially harmful effects of imprisonment itself—these policies not only cause undue pain to the imprisoned but ultimately increase crime.

Today the United States imprisons more people than any other nation. Its prisons are overcrowded, contain unprecedented numbers of mentally ill and nonviolent prisoners, and grossly overrepresent minorities. Too many prison systems still do too little to provide meaningful programming and other forms of effective rehabilitation. Yet adverse conditions can cause prisoners to adapt to the pains of imprisonment in ways that are problematic while they are imprisoned and dysfunctional after they are released.

In this critical and incisive but theoretically and empirically based analysis, Haney examines the key psychological issues at the heart of these problems. He uses modern psychological theory not only to challenge current prison practices but also to point to ways psychologists, policymakers, and others can help create a more effective and humane justice system.

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