INTRODUCTION

Prisons in the United States today face a crisis, punctuated by violence, disorder, and overcrowding. This current crisis emerged in the 1970s when the ideological commitment to rehabilitation declined sharply, along with our nation's optimism about alleviating poverty and a host of other social ills (Cullen and Gilbert 1982). The liberal consensus of the post-World War II era gave consistent ideological support to correctional policies based on the notion of offender rehabilitation. The demise of this consensus has left corrections without a clear philosophy to guide its policies and programs.

The growth of the current prison crisis is also rooted in the series of shocks to the economy that first became apparent in the early 1970s and escalated in the 1980s (Box 1987). The recessions of 1974–75 and 1979–82 placed enormous strain on the penal system as the number of economically marginal members of U.S. society increased along with the prison population.

This erosion of liberal optimism and of the underlying economic structure of the U.S. provides the recent context for political decisions by agents of the state. The decision makers within state legislatures and bureaucracies respond to the political pressures created by these ideological and economic shifts. Yet, agents of the state also act with their own self-interests in mind (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985). Furthermore, these decision makers do not necessarily act in concert; they often contradict each others' decisions. Thus the outcome of state decisions may not reflect a concerted, thought out plan of action based on the interests of "The State." Rather, policy outcomes may reflect the myriad actions and miscalculations of decision makers who act in their perceived self-interest while responding to (or, at times, taking advantage of) the shifting ideological, economic, and political winds that blow, or at times blast, into the halls of state government. These decisions by agents of the state culminate in a product that often no one understands, intends, or claims responsibility for. Such is the process that produced the current crisis within our prison system. The decision making by the state, under the influence of the changing ideological and economic climate of the 1970s

and 1980s, dramatically altered conditions of confinement and relations of control between the keepers and captives within our penal institutions.

The 1970s and 1980s were an important period of social, ideological, and economic change. As James B. Jacobs (1977: 2), in his social history of Stateville Penitentiary, has demonstrated, the history of a particular prison "reflects all of the major societal changes" of the period under study. Since 1975, the last year included in Jacobs' analysis, both society and prison organizations have undergone, yet again, enormous change and upheaval, the beginnings of which are captured in Jacobs' book.

Perhaps no prison in the United States better reflects the trend toward disorder, which has culminated in our current penal crisis, than the Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM). This penitentiary experienced a drastic shift from order, before 1975, to growing disorder, beginning in 1976. It is remembered for the brutal 1980 riot during which thirty-three inmates were killed. This riot was a dramatic event in an organization that had already been facing growing disorder. The violence and disruptions continued at PNM long after the riot faded from public consciousness (Galan 1988). While the 1980 riot has been the subject of other works (Colvin 1982; Morris 1983; Office of the Attorney General 1980a, 1980b; Useem 1985; Useem and Kimball 1989) and is detailed in Chapter 6, the current book focuses on the larger organizational history of this penitentiary beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1980s. It is a period that encompasses the most significant changes in our ideologies, politics, and economy since the Great Depression.

The Penitentiary of New Mexico, built in 1956, emerged suddenly in 1968 from the "authoritarian regime" (Jacobs 1977) that characterized its early history. From 1968 to 1974, programs aimed at offender rehabilitation proliferated within the prison. The period can be seen as one in which inmates were predominantly controlled through accommodations, or incentives, connected to these programs. Escapes and violence were rare as the prison remained orderly. As the period came to a close, however, informal accommodations increased, including prison officials' tolerance of a growing trafficking into the prison of heroin. The resulting scandal, with its charges of corruption, led to a major organizational shake-up in 1975 that included the removal of PNM's top officials. The change in officials in late 1975 coincided with the ideological shift away from rehabilitation and with an economic downturn that led to large increases in inmate population.

The period from 1975 through 1977 was filled with confrontations at various levels of the New Mexico corrections bureaucracy. First, there was a confrontation between well-organized inmates and the new prison administration over a reduction in program opportunities and other accommo-

dations. This conflict was reflected in organized inmate strikes and a major federal lawsuit initiated by inmates against the State of New Mexico. Second, there was a confrontation between various officials within the New Mexico corrections establishment over the direction of policies. The classic confrontation between "custody" and "treatment" was played out in the New Mexico corrections bureaucracy as officials struggled with each other for power and control over the future direction of the prison.

From 1978 to 1980, the prison organization and the corrections bureaucracy experienced a period of fragmentation. The confrontations of previous years gave way to administrative confusion and disorganization. The feuding top officials in New Mexico corrections provided little direction or leadership as the prison drifted toward increasingly arbitrary, inconsistent, and coercive tactics of control, which further incited inmate rage. Inmate relations also fragmented as the organized protests of the earlier period gave way to infighting and violence among inmates. The riot that erupted in 1980 reflected the disorganized relations among both agents of the state and inmates.

