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Professor Jeffrey Lin studies crime and punishment in the United States. His research, spanning the last decade, has informed significant changes to the New York City juvenile justice system and parole supervision practices in California. Since coming to DU, he has begun working with the state of Colorado to assess the effectiveness of new strategies of supervising offenders in the community. He has also started to study the management of sex offenders, assessing the utility of laws designed to control their continued offending.

Professor Lin brings a sociological perspective to the problems that state governments face in dealing with offenders and the systems of punishment that manage these offenders. This perspective maintains that criminal offending is not strictly behavioral. While individuals do make choices to offend, “crime” is also a product of how the state responds to those choices. For example, certain activities are now criminalized that were not previously criminalized (e.g., online sexual predation). Certain offenders are subject to more intense supervision than the average citizen (e.g., parolees and probationers), and are thus more likely to be caught when they do something illegal. Moreover, punishment patterns are subject to changes in the state’s orientation toward crime. Since 1980 the chances of going to prison for a crime have increased substantially, and those who go to prison now serve longer terms than they did in earlier eras. Nothing has changed about the criminal behaviors themselves. Burglaries remain burglaries. Assaults remain assaults. The critical change has occurred in official *responses* to those behaviors. Importantly, this increasingly punitive approach to crime has resulted in massive prison population growth that has strained state budgets.

In this time of financial uncertainty, states have begun to look for ways to reduce the costs of punishment without sacrificing public safety. They have turned to scholars like Professor Lin to guide their strategies, asking important questions such as:

- Which juvenile offenders should be supervised in the community instead of in secure facilities?
- Who can be released from prison with the least risk to public safety?

- Which sex offenders require intense supervision and which do not?
- What community supervision techniques are most effective at suppressing offending?

Professor Lin is passionate about using his academic work to address real-world issues. He actively seeks out opportunities to work with state agencies to improve their correctional practices. In both his research and teaching, he focuses on the ways that academics can utilize their findings to solve social problems.