

# Reintegrating the Concept of *Community* into Community-Based Corrections

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*Police administrators across the country are developing a range of community-oriented policing strategies at a time when community corrections administrators are moving in the opposite direction by applying traditional, offender-based policing concepts to probation and parole practice. I highlight the limitations of this new wave of intermediate sanction programs and then discuss the importance of community context (i.e., community attitudes, tolerance, support, and structure) to the development of effective adult supervision strategies. I conclude by describing the four key characteristics of a community-oriented approach to probation and parole supervision: (1) service brokerage, (2) advocacy for offenders and victims, (3) triage, and (4) location in the community.*

## INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING AND CURRENT COMMUNITY-CORRECTIONS PRACTICE—DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

In recent years a new term has been added to the police nomenclature: *community-oriented policing*<sup>1</sup>. This label has been placed on a wide range of police initiatives designed to solve underlying community problems rather than to respond to specific incidents or calls for service. Wilson and Kelling (1989, p. 49) offer the following simple description of the community-oriented approach to policing:

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Community-oriented policing means changing the daily work of the police to include investigating problems as well as incidents. It means defining as a problem whatever a significant body of public opinion regards as a threat to community order. It means working with the good guys, and not just against the bad guys.

The basic problem-solving techniques employed in these initiatives are certain to be familiar to community corrections administrators across the country: service brokerage and advocacy. A number of examples of the successful implementation of community-oriented policing in U.S. cities are provided in a recent article by Wilson and Kelling (1989):

In Newport News, Virginia, the police department decided to take a new approach to a housing project that was plagued by drug users and, not surprisingly, also had the highest burglary rate in the city. They went into the project and talked to the residents about their concerns. The police found that both crime *and* deteriorated, inadequate housing were priority areas. They subsequently began the task of coordinating improvements in the housing project with other city agencies [p. 46].

In Los Angeles, when residents in one neighborhood "complained to the police about graffiti on walls and gang symbols on stop signs, officers assigned to the Community Mobilization Project did more than just try to catch the gang youths who were wielding the spray cans; they also organized citizens' groups and Boy Scouts to paint over the graffiti as fast as they were put up" [p. 48].

And in New York City, when local merchants in one neighborhood "complained to the police about homeless persons who created a mess on the streets and whose presence frightened away customers, the officer who responded did not roust the vagrants but instead suggested that the merchants hire them to clean the streets in front of their store every morning. The merchants agreed, and now the streets are clean all day and the customers find the store more attractive" [p. 48].

These three examples are certainly illustrative of a new set of priorities in many police departments across the country, in tacit recognition of the need to focus our crime control policies on efforts to "change places, not people" (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989, p. 47). By directly involving police officers in such a community change effort, community-oriented policing reforms are expanding the role of police to include functions traditionally associated with other agencies,

both inside (e.g., probation, parole) and outside (e.g., social welfare, mental health) the criminal justice system.

One apparent byproduct of this process of role redefinition is the change in police officers' view of the general community:

Traditionally, police officers after about three years get to thinking that everybody's a loser. That's the only people you're dealing with. In community policing you're dealing with the good citizens, helping them solve problems [Officer Robin Kirk, Houston Police Department, as quoted by Wilson and Kelling, 1989, p. 52].

Similarly, the results of a number of community-oriented police experiments suggest that the *community's* attitude toward the police also improves when these programs are implemented. To many observers, this change may be the most significant aspect of the reform effort, because it suggests a strategy for improving not only police-community relations, but also the relations between the courts and the community, and corrections and the community.

Ironically, it appears that as police administrators move to embrace a *problem-oriented* style of interaction with offenders and communities, *community corrections* administrators are introducing traditional (offender-based) policing concepts—utilizing surveillance, control, and incident-based apprehension strategies—which deemphasize the need to examine (and change) the underlying community context of offender behavior. The design and development of such *intermediate* sanctions as intensive supervision, house arrest, electronic monitoring, and split sentencing has been guided by a need to demonstrate to the public that punishment and control, rather than offender treatment, are now the primary task of community corrections. For example, in the name of punishment and “control,” we now (1) conduct random drug and alcohol tests, (2) set strict curfews and then monitor compliance utilizing home visits and/or electronic surveillance techniques, (3) require probation fees and/or community service, (4) establish *mandatory* treatment conditions (e.g., mandatory referrals in the areas of employment, education, substance abuse, individual/family problems), and (5) use a short prison sentence to “shock” offenders into compliance. Moreover, the probation and parole officers who monitor offenders' compliance with the multiple conditions of supervision are expected to return offenders to prison or jail if they refuse to abide by these conditions. As Todd Clear recently observed: “The new probation officer is just as likely to bust a felon as encourage him to attend

Alcoholics Anonymous" (Clear, 1987, as quoted by Petersilia, 1988, p. 4).

In one sense, this strategy is a response to the community, in that the public's perception is that offenders deserve more punishment (and require more control) than they currently receive in this country.<sup>2</sup> However, it is also apparent that the reason community members call for more punishment is that *they simply want to make their neighborhoods safer places to live*, and they are apparently convinced that punishment, rather than rehabilitation, is the most effective mechanism for accomplishing this goal. Clear and Cole (1986, p. 532) emphasize the futility of this approach:

A move to meet public demands for punitiveness detracts in the long run from public confidence in corrections. Punishments increase, prisons are filled to overflowing, and still there is crime in the streets. This is a cycle that is nearly impossible to break: the experience of crime leads to a public outcry for punishment as a means to prevent crime, but because the increased punishment has little direct effect on the amount of crime, the cry for more punishment continues unabated.

It is precisely because of this misplaced focus on offender punishment and control—rather than community safety—that the current wave of intermediate sanctions has been explicitly designed to monitor closely and swiftly *react* to early evidence of offender noncompliance. In actuality, punishment and control are simply means to an end: neighborhood safety. However, it is difficult to envision how a strategy designed to punish and control a relatively small number of offenders could have a significant effect on neighborhood safety. In this respect, it seems clear that if the new wave of intermediate sanction programs is to become something more than a short-term solution to prison and jail crowding, program administrators will have to find a way to redefine these programs in terms of *community* protection rather than *offender* punishment and control.