Since the 1980 riot, court-ordered reforms have been implemented and much of the poor living conditions and the overcrowding that had existed prior to 1980 have been eliminated. Yet PNM continued for several more years to experience the violence and escapes that characterized the disorder that led up to the 1980 riot (Galan 1988). The ideological, political, and administrative strife that had created instability after 1975 continued into the late 1980s.

A clear mission for corrections has yet to emerge in New Mexico and other states since the demise of the rehabilitative ideal in the mid-1970s. The mere warehousing of inmates is not a mission; it is not a means to any end that might give corrections departments a guiding direction. As Cullen and Gilbert (1982) argue, the rehabilitative ideal gives a legitimizing philosophy to the correctional enterprise. Any other approach becomes an absurdity as we spend more and more money to warehouse a seemingly never-ending stream of offenders in institutions that serve no apparent purpose but brutalization. Given this lack of direction, confused and contradictory policies continue to rule penal institutions. New Mexico, with the introduction of determinate sentencing in 1979, clearly moved away from the rehabilitative ideal. Yet its top correctional administrators have, in an on-again-off-again fashion, promoted rehabilitation.

This lack of policy direction has been fueled by a constant turnover of top administrators (see Appendix A). Complex organizations of all types are disrupted by the process of "administrative succession" (Gouldner 1954). Prisons are especially subject to instability when a new set of top administrators takes over and attempts to remold the organization in a

new direction. In New Mexico, this often disruptive process of administrative succession has been repeated on numerous occasions since 1975. As I write elsewhere (Colvin 1982: 456), "the [New Mexico] state corrections department was becoming *increasingly disorganized* as a result of the steady turnover in administrators. One warden and one secretary of corrections had administered the prison from 1970 to 1975, but after the 1975 shake-up, the prison [during the next four years] went through four wardens and [the department] through four secretaries."

New Mexico, which from 1966 to 1990 had a constitutional limit of one four-year successive term of office for its governor, was especially susceptible to the disruptive consequences of administrative succession. Each new governor in the 1970s and 1980s had a new agenda for corrections and placed a new set of top administrators in charge to carry out this new agenda. And, at times, a governor simultaneously placed into key corrections department positions administrators who were at odds over the direction that correctional programs should take. From one four-year administration to the next, then, a new set of policies and a new set of corrections administrators had been put in place. PNM and other prisons throughout the United States have been increasingly unable to insulate their organizations from the political winds and whims emanating from their state capitol buildings and governors' mansions. The result has been continued disruption of policies and goals and a prison organization that is pulled in often contradictory directions.

The influence of the New Mexico Governor's Office on PNM has grown since the 1960s. The independence of PNM and its warden gradually eroded after 1969 as it came under the purview of other executive agencies. To an increasing degree throughout the 1970s, these agencies, rather than PNM itself, acted on the Governor's behalf in presenting budgets and corrections initiatives to the state legislature. From the late 1960s to 1980, three agencies, the Corrections Commission, the Corrections Central Office, and the Governor's Council on Criminal Justice Planning, played larger roles. They supplanted PNM as lead agency for corrections. These three agencies along with PNM were eventually combined during a massive 1978 reorganization to form part of a new Criminal Justice Department; they immediately struggled for the lead role in developing correctional policies.

The major force behind the 1978 reorganization, Governor Jerry Apodaca, left office in January 1979.His successor, Governor Bruce King (who had also served as governor from 1971 to 1975), dismantled key aspects of Apodaca's reorganized Criminal Justice Department. Governor King then gave simultaneous but vague messages of support for the leading role in corrections to the Corrections Commission, Corrections Central Office,

and the former Governor's Council staff, three entities within the department that were actively pushing corrections in divergent and contradictory directions. As a result, the corrections administration became even more disorganized and fragmented as lines of authority and accountability dissolved. The confusing array of agencies that sprang up to oversee New Mexico corrections during the 1970s reflects the changing and, by 1979 and 1980, chaotic organizational context in which PNM operated.

The federal courts have attempted to provide direction, stability, and consistency in prison operations, as well as humane living conditions for inmates. But federal court intervention often becomes another confounding element in this confused direction of policies, especially, as has been the case in New Mexico, when agents of state governments ignore, fight, or attempt to undo court-mandated reforms.

