

**New Directions in Offender Typology Design, Development, and
Implementation: Can we Balance Risk, Treatment and Control?**

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Abstract

There is no “one-stop shopping” offender typology available that can identify the risk level, targeted treatment protocols, and control levels of the offender groups examined in this special issue: murderers, sex offenders, batterers, violent prisoners, and violent mentally ill offenders, which is why further research establishing the links between offender risk level, offender treatment needs, and offender control requirements is critical. This article provides a “state of the art” discussion of the key issues that must be addressed by policymakers, practitioners, and ultimately, the public, vis-à-vis the design, development, and implementation of typologies for these targeted groups of offenders. This is followed by our assessment of the lessons learned from the great prison classification experiment. We conclude by providing an assessment of new directions in the development of typologies of offenders and the communities in which offenders reside.

Key words: typologies, offender risk, community risk, treatment, prison, deterrence, violent behavior

Introduction

Our special issue of *Aggression and Violent Behavior* presents “state of the art” reviews of the research on the application of empirically- based offender typologies in each of the following areas: (1) sex offenders(Robertiello and Terry; Burgess, et al.), (2) homicide offenders (Roberts, Zgoba, and Shahidullah) (3) male vs. female batterers (Bender and Roberts), (4) mentally ill offenders (Harris and Lurigio), and (5) offenders involved in prison violence(Byrne and Hummer). In addition, we have included two studies that consider new approaches to typology development, including a theory-based typology of community culture that incorporates person-environment interactions and a social ecological framework (Stowell and Byrne); and a new typology of community violence that replaces the traditionally narrow focus on homicide with a wide range of behaviors resulting in violent death (Neuilly).Finally, we have included a study of that incorporates rarely used measures of nativity/ethnicity in order to shed new light on the relationship between immigration and various forms of community-level violence (Stowell and Martinez). According to the authors, “Using ethnic-origin as a means of classifying a neighborhood’s foreign-born population will promote a more nuanced understanding of the differential impacts of immigration on levels of violent criminal offending (this issue)”. Given the recent attention focused on immigration policy generally and the Latino Paradox (i.e. Latinos have lower levels of violence than African Americans) in particular, this study’s findings have important implications for community level violence prevention. Taken together, these articles underscore the shift from clinical to actuarial judgments in criminal justice decision-making generally and in

typology development in particular (Gottfredson and Moriarty, 2006), while also suggesting new directions for theory, policy, and practice in terms of both offender-based and community-based typologies of violent behavior.

At the center of most debates about how to classify, treat, and control violent behavior is the prison. The decision to send a convicted offender either home or to prison can be viewed as the result of a simple classification decision (prison vs. home) that has consequences for both offenders and communities that are important to understand (Byrne and Taxman, 2005). For this reason, we have included a review of the effectiveness of what some have called “the great prison experiment” (Stemen, 2007; Clear, in press); we then consider the implications of these findings for the specific groups of offenders that are the target of the typologies examined in this special issue: murderers, sex offenders, batterers, and violent mentally ill individuals. We begin with a discussion of the key issues that must be addressed by policymakers, practitioners, and ultimately, the public, vis-à-vis the design, development, and implementation of typologies for these targeted groups of offenders. This is followed by our assessment of the lessons learned from the great prison experiment. We conclude by providing an assessment of new directions in the development of typologies of offenders and the communities in which offenders reside.

The historical roots of criminal typologies: a brief note

In 1876, Cesare Lombroso, a medical doctor in Italy, and founder of the Positive School of Criminology wrote the first treatise on the biological and typological theory of the criminal. Based on anthropometric measurements Dr. Lombroso identified five types

of offenders: 1) The born criminal; 2) the epileptic criminal; 3) the criminal of irresistible passion; 4) the insane or feeble-minded criminal; 5) the occasional criminal, and 6) the persistent and non-abnormal type of criminal (Mannheim, 1960). Lombroso was the first to develop a classificatory typology, but he did realize the many limitations of his primitive typology in determining causation and motivation of the offenders. By today's empirically-based standards, Lombroso's early typology was very primitive.