In this article, I describe the interaction between offenders and communities in some detail. I then discuss the potential impact of *community-oriented* probation and parole interventions on the quality of life in our communities. These interventions are a natural extension of the current wave of intermediate sanctions programs that are *already in place* across the country. Drawing on the results of a recently completed evaluation of intensive probation supervision in Massachusetts, I suggest four key elements of a proactive, community-oriented supervision strategy: (1) the coordination and development of

community resources to assist offenders with problems in the areas of substance abuse, employment/education, and marital/family relations; (2) the generation of support for the deescalation of both community-based and institution-based sanctions; (3) a focus on the problems and needs of communities as well as offenders; and (4) the direct placement of probation officer teams in neighborhoods, with responsibility for resource development (as well as offender control) within a specific geographic area. These recommendations for reform are based on a belief that it is time now for the "panacea pendulum" to swing back in the direction of *community-based* solutions to the crime problem.<sup>3</sup> Community-oriented policing represents one important step in this direction, but the development of community-oriented probation and parole supervision strategies is also needed.

#### *OFFENDERS, COMMUNITIES, AND THE ISSUE OF CONTROL*

Each year, approximately three-fourths of all offenders under correctional "control" are supervised in community settings. In 1987, for example, 64.8% of the adult correctional population (which totaled 3,460,960) was placed on probation, while an additional 10.5% was placed on parole. It is interesting to consider that while the *prison* crowding problem has received much recent attention (e.g., Blumstein, 1983; Petersilia, 1987; Irwin and Austin, 1987), very few commentators have highlighted the fact that our probation and parole populations have been increasing at a *faster* rate than our prison and jail populations (e.g., Tonry and Will, 1988). During the five year period between 1983 and 1987, the overall adult correctional population increased by 39.8%, from 2,475,100 to 3,460,960. However, the parole (47% increase) and probation (41.6% increase) populations grew faster than the prison (32.6% increase) and jail (32.7% increase) populations during this period.

It should be apparent that probation and parole crowding pose a more *immediate* threat to the community than either prison or jail crowding, since it is probationers and parolees who are currently "at risk" in the community. In fact, a number of these offenders do fail while under community supervision, due to rearrest, reconviction, or technical violations. A recent review of new state prison admissions (Byrne and Kelly, 1989) revealed that between 30% and 50% of new prison admissions in a given year were community supervision failures.

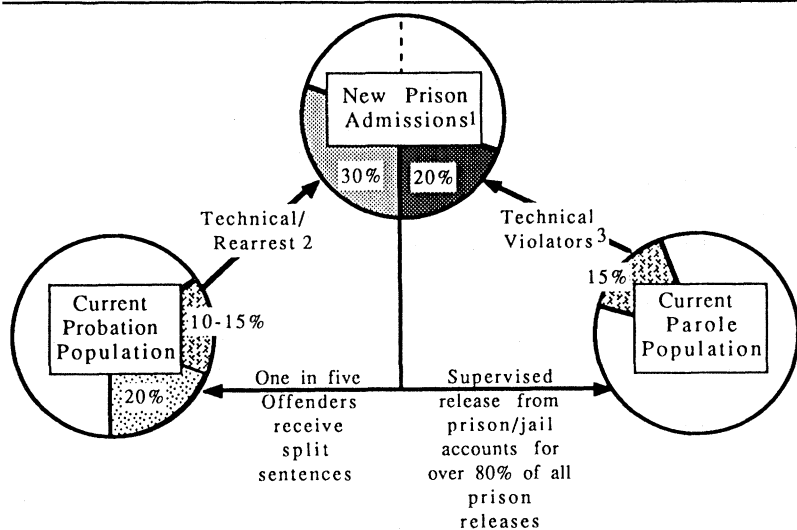
Clearly, any discussion of possible *solutions* to the correctional crowding problem must recognize that many offenders move back and forth between community and correctional control during their criminal careers.<sup>4</sup> I highlight this point in Figure 1.

The obvious question becomes: How can we break this cycle of failure? One obvious answer is that we should continue to expand intermediate sanctions as front-end sentencing alternatives, while reducing our reliance on incapacitation. As Lauen (1988, p. 117) suggests, we need to "(1) view prison as a finite resource, (2) reduce the number of people sent to prison, and (3) reduce the length of stay of select inmates." However, such *true diversion* is difficult to achieve for two reasons. First, front-end alternatives often "widen the net" of social control, with little overall effect on the prison population (Baird, 1988). Second, since the primary focus of these new intermediate sanctions is offender punishment and control, a significant number of these offenders are being returned to prison or jail as technical failures after only short periods of community supervision (Pearson, 1987; Byrne and Kelly, 1989). This suggests that for intermediate sanctions to be effective, they must be understood and accepted by "in/out" decision makers (Clear and Baird, 1987) as alternatives to prison and/or jail. In addition, program administrators need to develop supervision strategies that are proactive and community oriented rather than reactive and offender oriented. I will expand on both of these points later in this article.

To assess the appropriateness of a community-oriented supervision strategy, it is necessary to consider the broad community context of offender behavior and to identify the interaction among offenders, peers, and family members in these settings. An examination of the professional criminology literature reveals that researchers have "re-discovered" (and revised) the concept of community as originally presented by Shaw and McKay in the 1920s (Bursik, 1988; Stark, 1987; Reiss, 1986; Byrne and Sampson, 1986). A review of this literature provides a strong conceptual framework for community-oriented probation and parole supervision strategies.<sup>5</sup>

### *THE IMPACT OF OFFENDERS ON COMMUNITIES*

Offenders affect their immediate communities in a number of direct and indirect ways. For example, the use of probation for a serious (i.e.,



**Figure 1: The Interaction Between Community and Correctional Control**

SOURCE: Byrne and Kelly (1989).

NOTE: Data on the movement of offenders from community to correctional control are from a variety of sources, but see the 1986 *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* (Table 6.24). Blumstein (1983) has provided perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of demographic effects on prison crowding. For a review of recent shifts in sentencing policy, see Clear (1984) and Tonry and Will (1988). For an overview of the crowding problem, see Gottfredson and Taylor (1983) and Petersilia (1987).

1. We do not depict the interaction between prison and jail populations in this figure. However, prison crowding has a "trickle down" effect on jail crowding (see Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988a, 1988b 1988c), since statebound offenders (as well as parole violators) are held in county/local jails when the prison system is over capacity.

