

First do no harm: a look at correctional policies and programs today

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Abstract

Objectives This paper reviews the historical changes in correctional policies and the impact these changes have had on the operations of corrections and correctional programs. Social changes and theoretical perspectives moved corrections away from a focus on rehabilitation to programs characterized by deterrence, incapacitation, and control. Similarly, theoretical criminology encouraged corrections to move away from rehabilitation towards programs designed to provide social opportunities such as employment and housing for offenders. This paper examines whether these changes in policies and programs have been effective in reducing recidivism. The question is: What works in corrections?

Methods This paper reviews the research examining the impact of correctional policies and programs on the later criminal activities of offenders and delinquents. Research using systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and the Maryland method scores is used to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of various types of programs, management strategies, and policies.

Results Research demonstrates programs based on deterrence, incapacitation and increased control do not reduce the future criminal activities of offenders and delinquents. Nor have programs targeting social opportunities such as employment and housing been effective in reducing recidivism. The most effective programs target individual-level change in thinking and information processing.

Conclusions In the search for ways to sanction offenders, U.S. correctional policies and programs using control, deterrence, and incapacitation have harmed individuals and communities. Such programs have not been effective in reducing recidivism. While programs that provide social opportunities for offenders do not necessarily harm offenders neither do they decrease later criminal activities. Effective programs bring about a cognitive transformation in offenders and delinquents. Theorists have begun to develop hypotheses about how and why these transformations are effective.

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The current emphasis on evidence-based programs, the research evidence on what is effective and the need to reduce the cost of corrections suggest we are on the brink of another paradigm change. Where this will take us is still unclear, but the paradigm will have to address the current problems facing the U.S. correctional systems.

Keywords Rehabilitation · Offender treatment · Correctional programs · Evidence-based corrections · Incapacitation · Deterrence

Dr. McCord's experimental research was trail-breaking. The Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study was the first large-scale longitudinal experiment ever conducted in criminology. In the study, boys 5–12 years old were paired based on teacher assessments of deviant behavior, and one of each pair was randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group. The treatment group was given a delinquency prevention treatment program based on the idea that “Friendly understanding—implying an ingredient of love—is the basis of all therapy.” The program developers believed such an affiliative relationship “should be established early in life before bad habits and an antisocial outlook become too firmly rooted.” (Allport 1951, p. vi). The boys were assigned to the program in the 1930s and treatment lasted for approximately 5 years. Dr. McCord had the foresight to follow the subjects and assess the treatment effects nearly 30 years later (McCord 1978). The results were shocking. Not only was this type of friendly relationship insufficient to prevent criminal behavior among high risk elementary school boys but it may also have produced negative long-term consequences. Program participants actually did worse than those who did not participate. They were more likely to have died early, committed serious crime, been diagnosed as mentally ill, display symptoms of alcoholism, and have other stress-related diseases. The landmark study was the first to demonstrate the harmful effects of well-meaning prevention programs.

Dr. McCord's work is important for us today for many reasons. The research clearly demonstrates the importance of randomized clinical trials with long-term follow-ups to test the effectiveness of preventive and correctional interventions. Programs that seem reasonable may have harmful impacts. Given the importance of allocating scarce resources efficiently and effectively, as well as the risk of programs potentially causing harm, it is imperative that randomized trials be used as often as possible (McCord 2003; Weisburd and Hinkle 2012). In fact, some have argued that we have a moral imperative to use strong research designs capable of providing valid answers about the impact of programs and management strategies (Weisburd 2003). Government has the power to “do harm” if its programs are misdirected, or to do good if the programs are effective, and, therefore, policymakers are morally obligated to get it right (McCord 1990). This is true of early prevention programs as well as for correctional programs designed to prevent known delinquents and offenders from continuing their criminal activities. Failure to recognize the harms of interventions can lead to suffering by the individuals as well as by the communities that expect benefits and not harms.