Dr. Enrico Ferri, a former student of Lombroso, built on and expanded his mentor's typology in the early 1900s (Barnes and Teeters, 1958). Ferri expanded on the fifth and sixth subtype and added a seventh type. The "occasional offender" seemed to be the largest group, and a product of growing up with a family of lawbreakers and in crime-infested neighborhoods. The "persistent criminal" was redefined as the habitual criminal who lacks education, grows up in poverty, has deviant companions, and is a product of his environment. The seventh subtype identified by Ferri was the involuntary criminal who causes damage as a result of poor foresight, negligence or disobedience rather than through evil intent or malice (Mannheim, 1960). Obviously, in terms of the conceptualization and testing of offender typologies based on psychological, psychiatric, sociological, and biological factors, we have come a long way in the past one hundred years. The articles in this special issue document the important recent progress that has been made in the development of empirically-based offender classification systems and typologies.

Typology design, development, and implementation: Implications for Theory, Policy, and Practice

Three themes emerge from our review of the articles included in the special issue: (1) decisions on typology *design* (and purpose) will reflect management's current view of the relative importance of risk levels, treatment programs, and controls for targeted offender groups; (2) an examination of typology *development* will clarify and demystify the policy choices related to our identification of-- and response to-- certain subgroups of offenders (e.g. sex offenders, mentally ill offenders, batterers, gang members), and (3) an assessment of typology *implementation* will identify the resources, technology, and staffing needs--and gaps in service delivery—associated with the classification, treatment, and control of different groups of offenders.

First, it appears that there has been insufficient attention focused on the theoretical “roots” of many offender typologies, as well as the primary purposes of the classification process itself. As Hood and Sparks observed over thirty seven years ago, a good typology “should separate offenders or kinds of behavior into types which have different theoretical explanations appropriate to them” (1970:124). However, a typology developed for determining the differential *risk* (low, medium, high) of a particular behavior (e.g. sex offending, murder, battering of a spouse, assaulting another inmate) , may not be helpful at all in classifying offenders for either different types of treatment or different levels of control in institutional and/or community settings. It is our view that until we reach a clear consensus on the purpose of classification, the offender-based typologies highlighted in this special issue will be of limited use to criminal justice

decision-makers, for the simple reason that different purposes require different typologies (e.g. classification by risk level, treatment options, or control needs).

A second area of concern related to typology development is that once typologies of specific groups of offenders are created, they are likely to be used in ways that raise both empirical issues (reliability and validity) and ethical issues (acceptable levels of false positives and false negatives). We address these concerns in this special issue. Bender and Roberts review (this issue) of the research on batterer typologies highlight inter-rater reliability associated with the use of both the offender and victim typologies., while Byrne and Hummer's review (this issue) of the research attempting to predict the violent behavior of prisoners while in prison sheds new light on the ethical issues that are associated with the "acceptable" level of false positives included in any prediction model.

A third area of concern is the inadequate attention that has been focused on the criterion problem. The typologies we present here attempt to classify the behavior of individuals using a variety of individual-level factors combined with an examination of crime commission characteristics (e.g. Robertiello and Terry, Burgess, et al., Bender and Roberts, Harris and Lurigio, and Roberts, et al.). Because the focus of these articles is on typology development, rather than risk prediction per se, comparatively little attention is focused in our special issue on the ability of these typologies to accurately *predict* the subsequent behavior (and recidivism) of offenders using these typologies. Since in at least one case(sex offenders) the outcome of interest is a rare event (sex offender recidivism studies suggest between a 5-10 percent re-arrest rate overall for sex offenders; Terry, 2006), the ability to develop sex offender typologies that could be used, for example, to distinguish high rate from low rate offenders is quite limited. Given our

inability to predict individual sex offender recidivism very accurately, and the very low base rate of re-offending across all categories of sex offenders with the exception of adult rapists (Robertiello and Terry, this issue), it is difficult to justify our recent increase in the use of prison for sex offenders on either risk level or risk reduction grounds.

Several studies included in this issue do attempt to address the criterion problem in different ways. First, Roberts, et al. (this issue) provide original longitudinal research on the subsequent behavior of 336 murderers released from prison. Second, the article by Harris and Lurigio (this issue) examines the predictive validity of various mental health assessment tools. Third, the article by Byrne and Hummer (this issue) describes the difficulty inherent in predicting who will become violent while in prison, and then discusses current classification strategies that have yet to demonstrate an empirical link between gang/ security threat group membership and prison violence. And finally, Neuilly (this issue) offers a new conceptual framework for measuring an important outcome measure, community-level violence, using an expanded definition of what she refers to as violent death.