2. Estimated from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin (1984, Table 6). For example, in 1985, there were 1,870,132 adults on probation. A *conservative* estimate of the failure rate for these offenders is included above.

3. The figure is for new supervised releases during a *one year* follow-up period. See *Examining Recidivism*, reprinted in Bureau of Justice Statistics (1988a, p. 111). Once again, our estimate of the percentage of all parolees returned to prison in a given year (e.g., 15% of the 277,438 offenders on parole in 1985) are rather conservative.

felony) or repeat offender may erode public confidence in the criminal justice system. This is especially true if neighborhood residents see no *visible* evidence of the correctional system's control over these offenders. As Wilson and Kelling (1989, p. 48) observe: "Every police officer knows that most crimes don't get solved if victims and witnesses do not cooperate." When the result of such "cooperation" is the immediate return of the convicted offender to the community with no apparent

"control" by the correctional system, it is easy to understand the current support for a more punitive sentencing policy.

Of course, it is not simply the fact that these offenders receive probation that is at issue; rather, it is their attitudes and behavior while in the community that concerns residents. The life-styles of high-risk offenders often challenge existing community *control* standards, due to their public (e.g., motor vehicle violations, license/liquor law violations, littering) and private (e.g., nonsupport, family relationships) behavior. These same offenders may also challenge *public order* in a number of ways (e.g., disorderly person, loitering, failure to disperse, prostitution, drug use) that require community residents to request additional police resources for the area. And finally, these offenders may threaten *community protection* and *public safety* by committing (and getting arrested for) a wide range of felonies and misdemeanors, often in their own community.<sup>6</sup> Since there are obviously many other offenders in each community who are never arrested and/or convicted, the public's desire to punish those who *are* caught is understandable, especially when these more serious violations are viewed by community residents as an outgrowth (or escalation) of other (earlier) forms of disorder that have not been controlled.

We can begin to understand the adverse effects of offenders on communities by examining the findings from a variety of empirical studies of communities and crime. Blumstein et al. (1986), for example, have estimated the impact of *known* offenders on the crime rates of the communities in which these offenders reside.<sup>7</sup> Other researchers have examined such related issues as the impact of crime rates on neighborhood deterioration (Bursik, 1986a, 1986b) and fear of crime (Greenberg, 1986; Skogan, 1986; Skogan, this issue). In addition, a number of researchers have attempted to estimate the social, economic, and political impact of current sentencing and correctional policies on communities. The *social* costs of community supervision are felt when offenders challenge informal neighborhood social controls. For example, offenders represent negative role models for young residents and thus their presence in the community may change the way parents supervise their children as well as the form and extent of neighborhood organization (McGahey, 1986). The *economic* cost of the community supervision of offenders is found in the financial loss associated with the crimes these offenders subsequently commit and in the cost of control itself (Michalowski and Pearson, 1987). And finally, the *political* cost of the community supervision of offenders can best be understood by



considering the “stakes” involved in releasing certain types of offenders into the community, and, consequently, the use of crime as a political issue (Finckenauer, 1978, 1982). In this regard, the impact of the Willie Horton case on the recent Presidential campaign provides a classic illustration of the consequences of a single release decision on the community’s attitude toward a correctional policy (i.e., furloughs for offenders serving life sentences). My point is simple: Offenders affect communities in a number of ways that not only influence the form and content of sentencing and correctional policies, but also influence the way the community views itself.

### *THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITIES ON OFFENDERS*

While it is true that offenders change communities, it is also true that communities change offenders in a variety of ways that can be either directly or indirectly related to offender recidivism. There are four elements of community context that can be identified: (1) community attitudes, (2) community tolerance, (3) community support/resource availability, and (4) community structure. Byrne and Kelly (1989, p. 4) recently highlighted the influence of these community context variables on adult supervision practices:

- (1) *Community Attitudes* toward punishment and various offender control strategies help shape both sentencing and correctional policy.
- (2) *Community Tolerance* for various forms of misbehavior (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism, gang control of certain areas) will affect both who ends up in court and how [convicted offenders] are supervised in community settings.
- (3) *Community Support* (i.e., resource availability) for individuals at risk, due to substance abuse, unemployment, a plethora of individual and family problems, and general living conditions, will directly affect probation officers’ assessments, referrals, and follow-up procedures.
- (4) *Community Structure* defines the general context in which traditional, offender-based community control strategies must operate, in that “certain kinds of community structure either weaken forms of social control that induce conformity to law-abiding norms or generate controls that inhibit conformity” (Reiss, 1986, p. 15). For example, legal and illegal community opportunity systems . . . may be directly related to

the success of various community control strategies (e.g., the use of special conditions mandating employment, drug testing, or curfews).

It is only by examining the influence of each of these elements of community context on *current* policies and practices that we can begin to develop a specific strategy for reintegrating the concept of community into community-based corrections. In the following section, we discuss each of these elements of the community context of correctional control policies.

### *Community Attitudes*

*Community attitudes* toward punishment and various offender control strategies help shape a number of decisions about offenders: Who should be incarcerated and for how long? Under what conditions should offenders be released (if ever)? How intensively should offenders be supervised in community settings? Under what circumstances should offenders be returned to prison? An examination of the Willie Horton case underscores the potential impact of community attitudes on current correctional control policies and practices. The facts of this case are generally known by most Americans:

On April 4, 1987, William Horton was arrested in Maryland and charged with the rape of a woman and assault and battery with a knife of her fiance after breaking into the couple's home. At the time of his arrest, Horton was an escapee from the Northeast Correctional Center in Massachusetts, where he was serving a life sentence (with no parole) for first degree murder and armed robbery, stemming from his 1975 conviction for the fatal knifing of a 17-year-old gas station attendant in Lawrence, Massachusetts (on October 26, 1974). Horton had escaped from the Northeast Correctional Center by simply not returning from an unsupervised furlough (his eleventh) in June of 1986. A number of questions about the appropriateness of allowing furloughs for first degree murderers arose in the spring of 1987 and followed Governor Dukakis throughout the presidential campaign. Bowing to intense community opposition to the state's furlough program, the governor placed an official ban on furloughs for first degree lifers in December of 1987, and in April of 1988 he signed legislation to ban furloughs for first degree lifers.<sup>8</sup>