A significant consequence of this confusion in policies is the failure to establish and maintain a consistent and effective strategy of control within the prison organization. There are obvious contradictions within a prison organization where an outnumbered staff, with limited resources, attempts to control the movement and behavior of captives who have no inherent reason to cooperate with their keepers (Silberman 1978). Such a situation is ripe for conflict. Strategies of control, which attempt to overcome these inherent contradictions, emerge and, for periods of time, are effective in holding the basic conflict between keepers and captives in a dormant state. Underlying the crisis we are witnessing in our prisons is the breakdown of control strategies that had placated and accommodated inmates and provided them with a self-interest in maintaining order.

A major focus of this book is to lay out the history of control strategies at one particular penitentiary. How did accommodative control strategies work? Why did they begin to break down? What internal organizational strains led to their demise? What forces external to the penitentiary hastened the breakdown of these controls? After these mechanisms of control broke down, the keepers had to devise new ways of keeping their charges in line. What were these new strategies of control? How did they affect relations between inmates and staff? How did they affect relations among inmates?

These questions focus on the dialectical interplay between the keepers and the captives. The prison contains within its walls opposing elements that make up its system. These elements tend to respond to and shape each other. As one shifts, the other shifts correspondingly, though not necessarily in ways that can be predicted. By applying Francis T. Cullen's (1983) concept of "structuring variables" to the prison setting, social control strategies by the prison administration can be seen to channel the behavior patterns of inmates. Shifts in control strategies thus may have

unexpected and unintended consequences for the prison organization by altering the nature of relationships between staff and inmates and among inmates themselves. At times, these consequences can be explosive. The emerging crisis in the late 1970s at PNM can be understood as an outgrowth of such a shift in administrative control patterns. As is documented in the following chapters, when controls at PNM shifted from accommodative to coercive strategies, open confrontations between the keepers and captives emerged, and eventually solidarity among inmates gave way to fragmentation and infighting as inmate relations also became more coercive.

This book, then, draws attention to four interconnected tendencies that have disrupted prison organizations over the past two decades. First has been the lack of an effective legitimizing philosophy that gives direction to our correctional policies. As Christopher Adamson (1984) has demonstrated, correctional policies often shift with changes in the business cycle. Corresponding with the economic downturns of the 1970s and early 1980s, the demise in our consensus about rehabilitation has set corrections policies adrift. They are now dictated more by events growing out of the crisis than by any concerted, well-conceived plan of action. Second is the growing influence of politicians over correctional operations. The waning ideological commitment to rehabilitation and the growing influence of the "crime issue" in political campaigns have made prisons more subject than ever before to the whims of politicians. Third is the rapid turnover of top prison administrators who are unable to establish and carry through a consistent policy for corrections before they are dismissed by their politically appointed superiors. Disorganization in the corrections administration has been an obvious result of this repeated process of administrative succession. And fourth is the shift in control strategies over inmates. These four trends have had unexpected but nevertheless drastic consequences for the prison organization.

I bring personal experience to the study of prison organizations, particularly the Penitentiary of New Mexico. While completing my master's degree in sociology in the early 1970s, I served an internship as a correctional caseworker at the Federal Correctional Institution, Texarkana, Texas. I was exposed to highly trained professionals who understood the intricacies of inmate management and control. My mentor, O.C. Jenkins, an experienced caseworker at the federal prison, told me that you must always find an "honorable way out" for an inmate during a confrontation or dispute and to always make sure that each individual inmate is tied into your program through his perception that "he has something to lose by going against you and something to gain by going along with you." This bit of common sense, I discovered later, was actually an important key to

control within prisons. During the completion of my master's degree I also studied prison organizational change and wrote a paper about administrative succession and disruption of prison organizations for a seminar in complex organizations.

After I graduated with my master's degree, I was told by a trusted advisor, my father, to experience the real world for a few years. I moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, intent on working in corrections for a few years before continuing my graduate studies. My experience of the real world turned out to be somewhat more than I had anticipated. My move to Santa Fe coincided with the 1974 recession, which caused a doubling in the unemployment rate in New Mexico. For nine months in 1974, I worked sporadically in construction jobs and as a hospital orderly; but mostly I remained unemployed awaiting word on the many state jobs for which I had applied. This experience, no doubt, accounts for my focus on economic factors and unemployment in understanding social change. Finally, in late December 1974, I was called for a job interview at PNM.

During 1975, a year marked by important changes in the New Mexico prison organization, I worked at PNM as a counselor in education programs and as a parole officer in charge of coordinating a college release program between the prison and a local college. These two roles allowed me to observe PNM first-hand and, more importantly, to discuss the prison's history to that point with inmates, staff members, and officials.