One final issue addressed in this collection is the extent to which an *individual* offender's risk, and by extension the offender typologies used by corrections practitioners to identify and manage risk, is influenced by *community* context, including such factors as community composition (e.g. size of the minority population, age composition, proportion of first generation immigrants), community culture (e.g. support for criminal behavior, situational support for use of violence, legal cynicism, collective efficacy), and the structural characteristics of communities(e.g. poverty, inequality, resource availability/ deprivation).According to a recent assessment by Byrne, Taxman, and

Hummer (in press): “ The question we need to ask ourselves is what can and should we be doing at the *individual* level (in terms of addressing the healthcare, education, employment, mental health , housing, and victimization needs of individuals) and also at the *community* level (in terms of addressing the causes and consequences of living in structurally disadvantaged “poverty pocket” neighborhoods, where collective efficacy is low and legal cynicism is high) to reduce the risk of both individual and community-level violence and victimization?”

There is a large body of research conducted from a social ecological perspective that supports the notion that person-environment interactions offer the best explanation for community level differences in crime, in particular violent crime (Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004; Sampson and Bean, 2006). Recently, Byrne and Pattavina (2006: 66) have argued that “The accuracy of the individually-based risk classification system will likely improve with the inclusion of overall community risk level (high vs. low/ medium risk, for example, based on offender density and/ or the area’s crime rate), along with selected community risk characteristics (such as unemployment rate, proportion of residents living in poverty, size/characteristics of first generation immigrant population)”. Byrne and Stowell (this issue) focus on the cultural component of community risk, assessing the extent to which cultural mechanisms “ are often ignored by researchers and policy makers interested in violence reduction in both institutional and community settings”(this issue).To address this problem, they present a new model of “ culture in action” that offers a more comprehensive view of cultural influences on violent behavior than found in traditional perspectives on the culture of violence.

Prison: What is the impact of the largest classification experiment ever conducted?

We continue our introduction to this special issue on typologies of aggression and violent behavior by highlighting research on the single most important classification typology currently used in our criminal justice system: our typology of prisoners vs. non-prisoners. In our view, the decision to send an individual offender to prison is consistent with the classical theory of criminal behavior (e.g. Beccaria, Bentham, Wilson) and represents a critical policy choice with consequences for both offenders and communities that are important to understand. Consider the following:

“In the 1970s the United States embarked on one of the largest policy experiments of the 20th century—the expanded use of incarceration to achieve greater public safety. Between 1970 and 2005, state and federal authorities increased prison populations by 628 percent. By 2005, more than 1.5 million persons were incarcerated in U.S. prisons on any given day, and an additional 750,000 were incarcerated in local jails. By the turn of the 21st century, more than 5.6 million living Americans had spent time in a state or federal prison—nearly 3 percent of the U.S. population. Having so many people imprisoned over the course of 30 years raises an obvious question: **has this experiment worked?**” (Stemen, 2007, p.1)

The short answer to this question is that the prison sanction does *not* work as a specific deterrent and it has been found to have only a modest (2-4%) general deterrent/incapacitation effect (Stemen, 2007). However, we first need to distinguish the effects of incarceration on *individual* offenders (specific deterrence) from the effects on *communities*, cities, states, regions, and nations (incapacitation, general deterrence). It is within this context that the question of prison effectiveness can be answered and the implications for prison classification decisions can be assessed.

1a. The specific deterrent effect of prison

In terms of specific deterrence effects on *individual* offenders, there is no methodologically rigorous evidence that incarceration reduces an offender's risk of re-offending upon return to the community ; in fact, it appears that when compared to similar groups of offenders placed in one of a range of alternative, non-custodial intermediate sanctions, prisoners actually re-offend at a higher rate (Stemen, 2007; Farabee,2005). Unfortunately, any definitive statements on the comparative effects of incarceration versus non-incarcerative sanctions must await the completion of more—and higher quality—research, preferably using experimental designs.