The legislation to ban furloughs for first degree lifers was developed in response to an initiative petition by a community group called

CAUS—Citizens Against Unsafe Society—in the fall of 1987, which garnered 52,407 petitions in support of a furlough ban (Bidinotto, 1988). The legislation was also affected by the intense media coverage of the event. A local newspaper—the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune*—ran over 200 stories on the furlough issue, as well as such related topics as the public's right to offender record information. The reporters who covered the story (Susan Forrest and Barbara Walsh) received the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in 1988, an accomplishment that both large and small newspapers across the country certainly noticed. Consequently, correctional policymakers and administrators are likely to be monitored more closely in the future by both the media and "public interest" organizations. In anticipation of closer scrutiny, I suspect that decision makers will reassess their current policies and practices and—in areas with potential "Willie Horton effects"—they will restructure their decision-making apparatus to ensure greater accountability and control.

It is in this respect that the consequences of the Willie Horton case transcend the individual impact of Horton's actions on his victims and the general impact of the Horton issue on the presidential campaign. They also move beyond a discussion of who should be furloughed and under what conditions. The Horton case raised the decision-making stakes for each of the key decision makers in the correctional system: for politicians who develop sentencing policy, for prison administrators who must control the institutional behavior of offenders and make difficult release decisions in crowded institutions, and for community corrections administrators who must decide on the type and intensity of community supervision that is needed for offenders. The Horton case also did something else: It raised the stakes for communities considering the request for the siting of a new institution, halfway house, or group home in their area. Not surprisingly, the success of the furlough reform effort has heightened general community opposition to alternatives to incarceration. Apparently, this is true not only in Massachusetts, but across the country. When faced with such opposition, the easy, short-term solution is to utilize *more control* in both institutional and community settings. However, the simple truth is that while getting "tough" with offenders is certainly good *politics*, it is not necessarily good policy.

The recent community support for the use of imprisonment is a good example. A study by Petersilia, Turner, and Peterson (1986) revealed that a selective incapacitation strategy for "high-rate" offenders may indeed have a short-term suppression effect that is counterbalanced by

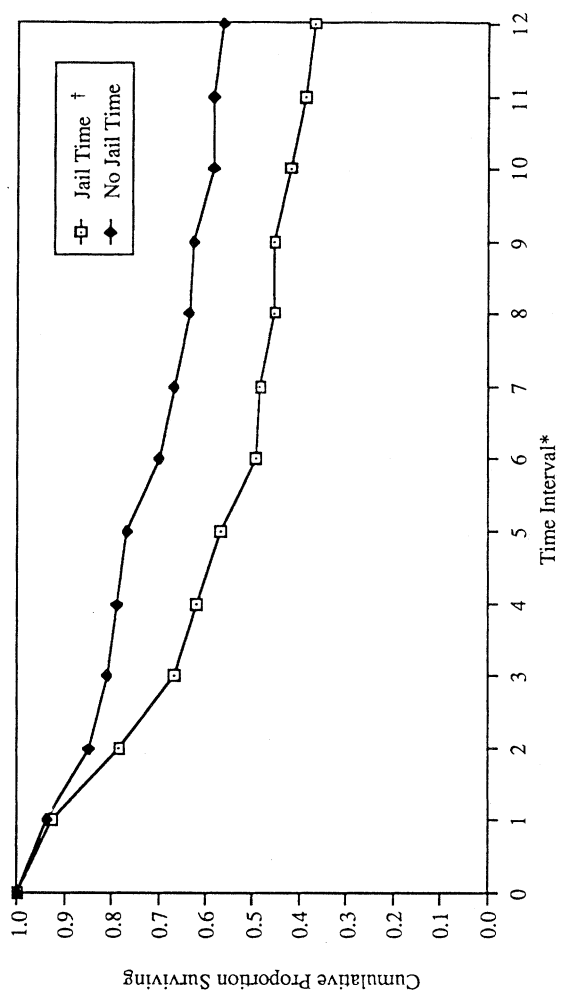
two factors: (1) noticeably higher recidivism rates by these offenders once they are released from prison or jail, and (2) the fact that current prediction models used to identify high-rate offenders often have false positive rates of over 50%. Even if the false positive rate *could* be lowered, it appears that what the community might gain from locking these offenders up is lost further down the road. These findings are supported by the results of the recent evaluation of intensive probation supervision in Massachusetts: During a one-year follow-up period, offenders with a recent history of incarceration were much more likely to fail (i.e., arraignment for a felony or a misdemeanor) than offenders who were not incarcerated (Byrne and Kelly, 1989).<sup>9</sup> I highlight this point in Figure 2 below. Contrary to the public's perception, the results of this study suggest that the increased use of prisons and jails results in communities that are less, not more, safe.

It should be recognized, however, that public opinion about crime and the criminal justice system is not adequately reflected by the two catchphrases "get tough" and "lock 'em up." A recent nationwide opinion survey revealed the following:

- In total, 76% of the respondents agreed that "judges should use probation for certain offenders as an alternative to prison."
- In total, 82% of the respondents agreed that "for some offenders, parole supervision is useful in deterring crime and in helping the individual to adjust to the community."
- In total, 64% of the respondents agreed that parole "performs a valuable safety net function that controls for sentencing disparities at earlier stages" [Research and Forecasts, Inc., 1985, as summarized in Jamieson and Flanagan, 1987, p. 88].

Perhaps even more interesting is the public's response to the question: "What should we do about prison overcrowding?" While 75% did agree that we should build more prisons, 67% of the respondents indicated that we should divert more offenders into alternative programs and 71% recommended that we "reserve prisons primarily for those whose crimes are the most severe" (Jamieson and Flanagan, 1987). How should we interpret these findings? Does the public really want to increase the capacity of *both* prisons and alternatives to prison? Do they believe that we would need more of *both* types of correctional programs if we did, in fact, restrict the use of prisons to only the most "severe" offenders?

One possible answer is that the public is ambivalent about current correctional strategies, but unsure of how to proceed. Up to this point,



Overall Lee-Desu Comparison Statistic: 7.846 df(1), p=.005

**Figure 2: Cumulative Proportion of Massachusetts IPS Offenders Who Survive (Rearrangement for a Felony or Misdemeanor) by Jail Time (Yes/No)**

SOURCE: Byrne and Kelly (1989).