The correctional system in the U.S. and what we have learned about “What Works”, or, on the other hand, what does not, is the focus of this paper. In the years

since the McCord study, we have learned a great deal about what is effective in reducing the criminal activities of delinquents and offenders. “Friendly understanding” programs do not address the criminogenic deficits of these individuals and, thus, are doomed to failure. Based on research demonstrating how to successfully reduce delinquent and criminal activities, general principles of effective programs have been developed to guide program developers in identifying the important characteristics of successful programs (Lipsey 1995; Andrews and Bonta 2006). Conversely, research has also demonstrated what is ineffective in reducing criminal activities. In part, this knowledge has been gained by the research examining deterrence, control, and incapacitation-focused interventions popular in the past 30 or 40 years. Such programs were developed in part as a reaction to the social chaos of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Approximately 40 years ago, dramatic events occurred in the U.S. resulting in enormous changes in U.S. society. The times were ripe for change in all aspects of society and the justice system as a government institution came under scrutiny (Cullen and Gilbert 1982; MacKenzie 2006; Cullen and Gendreau 2000). Along with the general social chaos, corrections and sentencing faced some additional issues, and these, combined with the general chaos, led to major changes in how the systems functioned. It is now clear that many of these changes in policies and procedures have created harm—to individuals and to communities. I titled this manuscript “First Do No Harm” because in corrections as in early prevention and medicine, we have a social obligation not to harm either the individuals who come under the responsibility of the justice system or the society from which they come. Our recent policies have come at a great financial cost and caused damage to individuals and communities. And what we have been doing is not effective in reducing crime!

This manuscript reviews the work on “What Works in Corrections” and conversely what appears not to work. We have come a long way from the work of Martinson and his colleagues in understanding what works in corrections, but, as they acknowledged many years ago, the quality of our research designs often lacks scientific rigor and we are only beginning to understand and study the implementation process. I believe we are now on the brink of another major change in U.S. correctional systems. Where we will go is still uncertain.

The move from rehabilitation to a new paradigm

Events occurring 40 years ago combined to create an environment conducive to major social changes (Cullen and Gilbert 1982; MacKenzie 2006). People began to question the legitimacy of many U.S. social institutions. For example, inequalities in society for minorities and women led to controversies over civil and women’s rights. Youthful citizens questioned the mores of the time, they demanded more sexual freedom, and flexibility in choice of clothes and hair styles. Illegal drug use increased. Some professors at respected universities advocated the use of legal drugs like LSD. They argued young people should question authority and, in the words of Timothy Leary, “tune in, turn on, drop out.” This chaos was further fueled by the war in Vietnam. Anti-war advocates displayed their disagreement with the war through civil disobedience such as marches, sit-ins, and draft dodging. It was a time when

people began questioning the status quo. Times were ripe for a change and major upheavals occurred in social institutions (Cullen and Gilbert 1982).

Corrections and sentencing agencies were not immune to the general chaos of the times, but also faced added troubles. Sentencing research revealed extreme discretion and disparity in sentencing, frequently resulting in negative consequences for minorities. Prison conditions led to riots where both staff and inmates were injured or killed. Rising crime rates, social disobedience, and increased drug use alarmed many people.

For corrections, perhaps the watershed event was a research report (Lipton et al. 1975) summarized by Martinson (1974) in his essay entitled “What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform.” The researchers were asked by the state of New York to examine research on correctional programming in order to find out which programs were effective in reducing recidivism so these programs could be developed in the state correctional system. The results were not as expected. After reviewing the literature, Martinson concluded “with few and isolated exceptions the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism.” (Martinson 1974, p. 25) The report was generally believed to show that nothing was effective in changing offenders. Based on this conclusion, the mantra became “nothing works.” The phrase had a major impact on corrections because, if nothing worked to reduce recidivism, then the whole premise of the rehabilitation model was faulty.