Recently, Villettaz and associates (2006) conducted a systematic evidence-based review of prison vs. community-based sanctions; we have serious reservations about the researchers' conclusions. According to this recent systematic review completed in conjunction with the Campbell Collaborative (Villettaz, et al., 2006), only five controlled or natural experiments have ever been conducted on custodial versus non-custodial sanctions. They concluded that “Although a vast majority of the selected studies show non-custodial sanctions to be more beneficial in terms of re-offending than custodial sanctions, no significant difference is found in the meta-analysis based on four controlled and one natural experiments” (Villettaz, et al.,2006:3). Our first major concern is based in large part on the authors' decision to focus primarily on only the five studies they decided to include in their meta-analysis; of the five experiments included, only three targeted adult offenders. One study comparing prison to probation (Bergman,1976) showed probationers fared significantly better; however, a second study comparing prison to

community service had mixed results (Killias, Aebi, and Ribeaud, 2000), while a third natural experiment comparing the effects of a 14 day prison term to a suspended sentence reported mixed results as well (Van der Werff, 1979). Two thoughts come immediately to mind: first, you don't conduct a meta-analysis on just five studies, especially if these studies have different target populations (3 adult, 2 juvenile) and different experimental and control group comparisons (see above); second, systematic, evidence-based reviews are only going to be useful to the field when sufficient numbers of well designed research studies are available for review. Obviously, this is not the case here.

We focus on the findings of this systematic, evidence-based review to highlight the potential dangers inherent in an over-reliance on meta-analysis techniques to analyze studies that are as different as apples and oranges; this problem is compounded by the decision to exclude the quasi-experimental research from this analysis. The conclusions reached in the Villettaz, et al (2006) systematic review focused exclusively on the five experimental studies examined in their meta-analysis, and did not included the other 18 studies they identified meeting the study's minimum review criteria. Eleven of these 18 studies showed positive effects for a range of non-custodial sanctions, including probation, home confinement, community service, and mandatory alcohol treatment in drunk driving cases. Only two studies showed positive effects for a prison sanction (prison fared better than electronic monitoring , but only for low risk offenders; shock incarceration fared better than probation).The remaining five studies identified no significant differences between experimental (three prison, two shock incarceration) and control (home confinement, probation, community service, and no prison) groups.

In our view, the available research findings—although of poor quality overall-- challenge the underlying assumptions of the classical, deterrence-based theories of crime causation that provide the basic foundation for the prison typology we use to justify our reliance on prison for a wide range of offenders. However, we offer one possible caveat: it could be argued that the higher recidivism rates generally reported for prisoners (compared to non-prisoners) do provide evidence that the prison typology did, in fact, select a target group of convicted offenders who posed a *greater* risk of re-offending than those sentenced to some form of community-based sanction.

Stated simply, it appears that we are better at identifying *risk level* than at developing strategies that result in *risk reduction*. We are not arguing that currently sentencing schemes are accurate, because it is entirely possible that the *prison experience* increased the risk posed by prisoners upon release to the community. But it seems obvious that there are individuals who exhibit behavior that can only be addressed in institutional settings; it is a sad reality that a number of the individuals sent to prison need to be there, for the safety of the community. Viewing prison as a correctional system-- controlled, clinical decision --rather than a political, sentencing decision-- is the first step in the prison transformation process. Once this occurs, corrections managers can use both clinical and actuarial assessment tools to determine the criteria used to classify offenders for placement in the prison category. This assessment will disturb at least some readers of “liberal” persuasion, according to a recent review by Francis Cullen (in press):

“Despite mounting evidence from life-course criminology, liberals wish to deny that offenders are, to varying degrees, different from non-criminals. When taken together, these individual differences, such as antisocial cognitions and low self-control, make offenders “pathological.” By pathological, I do not mean that offenders are completely different from the “rest of us.” But I do mean that they have a propensity that allows them to steal, vandalize, and assault at levels that “normal” people, who might

sporadically do such things, would never contemplate. Some offenders also feel perfectly comfortable carrying, brandishing, and even using weapons, at times for utilitarian purposes (to get something) and at times senselessly (for being “disrespected”).”