\*Months 1-12. Offenders who were incarcerated due to a technical revocation have been censored at their date of termination.

† Jail time includes split sentences and/or incarceration in the one year prior to disposition. Proportion surviving until the end of the follow-up period is .57 for offenders with no recent jail time and .37 for offenders with jail time.

the new wave of intermediate sanctions (in particular, electronic monitoring) has been "marketed" to the public as an intermediate *punishment*, and the high level of surveillance required by these programs has been emphasized. While it is certainly possible that "surveillance-oriented community corrections is here to stay" (Petersilia, 1988, p. 4), it is also possible that residents will become disillusioned with these new programs once they recognize that increased punishment of a relatively small number of offenders does not accomplish what they are most interested in: safer communities.

### *Community Tolerance*

Communities may have an effect on offenders in other ways as well. *Community tolerance* for various forms of misbehavior (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism, gang control of certain areas) will affect local police practices and sentencing decisions, and, ultimately, how offenders are supervised in community settings. Moreover, *police tolerance* of different types of behavior in different types of neighborhoods will affect traditional adult supervision strategies in ways that are important to understand. For example, Douglas Smith's (1986) recent analysis of the neighborhood context of police behavior in three large U.S. cities revealed the following: (1) "Police patrol both people and places" (p. 337) and (2) "suspects confronted by police have a higher average probability of being arrested in lower-status neighborhoods than in higher-status areas" (p. 337). As I mentioned earlier, one consequence of a more punitive probation and parole system is a higher return to prison rate for offender misbehavior. To the extent that an offender's likelihood of return is affected by *where* they live as well as *what* they have done, we have found yet another mechanism for race and/or class-based disparity.<sup>10</sup> Program developers must recognize this possibility as they develop community-oriented supervision strategies.

### *Community Support*

A third aspect of the community context of adult supervision strategies is the level of *community support* for individuals at risk, due to substance abuse, unemployment, a plethora of individual and family problems, and general living conditions. Although such support can be manifested in a number of ways, it is resource availability that offers the

initial challenge to probation officers seeking help for offenders. Specifically, probation officers conduct an *initial* assessment of offender problems utilizing community resources (e.g., a variety of agencies conduct psychological assessments, educational assessments, alcohol/drug use assessments, and family assessments). Decisions on appropriate referrals and follow-up procedures are based on the availability, cost, and quality of these treatment resources. Of course, the issue of resource availability is less critical to the success of adult supervision strategies if we accept the notion that treatment programs do not reduce recidivism.<sup>11</sup> However, a review of the research on this issue does not support this position (see, e.g., Gendreau and Ross, 1987; Byrne and Kelly, 1989) and, therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that resource availability is an important factor to consider.

The link between resource availability and offender change was highlighted in the Massachusetts IPS evaluation, where initial offender improvement in the areas of substance abuse, employment, and marital/family relationships resulted in *significant* reductions in offender recidivism (i.e., rearraignments) during a one-year follow-up period (Byrne and Kelly, 1989). The authors point out that the offenders who were seen the most often by probation officers were the *most* likely to improve in experimental courts, but the *least* likely to improve in control courts. They explain this difference as follows:

It is evident that the implementation of this element of intensive supervision [quantity] results in a *proactive* style of probation supervision, whereby offenders are seen before (and not after) a problem arises. In contrast, probation officers in control courts appear to utilize a *reactive* style of supervision in that it is only *after* offenders begin to fail that they are seen more often by their probation officers. Thus, it is not only the *volume* of contacts but also the *timing* of contacts that is related to offender improvement in substance abuse, employment, and marital/family relationships [Byrne and Kelly, 1989, p. 273].

In the Massachusetts model of intensive supervision, the rationale for closer supervision was not surveillance, but service brokerage. The assumption was that "it takes time" to address the employment, substance abuse, and family treatment needs of offenders by linking offenders with problems to the appropriate treatment resource. Despite these generally positive findings about the impact of intensive supervision on offender change, it was also apparent that resource availability varied greatly from community to community in Massachusetts. A

recent assessment of these rehabilitative services by Spangenberg Associates (1987, p. 110) revealed the following:

Only a patchwork system of social services within and outside the probation system has been developed in the Commonwealth. As a result, services that may be available in one community are totally lacking in others. The availability of services in any given community is likely to be the result of a great many factors including the demographics of the area, the urban or rural character of the community, proximity to social work schools and related programs, the personal persuasiveness of the first justice or C.P.O., and, at times, pure chance.

The consequence of this service delivery shortfall for *offenders* is straightforward: Offenders with problems do not get the treatment they need. As a result, these offenders are more likely to continue their "careers" as criminals (and, in many cases, their movement from community to institution and back again). A recent analysis of the reason for eventual return to prison among several thousand prisoners in North Carolina underscores this point:

The type of individual most likely to return to prison (and most likely to have a *small* time until recidivism) is a young, black male with a large number of previous incarcerations, who is a drug addict and/or alcoholic, and whose previous incarceration was lengthy and for a crime against property [Schmidt and Witte, 1988, p. 87].

These results underscore the futility of developing supervision strategies that allocate limited correctional resources to offender monitoring, apprehension, and punishment rather than to offender control through treatment (Clear and O'Leary, 1983).

### *Community Structure*

A fourth element of community context is *community structure*. Reiss recently reviewed the available evidence on the interaction between offenders and communities and concluded that

The empirical foundation of policies and programs calling for community interventions to reduce crime is that the structure and organization of communities affect the crime rate *independent* of the individual characteristics of residents and offenders or the culture and organization of the



society. Offender characteristics contribute to predictions of recidivism, and so does the density of offenders in a community and its social organization. *Each of these factors has an effect on recidivism independent of the others.* Thus a crime reduction program for delinquent recidivists may require intervention into the lives of delinquents, their families and communities [Reiss, 1986, p. 24, emphasis added].

Reiss's assessment of community structure suggests that *offender-based* community control strategies are incomplete, since they take a "closed system" view of correctional interventions: *change the offender and not the community.* Offender improvement in such areas as substance abuse, employment, education, and marital/family relationships is an admirable goal in itself, given the link between offender change and recidivism reduction (Byrne and Kelly, 1989). However, such improvement may be made more (or less) difficult by a variety of community factors, which are important to understand.