In 1976, I became a corrections planner for the New Mexico Governor's Council on Criminal Justice Planning, which at that time was largely the "pass through" agency for federal funding of criminal justice programs. By 1977, however, the Governor's Council became the lead agency for New Mexico corrections policy as it spearheaded for then-Governor Jerry Apodaca a massive reorganization of state criminal justice agencies. In my capacity as corrections planner, I helped develop "Standards and Goals" for New Mexico corrections, assisted with the development of the "New Mexico Corrections Master Plan," wrote legislation based on the "Standards and Goals" and "Master Plan," reviewed budget requests from PNM, and assisted with the development of the Governor's reorganization plan. I thus observed and had a small role in the political process during this period of massive changes in New Mexico corrections.

In retrospect, many of the high hopes for corrections that were enunciated in the New Mexico Standards and Goals and the New Mexico Corrections Master Plan seem strangely irrelevant to the actual direction the prison organization took in the late 1970s. I began in 1978 to have a sense of despair and profound doubt about our capacity to determine the shape of New Mexico corrections. The Standards and Goals and Master Plan (which outlined progressive changes in corrections) were only effective to

the extent that the Governor's Office gave them strong backing. By the time the Governor gave his full support to these initiatives, his term of office was close to expiration. In 1978, with new gubernatorial elections in a state that does not allow incumbent governors to succeed themselves, it became clear that initiatives begun in 1976 would not be completed. It also was becoming increasingly clear to me that the organizational structure of the prison was much more complex and resistant to planned, progressive change than I had imagined. Despite the Standards and Goals and good intentions of most top administrators in New Mexico corrections, PNM by 1978 was becoming increasingly unsafe, as violence became commonplace and conditions deteriorated.

I left my position in New Mexico corrections in late 1978 to continue my graduate studies, which focused on organizational change, the sociology of corrections, criminology, and political economy. I returned to graduate school with a new appreciation for the concept of "structural constraints" on human action.

A year and a half later, the riot at PNM occurred. Within a week of this event, in an attempt to update information for a graduate paper I had been writing on the organizational change at PNM from 1975 to 1978, I returned to Santa Fe. During my conversations with contacts in the correctional community (both staff members and former inmates), I was steered toward the office of New Mexico Attorney General Jeff Bingaman, who was preparing to undertake the official investigation of the riot. I gave Attorney General Bingaman the graduate paper based on my earlier observations of PNM; I discussed with him the possibility of my gathering more information. The following day, he offered me a role in the official investigation as a principal researcher into the long-term causes of the prison riot. I accepted.

The Attorney General made a decision very early in the investigation that was crucial for the inquiry. He had a choice of whether or not to involve the Attorney General's Office in the criminal investigations connected with the takeover and killings during the riot. He chose not to be part of these criminal investigations, which were then handled by the Santa Fe County District Attorney's Office. This decision allowed me and the other investigators involved with the Attorney General's probe to conduct confidential interviews with inmates, staff members, and officials and to guarantee the anonymity essential for encouraging respondents to give information during interviews. Respondents were asked not to mention their names during the taped interviews; and interview transcripts did not identify respondents. In addition, inmate respondents were asked not to mention the names of other inmates since ours was not a criminal investigation. This final condition was necessary to avoid any possibility of our

inmate respondents' being labeled as "snitches" or informants, a particularly sensitive issue following the riot. This procedure meant that our respondents could not be called into court based on anything they might have told interviewers involved in the Attorney General's probe.

A total of 302 respondents were interviewed during all phases of the New Mexico Attorney General's investigation. These included current and former correctional officers, inmates, and state and corrections officials. Each interview lasted from two to four hours. In addition to these interviews, former prisoners and current and former staff members, who had been reliable sources of information for me in the past, provided important insights and information during the investigation. We also had access to the hundreds of other interviews that had been conducted by the New Mexico State Police during and immediately after the riot. Unless otherwise noted, quotes used in this book are drawn from the confidential interviews conducted during the New Mexico Attorney General's 1980 investigation of PNM. Throughout, I maintain confidentiality by identifying quotes only by the category of respondent: inmate, correctional officer (CO), or official.

The Attorney General's investigation consisted of two phases. First, we reconstructed the events during the riot itself (Office of the Attorney General 1980a). In this phase, 169 interviews were conducted. During this phase of interviewing, I asked preliminary questions of respondents about conditions leading up to the riot. These inquiries produced some useful information about conditions and the organizational structure of the prison, but more importantly became the basis for developing a comprehensive interview schedule, used during the second phase of the inquiry to conduct 133 interviews that focused on the long-term history of PNM (Office of the Attorney General 1980b).[1] This latter set of interviews included 34 correctional officers and 57 inmates who were selected through a random sample that was stratified by length of association with the prison.