Can these offenders be changed during their time in prison, or is the most we can hope for a short-term incapacitation effect and relief on the part of victims that these offenders are “out of sight and out of mind”, at least temporarily? The answer appears to be that it depends on whether you design a prison system that focuses on offender control or offender change (in those areas that *can* be changed, such as educational deficits, employment skills, addiction issues, and mental health). Interestingly, if we focus *only* on the target group identified by our current classification scheme (i.e. prisoners), we consistently find that prisoners who receive treatment in prison have fewer incidents of misbehavior while in prison, and fare significantly better upon release from prison, than prisoners who don’t receive treatment (Byrne and Hummer, in press; MacKenzie, 2006). We should point out that this is also true of many other individuals identified using various offender-specific typologies, including three groups that currently dominate the debate on sentencing and correctional control policies: violent offenders, sex offenders, and mentally ill offenders. When these offenders receive appropriate levels of treatment, they have a significantly lower risk of re-offending than their untreated counterparts.

This suggests two things: first, classical, deterrence-driven strategies do not have a sound empirical foundation (prisons not only don’t deter, they also appear to make offenders worse); second, evidence of positive individual offender change –using a combination of control and treatment—can be found in *both* institutional and community settings(Byrne and Taxman, 2006; Byrne and Pattavina, 1992).Although the reported

effect sizes for prison treatment and program are modest (a 10% reduction in recidivism), there is reason to anticipate improvements in these effects in prison systems designed to focus on offender change rather than short-term offender control (Welsh and Farrington, 2006; Byrne and Pattavina, in press).

In other words, *comprehensive assessment-oriented and intensive treatment-focused prisons* may be the appropriate classification for some convicted offenders, but not because there is evidence that the prison experience will deter these individuals from future involvement in crime; rather, prison may represent the appropriate location (and control level) for the provision of the types of treatment and services targeted to the offender typology being used (e.g. sex offender, drug offender, mentally ill offender, batterer, violent offender, etc.). This is precisely the point being argued by those in favor of downsizing prisons (Jacobson, 2005) and by advocates of prison reform (or rather prison transformation), who argue that we need to replace “bad” control-oriented prisons with “good” change oriented prisons (Maruna and Toch, 2006; Deitch, 2004; Gibbons and Katzebach, 2006). From a classification perspective, these findings suggest that we need to rethink our prison (in/out) typology focusing on individual offender control concerns, rather than the false promise of specific deterrence, while also redesigning our external and internal classification systems to focus on *offender change* (via a renewed emphasis on treatment classification and subsequent treatment provision) *while in prison* as the primary outcome (Byrne and Pattavina, in press).

1b. The General Deterrent and Incapacitation Effect of Prison

Our examination of the research on the general deterrent effect of prison underscores the observation attributed to Mark Twain: “there are three types of lies- lies, damn lies, and statistics.” In his recent, detailed review of the research on the impact of prison on crime, Stemen (2007) found that variation in effect sizes across studies—for the studies looking to demonstrate a general deterrent effect in particular-- could be attributed to such factors as (1) how the effectiveness of the prison sentence is to be determined (e.g. impacts on individuals, impacts on neighborhoods, state or national level effects);(2) the use of comparison groups and/or comparison policies;(3) the criterion measure employed (violent crime, overall crime); (4) the statistical procedures, including controls for simultaneity , that were applied; and (5) whether cost effectiveness comparisons were included(e.g. if you spent the money on such alternative crime reduction strategies as improving treatment, the quality of education, early childhood intervention, or employment/ anti-poverty initiatives that you spent on incarcerating an increased number of offenders, what would be the crime reduction effect?).

Despite these cross-study differences, we agree with Stemen (2007) that it is possible to use this body of research to answer the question that policymakers and the general public continually ask: does prison work as a general deterrent? By focusing on the results of research conducted at different levels of aggregation with—where available-- appropriate statistical controls for simultaneity, a clearer picture of the general deterrent impact of incarceration begins to emerge (Levitt, 1996; Spelman,2000; Spelman,2005). At the *national* level, a 10 percent increase in the rate of incarceration is estimated to result in about a 4 percent decrease in the rate of index crimes, with

estimates of the impact on violent crimes between 3.8 and 4.4 percent. Studies claiming larger reductions in crime (between 9 and 22 percent) using national level data did not include controls for simultaneity. Based on *state* level data, a 10 percent increase in the incarceration rate is associated with a decrease in the crime rate between 0.11 and 4 percent. At the *county* level, a 10 percent increase in incarceration is associated with a 4 percent reduction in the crime rate (Stemen, 2007). We agree with Spelman, Levitt and others who have concluded that our recent incarceration binge has had—at best—only a modest impact on crime rates at the national, state, and local level.