A number of recent empirical studies support this position. For example, Gottfredson and Taylor (1986) recently reported that the risk of recidivism posed by parolees released into 90 Baltimore neighborhoods was at least partially explained by a set of previously overlooked socioenvironmental variables, including such factors as level of incivility, deterioration of the neighborhood, and other situational factors. According to the authors, it is the "interaction effects of environmental and offender characteristics" that hold the key to understanding patterns of recidivism. Other researchers have also examined the impact of community characteristics on offender behavior. Stark (1987, pp. 894-895) reviewed this *ecological* research and concluded that "there are five aspects of urban neighborhoods that characterize high deviance areas of cities. . . . These essential factors are (1) density; (2) poverty; (3) mixed use; (4) transience; and (5) dilapidation." According to Stark (1987, p. 895), these factors result in the following responses by area residents: "(1) moral cynicism among residents; (2) increased opportunities for crime and deviance; (3) increased motivation to deviate; and (4) diminished social control." If this scenario is accurate, it points to the need for probation and parole officers to act as *advocates for change* in the communities where offenders reside. Elliot Currie recently described the complexity of this community-level change effect:

If we are serious about attacking the roots of this American Affliction [crime], we must build a society that is less unequal, less depriving, less disruptive of family and community ties, less corrosive of cooperative

values. In short, we must begin to take on the enormous task of creating the conditions of community life in which individuals can live together in compassionate and cooperative ways [Currie, 1985, pp. 225-226, as quoted by Gibbons, 1988, p. 22].

Figure 3 depicts the range of person-environment interactions that social ecologists suggest are related to offender behavior. In this model, individual behavior is viewed as the product of a variety of influences, including individual, family, peer, and neighborhood characteristics. What can *not* be depicted in this model is the mechanism for successful interventions in each of these areas by probation and parole agencies, given current community attitudes, tolerance, and support. I describe the necessary conditions for one possible *community-oriented* intervention strategy in the following section.

#### *A STRATEGY FOR REINTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY INTO COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONS*

The paradoxical effect of the current correctional crisis is evident in that it offers both an impediment to change (i.e., we define the problem as one of prison crowding rather than community control) and an opportunity for reform (i.e., decision makers must consider new alternatives during this period). Unfortunately, a review of the new wave of intermediate sanctions—such as intensive supervision, split sentencing, house arrest, and electronic monitoring—does not suggest that we are about to return to a community-oriented approach to offenders in the near future. Instead, we appear to be embracing the very tactics that police executives across the country are rejecting: a focus on specific *incidents* rather than on underlying *community problems*.

The basic philosophy of community-oriented policing has much to offer community corrections administrators. This is not surprising, since the community intervention techniques—brokerage and advocacy—are borrowed from the not so distant past of probation and parole.<sup>12</sup> However, it is clear that any attempt to introduce a community orientation to the *current* wave of intermediate sanctions must recognize that community attitudes have become more punitive and that community protection, rather than individual offender rehabilitation, must

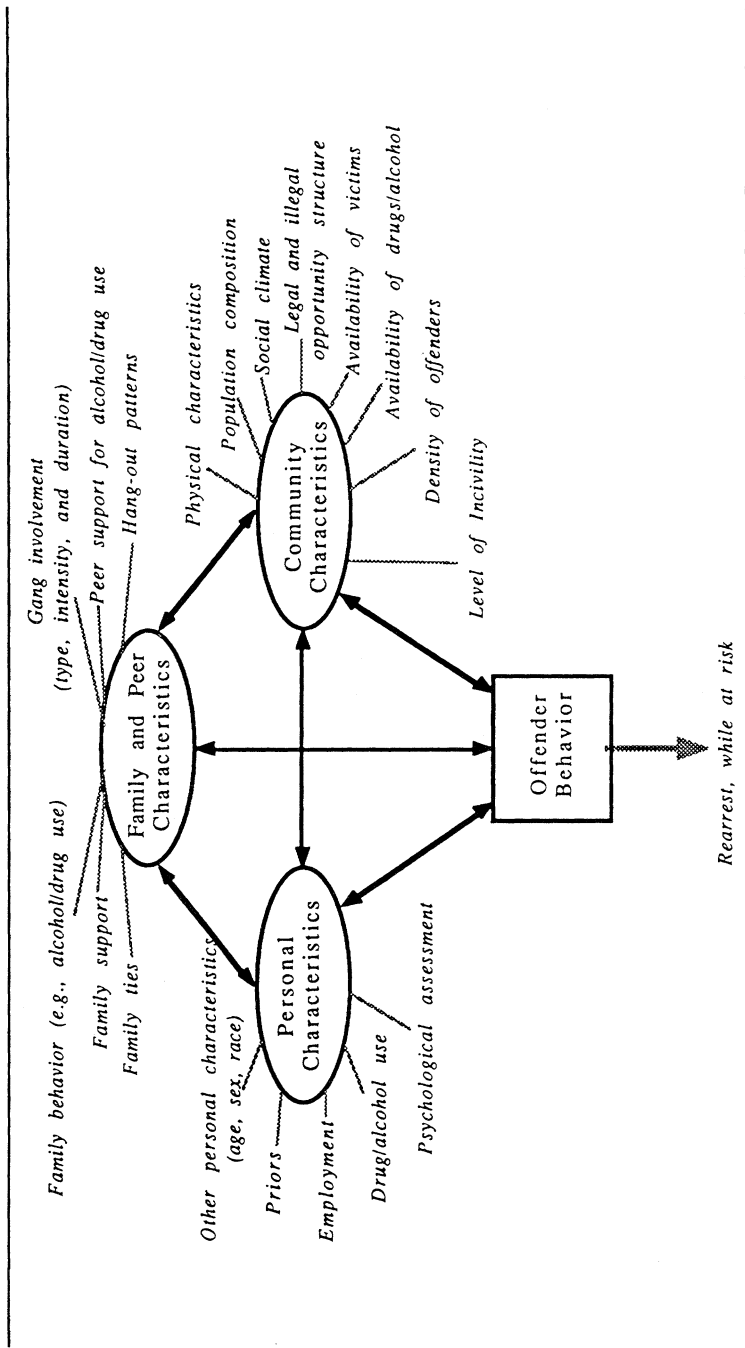


Figure 3: Person-Environment Interactions and the Prediction of Recidivism  
 SOURCE: Byrne and Kelly (1989).

be the primary concern of program administrators. Dean-Myrda and Cullen (1985, p. 26) underscore this point:

The punitive panacea at present has no competition, and all evidence suggests that its influence in the correctional arena is growing. Unless those with more reformist impulses begin to offer policy agendas that at once reveal the inadequacies of "getting tough" and furnish answers to the crime problem, the salience of the conservatives' vision of justice thus promises to remain undiminished in the time immediately ahead.