I had primary responsibility during phase two of the Attorney General's probe for researching the long-term history of PNM and the conditions that led up to the 1980 riot. I conducted interviews and prepared the initial drafts of the phase two report. The research for this phase of the Attorney General's probe, however, was truly a team effort. The other investigators, report writers, and transcribers included Reese Fullerton (coordinator of phase two of the inquiry), David Brentlinger, Manny Aragon, Jim Wilson, Tim Orwig, Tess Monahan Fiddes, Ken Richards, Patrick Van Bargen, Carol Wantuchowicz, Patrick Whelan, Ray Gallagher, Jerrie Herrera, and Martha Wood. Michael Francke coordinated the inquiry during phase one.

I was the only social scientist and the only person who had worked in prisons to be employed on a full-time basis for the Attorney General's investigation. Ben M. Crouch, a professor of sociology at Texas A&M University, who has made extensive studies of prisons, provided me and the investigation staff with enormous assistance. Many of the insights in this study were the direct result of discussions, which often went late into the night, with Ben Crouch, who came to Santa Fe on several occasions during the investigation to assist with developing interview schedules, reviewing our reports, giving guidance to the investigators and the Citizens' Commission overseeing the probe, and generally helping to keep the inquiry on track. Ben Crouch's visits were especially helpful for me, since they allowed me to bounce ideas off an experienced prison researcher.

In September 1980, the final report of the Attorney General was released and I returned to graduate school to finish my doctoral studies. In 1982, I published my initial interpretation of the causes of the 1980 riot in *Social Problems* (Colvin 1982). The Attorney General's report and the *Social Problems* article do not provide the type of detailed social history that I think is necessary for a complete understanding of the organizational changes that led to the period of crisis in New Mexico corrections—a crisis that was punctuated by the 1980 riot. The current book draws upon these earlier works and the thousands of pages of interview transcripts from the New Mexico Attorney General's investigation. It also draws upon my own observations as a correctional employee and upon confidential interviews and discussions with scores of former prisoners, staff members, and corrections officials. These are people with whom I have developed mutual trust and who have been reliable sources of information throughout my association with New Mexico corrections.

Given my experience and academic training, I strongly believe that a sociological perspective, focusing on the prison organization and the structural changes that have occurred there, provides the most coherent explanation of the current prison crisis. The most immediate cause of prison disorder is the change in relations among inmates. This change cannot be understood without exploring the evolution of the organizational structure of prisons.

Both a prison administration's control structure and an inmate social structure contribute to the organization of prisons. The administration's control structure is comprised of the formal and informal relations of power and authority instituted and maintained by the prison staff to control inmate behavior. The inmate social structure involves relations of power, status, and economic exchange among inmates (Bowker 1977; Clemmer 1940; Davidson 1974; Kalinich 1980; Sykes 1958; Thomas and Petersen 1977). I deliberately use the term "inmate social structure,"

rather than "inmate subculture," to emphasize the relations of power among inmates rather than the supposedly isolated system of inmate roles, values, mores, and beliefs first emphasized by Clemmer (1940) and later by other researchers (cf., Bowker 1977). These authorities tend to perceive more of a subcultural than a social structural phenomenon when observing inmate relations. I have found the idea of an isolated inmate subculture to have little relevance in contemporary prisons. The structure of inmate relations, however, is extremely important for understanding the prison organization.

The prison administration's control structure greatly influences the pattern of inmate relations. Changes in the control structure have a potentially enormous impact on the inmate social structure. Thus, much attention is focused in the analysis on shifts in control strategies and their effect on inmate social relations.

These changes in the administration's control structure and the inmate social structure must be placed in a larger social context of historical and political trends outside the prison. As Jacobs (1977) makes clear in his case study of Stateville Penitentiary, changes within prisons are affected by and reflect changes in the larger society. While the current analysis attempts to go beyond Jacobs' "mass society" explanation by incorporating it within a "class society" perspective, it follows Jacobs' pioneering approach by connecting external with internal factors in understanding shifts in prison organizations. From the late 1960s to the 1980s, the U.S. experienced enormous ideological, economic, and political shifts that had direct consequences for control relations within prisons. A major focus of the current book is tracing the interaction between these important external and internal changes that affected the organizational development of PNM.

Before laying out the social history of this penitentiary, certain theoretical questions must first be considered. What forces and events of the larger society, external to prison organizations, have affected prisons in the last several decades? And what internal forces of change within the prison itself shape the prison organization? We consider these questions at a more theoretical level in the next chapter before exploring them through the concrete example of the organizational changes that took place at the Penitentiary of New Mexico.