One underlying assumption of general deterrence is that the costs of a particular prohibited behavior must outweigh the benefits of the action, but only marginally, for an individual to be deterred. There is no assumption that more punishment translates into more compliance with the law. Indeed, too much punishment could have the opposite effect. Two recent studies provide support for this contention, suggesting that there is a “tipping point” for incarceration levels that can be demonstrated at both the state level and the neighborhood level(Liedka, Piehl, and Useem, 2006; Rose and Clear, 1998; Clear, Rose, Waring, and Scully, 2003). Incarceration reduces crime, they argue, but only up to a point. Once the incarceration rate hits a certain level (at the state level the tipping (or inflection) point appears to be around 325 inmates per 100, 000 population), crime rates actually increase. Although they do not identify a specific neighborhood level tipping point, Rose and Clear (1998) explain why they believe this occurs at the local level: “High rates of imprisonment break down the social and family bonds that guide individuals away from crime, remove adults who would otherwise nurture children, deprive communities of income, reduce future income potential, and engender a deep

resentment toward the legal system. As a result, as communities become less capable of maintaining social order through families or social groups, crime rates go up” (Rose and Clear, as summarized by Stemen, 2007:6).

The implication of this new research on possible tipping points is not that we should abandon prison as a sanction, but that we need to be parsimonious in its application. When viewed in the context of a typology, it is apparent that definitions of the “in-prison” group were expanded in the 1980’s to include “large numbers of nonviolent marginal offenders” (Stemen, 2007: 8). Since there is no evidence that this expanded definition had an added effect on crime rates (Zimring and Hawkins, 1997), it makes sense to consider our earlier, more restricted definitions of who should be considered for prison, which focused primarily on the identification of serious, violent offenders.

Finally, it is worth noting that much of the research on general deterrent effects does not include an examination of various “what if “ scenarios : what if we spent the same money used to expand our prison capacity on other strategies designed either as a general deterrent (e.g. police) or as a risk reduction strategy (education, treatment, employment, wages)? According to Stemen (2007), only about 25 percent of the major crime drop that occurred in the United States between 1990 and 2005 appears to be linked directly to our increased use of incarceration. The other 75 percent of the drop can be linked to a variety of other factors, including fewer “at risk” youth in the general population, decrease in crack cocaine markets, lower unemployment rates, higher wages, higher graduation rates, the recent influx of Latino immigrants, and of course, changes in police strength and arrest tactics (Leavitt, 2004; Sampson and Bean, 2006) According to

Stemen (2007), a review of the research on several of these factors suggests that they offer more crime reduction benefits than prison expansion, at much less cost. Consider the following:

(1) a 10 percent increase in the size of a city's *police force* was associated with an 11 percent lower violent crime rate and a 3 percent lower property crime rate (using county level data);

(2) a 10 percent decrease in the state's *unemployment* rate corresponded with a 16 percent reduction in property crime, but had no effect on violent crime(state and county level data);

(3) a 10 percent increase in *real wages* was associated with a 13 percent lower index crime rate, a 12 percent lower property crime rate and a 25 percent lower crime rate at the national level; state level analyses identified a 16 percent lower violent crime rate; and individual-level analyses reveal that a 10 percent increase in real wages is associated with a 10 percent decrease in crime participation;

(4) and a one year increase in the average *education* level of citizens resulted in a 1.7 percent lower index crime rate, while a 10 percent increase in graduation rates resulting in a 9.4 percent reduction in the index crime rate and a 5-10 percent reduction in arrest rates, through the increased wages associated with graduation(as summarized by Stemen, 2007: 9-12).

While the link between police strength (more police per capita), arrest levels (more arrests, especially for public order offenses) and subsequent reductions in crime is certainly consistent with deterrence-based strategies, few research studies have compared the crime reduction effects of both strategies. And perhaps more importantly, it seems clear from our brief review that research on the general deterrent effect of incarceration should always be examined in the broader context of non-deterrence based social policy changes that may achieve the greater crime reduction effects at a fraction of the cost.