Ironically, the opportunity to infuse a *community* orientation into existing intermediate sanctions is provided by the current correctional crowding crisis itself. The primary force behind the development of such intermediate sanctions as electronic monitoring, house arrest, and intensive supervision is prison crowding and its associated cost. Commenting on the development of intensive supervision, Petersilia (1988, p. 11) recently observed that "the entire movement towards ISP is economically driven. It is commonly acknowledged that if prison crowding disappeared tomorrow, thereby eliminating the need to create less expensive sanctions, so would the incentive to develop ISP."

Of course, program administrators not only promise diversion and cost effectiveness, they also promise increased community protection through intensive surveillance and control tactics. However, a recent review of the evaluation research on the effectiveness of these intermediate sanctions by Tonry and Will (1988) does not support the early claims of diversionary impact and cost-effectiveness.<sup>13</sup> One reason for these generally negative findings is that when *policing* strategies are used to achieve community protection, the "cost" of a low rearrest/rearraignment rate is a high return to prison rate. As Clear (1987), Petersilia (1987, 1988), and others have suggested, by promising too much to too many, the new wave of intermediate sanctions is setting itself up for failure.

A recent evaluation of New Jersey's intensive probation supervision program underscores this point. Pearson (1987) reported that over 40% of the offenders placed on intensive supervision were returned to prison within one year, and approximately 75% of these offenders were returned for technical violations rather than evidence of recidivism. Since the vast majority of these technical violations were drug test failures (Pearson, 1987), it appears that the program's emphasis was on the *incident* (in this case, detection of drug use) rather than the *underlying problem* (i.e., the offender's continued use of drugs).

According to Pearson (1987), one consequence of close surveillance and a strict, incident-based revocation policy is a low rearrest rate while offenders are in the program. However, we do pay a price for such control, and the price is related to (1) the crowding of prisons, (2) the associated costs of reincarceration, and (3) the impact of imprisonment on the subsequent criminal careers of these offenders. In addition, when the development of these new sanctions draws resources away from an already overcrowded *probation* system, we should also anticipate higher return to prison rates among these offenders. Unless these programs are redesigned, the long-term effect of the current wave of intermediate sanction programs on communities will be negative in two important respects: (1) increased cost, and (2) a higher concentration of "ex-offenders" who not only have substance abuse, employment, and family problems, but now also have a recent history of incarceration.

Dean-Myrda and Cullen (1985, p. 9) offer a cogent assessment of our current dilemma: "[The] Panacea phenomenon—characterized by a cycle of unrealistic expectations, failure and dissatisfaction leading to the search for yet another foolproof elixir for the crime problem—has pervaded the entire history of American correctional policy." One reform strategy advocated by Dean-Myrda and Cullen (1985) is to reintroduce and "old" panacea, community-based corrections, but this time with an emphasis on the community control of offenders. Existing intermediate sanction programs attempt to provide short-term community control by utilizing such *offender*-based strategies as drug/alcohol testing, curfew checks, surveillance (via high contact levels), and strict revocation procedures to induce compliance with treatment. However, the primary purpose of these activities is detection and apprehension, rather than treatment and control. As Clear and O'Leary (1983) and Palmer (1984) have suggested, the most effective method of crime control is treatment. For most offenders, this involves help in one or more of the following three general areas: substance abuse, employment and education, and marital/family relationships. The results of previous research on community supervision indicate that offenders who do not show improvement in these areas are much more likely to recidivate than offenders who do show improvement (Byrne and Kelly, 1989). If our objective is community control, then it makes more than a little sense to require probation officers to act first as *service brokers*, linking up offenders with problems to the necessary community resources. Since this social service network often involves a complex array of public and private agencies, specific training on both resource availability and networking strategies will be needed.

When it is apparent that treatment resources are not available in a particular area (e.g., drug treatment, alcohol treatment, employment training), it will also be necessary to have probation and parole officers act as resource *advocates*. The "scope and methods" of this advocacy role will be enhanced by assigning probation officers to specific geographic *areas*, rather than to specific offender caseloads, and by developing intervention strategies that focus on changing both people *and* places (Felson, 1987). The parallels between this approach and the "cop of the block" and "team policing" strategies recommended by community-oriented policing advocates are obvious.<sup>14</sup> Lauen (1988, p. 93) recently emphasized the need for this type of advocacy function:

Corrections needs to change its image in the minds of community members where communities-managed programs are located by expanding its role. Corrections should be viewed as part of the "helping professions" along with mental health, employment counseling, substance abuse treatment, etc. Unless this kind of change occurs, corrections will continue to be seen exclusively as a social control system, an arm of local law enforcement, with all of the attendant roles, problems, and expectations that this implies.

The scope of the probation and parole officer's advocacy role and brokerage function should not be limited to offenders; the problems and needs of victims should also fall within the purview of a community-oriented supervision strategy. As I commented earlier, the physical location of probation and parole officers in communities should be an important part of such a strategy, given such factors as (1) ongoing offender/victim relationships, and (2) the need to coordinate victim restitution and community service efforts. One of the unfortunate by-products of current community supervision practices is that probation and parole officers are often out of touch with the life-styles of community members generally and offenders in particular. Perhaps more important, both administrators and line staff may often become fearful of entire neighborhoods and this fear undermines the development of an effective intervention strategy. It is only by taking probation and parole officers out of the office and locating them in the community that we can begin to overcome this problem. How can we expect support for community-based corrections from residents who must *live* in the areas where probation and parole officers do not wish to enter? Probation and parole officers need to enter these communities and, as

Lauen (1988, p. 118) suggests, "create forums for the public to participate in correctional plans and programs."