(3) Concluding comments: New Directions in the Development of Offender-based and Community-based Typologies

The articles included in this special issue suggest several new directions for the field, particularly in providing the critical *linkage* across typologies that classify offenders for (1) risk, (2) treatment, and (3) control. For the past two decades control-based classification decisions have dominated the corrections landscape, resulting in both the over-classification of low risk offenders and the under-classification of the treatment needs of offenders in both our institutional and community corrections system (Austin, 2006; Byrne and Pattavina, in press). It appears that we are ready to move the system in a new direction, one that recognizes a long-standing problem in the classification and prediction of violent behavior : the need to balance risk(Glaser, 1987), treatment (Sechrest,1987), and control (Brennan, 1987) considerations if risk reduction is to become a viable correctional goal (Gottfredson and Tonry,1987). This is a precarious balancing act, but it is rendered even more difficult by our failure to recognize a simple axiom: typologies developed for one objective (e.g. risk assessment), may not be helpful in the realization of other objectives (e.g. treatment assessment).

There is no “one-stop shopping” offender typology available that can identify the risk level, targeted treatment protocols, and control levels of the offender groups examined in this special issue: murderers, sex offenders, batterers, violent prisoners, and violent mentally ill offenders, which is why further research establishing the links between offender risk level, offender treatment needs, and offender control requirements is critical. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need to consider new strategies for (1) assessing the community—and institutional-- context of

individual offender behavior and (2) incorporating new measures of social-ecological context (e.g. community risk level, community resource (or strength) level, cultural mechanisms) into the next generation of institutional and community-based classification systems if we are interested in real, long-term change in the criminal behavior of offenders.

For some criminologists who study violent behavior the prospect of individual offender change is just wishful thinking that runs counter to what is known scientifically about individual-level factors linked to criminal behavior in general and violence in particular. In this regard, James Q. Wilson recently noted that “Low intelligence, an impulsive personality, and a lack of empathy for other people are among the leading individual characteristics of people at risk for becoming offenders. Given these problems, it would be easy to abandon any hope of preventing crime” (2007: v). Wilson doesn’t share this view and argues persuasively that there are a range of possible intervention strategies—some deterrence-oriented, others rehabilitation oriented—that have been linked to changes in both individual criminal behavior and the level of violence and crime found at the community level (e.g. Farrington and Welsh, 2007).

We are entering a new era of evidence-based criminal justice that emphasizes the application of careful controlled scientific experiments, which are designed to test a variety of individual and community level intervention strategies to reduce violence and other forms of criminal behavior. Cullen (in press), offers his assessment of the task in front of us:

For rehabilitation to be a viable correctional paradigm over the long haul—if we are to avoid the “nothing works” criticism—three obstacles must be surmounted. First, corrections must be a profession that is based on scientific evidence and whose members develop expertise in delivering interventions. Medicine is a worthy model, though

criminal justice is unique in that elected officials have the discretion (judges) and the power (politicians) to shape what happens to offenders. Still, even within a politicized system where foolhardy interventions are proposed, correctional officials and practitioners must stand firm in saying, based on the evidence, what will and will not work.

Second, we must to develop more efficient conduits for technology transfer. As researchers develop increasingly sophisticated modalities for intervention, we need ways of communicating this evolving knowledge to agency personnel. Part of the obligation for receiving this evidence rests with those in the field; a hallmark of a profession is the openness, not the resistance, to new scientific information. But the obligation to transfer treatment technology also lies with the producers of the evidence. It is likely, of course, that the internet will be a useful tool in disseminating knowledge.

Third, there is an inordinate amount of work to be done in discovering how to ensure that programs are implemented correctly. It is too much to expect that those in agencies will know how to implement new treatment knowledge effectively, and it is too much to expect that researchers who produce such knowledge will travel agency to agency to ensure that programs are “done right.” There is a need to develop training systems—whether at centralized locations or through distance learning—that can enable practitioners to achieve a high level of program integrity.

Despite these challenges, I remain optimistic. Throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, corrections was in a truly dreary state. “Get tough” ideology and policy seemed virtually hegemonic. But the limits of what this mean season in corrections has achieved and the devotion during this difficult period of those committed to discovering evidence-based treatments...have combined to create opportunities for change. I sense that we are on the verge of a new progressive era in corrections. This will be a time in which evidence will matter and in which programs that demonstrate reductions in recidivism will be embraced”(in press).

This is sound advice.

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