Finally, it should be obvious that for our current probation and parole system to embrace fully the community-oriented strategy I have just described, one of three things must occur: (1) we reallocate a much greater proportion of existing correctional resources to community-based corrections; (2) we develop policies that result in significantly fewer offenders under direct correctional supervision/control; or (3) we increase our overall correctional spending. Of these three alternatives, I suspect that efforts to reduce the *size* of the overall correctional population would have the most positive effect on the quality of life in our communities. Bennett (1987) has called this approach "Triage" because it is based on a decision about who we need to control actively either in institutional or community settings—and who we can (or must) let go. A number of commentators have recommended that we reduce our reliance on imprisonment and develop a structured hierarchy of alternative sanctions (e.g., Reiss, 1986; Petersilia, 1987; Clear and O'Leary, 1983). However, we must also move to the *other* end of the sentencing scale and develop an equally creative system of alternatives to active probation supervision. Wasik and von Hirsch's (1988) recent recommendations for the expanded use of day fines is one possible approach, and the use of community service orders is certainly a second possible strategy (Morris, 1987). The implementation of these *nonsupervision* sanctions may require the application of another policing strategy—split policing—to probation and parole. If we are serious about community supervision, we may need to do two things: (1) dedicate a significant portion of current probation and parole personnel to that task alone; and (2) make collections (and other court-support services) the responsibility of the remaining personnel. For those offenders who *are* placed on *active supervision* (regardless of program type) and those offenders for whom *nonsupervision* sanctions are deemed appropriate, we need to consider Morris's (1987, p. 5) admonition:

We must begin to help judges to be serious about the proposition that the law must keep its promises. It makes no sense to threaten that which we are not going to do—to impose fines that we are not going to collect—to order supervision that we are not going to provide. In child care, if one wished to confirm a child in misconduct, one would make a series of unenforced threats. What we do, to put it rather vulgarly, is we repeatedly threaten offenders with a variety of sanctions, and then, finally we send

them away for a long, long time saying, "look at all the chances we gave you!" It is an irrational way to act.

## CONCLUSION

The community-oriented supervision strategy described in this article will obviously be very difficult to implement, but our current correctional crowding crisis does provide strong motivation for policymakers to consider alternative strategies. The recent development of intermediate sanctions to act as front-end alternatives to prison and jail is one indication that the change process has begun. Similarly, intensive community supervision has been utilized to justify early release of offenders from both prison and jail. The problem with these alternatives is that they are currently designed to focus exclusively on the behavior of *offenders* and ignore the problems of the *communities* in which these offenders reside (Reiss, 1986; Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989).

The community supervision model I propose would allow the correctional system to make *community crime control*, rather than *correctional crowding*, the driving force behind innovation and change in the system.<sup>15</sup> The parallels between community-oriented policing and the community-oriented probation and parole supervision strategies I recommend are important to consider. Police administrators across the country have begun the long, difficult, incremental change process that the development of community-oriented policing entails; it is time now for corrections administrators to do the same. Again.

## NOTES

1. Other labels for the community policing model include "community policing" and "community-based policing." An excellent discussion and critique of this general approach is provided by Murphy (1988). See also Moore, Trojanowicz, and Kelling (1988), or Kelling (1988).

2. A nice discussion of public attitudes toward punishment and control is provided by Cullen and Gilbert (1982). They point out that despite the current wave of support for punishment and control, the public *still* thinks we should initially attempt to rehabilitate adult offenders. See also Dean-Myrda and Cullen (1985) and Jamieson and Flanagan (1987, pp. 88-89).



3. Dean-Myrda and Cullen (1985, p. 26) have observed that "reformers would do well to reconsider whether it was a wise decision to have abandoned community corrections as their panacea when no alternative other than pessimism was at hand." Clear and Cole (1986) and Finckenaer (1982) also provide an excellent overview of the panacea problem in adult and juvenile corrections.

4. For a good overview of the movement of offenders between institutional and community control, see Byrne and Kelly (1989). See also Bureau of Justice Statistics (1984, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c).

5. A recent issue of the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (Vol. 25, No. 4, 1988) was devoted to the concept of community in criminology. For an overview of this research, see Leighton (1988).

6. Ironically, decision makers have developed the new wave of intermediate sanctions in a manner that results in *lower-risk*—but apparently prison/jail bound—offenders being placed under higher levels of supervision than *higher-risk* offenders on regular probation. See Byrne and Kelly (1989) for a more detailed examination of this issue. See also Byrne (1986).

7. A detailed review of criminal career research is provided by Blumstein et al. (1986). For a critique of this body of research, see Gottfredson and Hirschi (1988).

8. The basic description of the case included here was adapted from a chronology prepared by Maryellen Fidirich of the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice in June 1988.

9. The same pattern was identified when alternative criterion measures (e.g., any rearraignment, and any *felony* rearraignment) were employed. Importantly, there were no significant differences in the risk profiles of these two groups of offenders. See Byrne and Kelly (1988, 1989).

10. A detailed examination of racial disparities in the criminal justice system is provided by Petersilia (1983).

11. There is obviously considerable debate on this issue. A general overview of this research is provided by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1988), but see also Lipton et al. (1975) and Gendreau and Ross (1987).

12. Of course, police administrators are also reconsidering their *own* recent past. Consider, for example, the resurgence of foot A good summary of advocacy, brokerage, and community—"The A, B, C's of probation and parole"—is provided by Dell'apa et al. (1987).

13. See also the recent evaluation of the Florida Community Control Program's diversionary impact (Baird, 1988). In this evaluation, Baird concluded that approximately half of the offenders referred to this "house arrest" program were *true* diversions.

14. In their recent analysis of the "hot spots" of predatory crime, Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger (1989) suggest a variety of techniques for changing *places* rather than people. "On a place-specific basis, targets may be made less suitable, guardianship may be increased, and the supply of potential offenders may be reduced" (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989, p. 47).

15. Clear (1987) also emphasizes the need to clarify organizational purpose in this manner. A detailed discussion of the community control of offenders utilizing a *limited risk control* model is offered by Clear and O'Leary (1983). See also O'Leary and Clear (1984).

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