It is important to note that the Lipton et al. (1975) report did not say nothing could work to reduce the criminal behavior of offenders. Instead it offered the opinion that it was impossible to determine whether anything *could* work because, first, the existing research designs were so inadequate and, second, the programs studied were so poorly implemented. A great deal of controversy arose in the research community about the report and the conclusions (Palmer 1983, 1992; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Cullen and Gilbert 1982; Sechrest et al. 1979). Some agreed with the conclusions, others opposed the conclusions and argued that the research provided evidence that some programs were effective. Despite the controversy over the report, the environment was conducive to change, and “nothing works” became the battle cry for a move away from the rehabilitation model.

Rehabilitation had been the paradigm for corrections since the end of the twentieth century. From this perspective, the correctional system was supposed to “fix” or rehabilitate offenders so they would not continue to commit crimes. Correctional officials and parole boards had wide discretion in determining how long an offender would serve in prison. Sentences were indeterminate because it was thought that parole boards and correctional officials were capable of determining when the offender was corrected and could be safely returned to society. The goal of corrections was “to correct” the offenders so they would not return to their criminal activities.

But the times were ripe for change and, as with the wider society, the public and policymakers searched for new ways of doing things (Cullen and Gilbert 1982). Liberals and conservatives joined together in demanding changes in corrections. From the liberal point of view, if nothing corrections did was capable of changing offenders, and nor could officials recognize when the person has changed, then a system based on such flawed beliefs was unjust and coercive. The system was viewed as discriminatory because two offenders often received very disparate sentences

despite the similarity in their crimes and past criminal history. At other times, offenders with dissimilar convictions and vastly different histories received identical sentences or served similar times in prison. The justice model of sentencing was proposed as a solution to some of the problems with the rehabilitation perspective and as a fairer way to sentence (American Friends Service Committee 1971). This was a retributive model of corrections. From this perspective, sentences should be based on the crime of conviction and past history of offending only. Sentences would be fair and just but not be designed to accomplish some utilitarian or consequentialist goals (Logan 1990, 1991; Von Hirsch 1976). The ability of the state to cause harm to offenders would be reduced. Participation in rehabilitation would be voluntary and not coerced. Offenders would be given an array of legal rights to protect them and ensure equal treatment. Thus began efforts to abolish parole and initiate sentencing guidelines.

Conservatives had a different rationale for changing corrections. They worried about the changes in traditional mores, and the rising drug use and crime rates. In their opinions, the prior emphasis on rehabilitation meant the system was coddling criminals. They wanted to restrict the ability of judges and correctional officials to mitigate the harshness of punishment. In their opinions, the appropriate goals for corrections were deterrence and incapacitation. Criminals should be locked up or controlled so they would not be able to commit crimes. The threat of harsh and onerous punishments would deter the general public from committing crimes and receiving such punishments would deter criminals from criminal activity in the future. Parole should be eliminated because early release mitigated the harshness of punishments.

Even academic criminologists got into the foray. Criminologists were progressive and embraced an anti-rehabilitation position almost as a matter of professional ideology (Cullen and Gendreau 2000). They studied social problems and had little interest in intervening in the lives of offenders. From their point of view, social problems were the major contributor to and explanation for crime, and, therefore, efforts to reduce crime should target social problems and not focus on individual differences.

Impact on sentencing and corrections

In combination, these perspectives had a significant impact on sentencing and corrections. The most apparent effect was the large increase in the incarceration rate. The incarceration rate of approximately 100 per 100,000 in the population had remained relatively stable from 1930 until the mid-1970s during the rehabilitation era of corrections. As changes occurred in sentencing and corrections the incarceration rate began to grow. By 1980, the rate had doubled to 202 per 100,000 adults and it continued to grow until by 2008 the rate had reached 754, a rate higher than any other developed country in the world. The increase in people under the supervision of corrections occurred throughout the system, so that by 2010 the total number of people in prisons and jails and on probation, parole, or supervised release was over 7.1 million (Glance 2011). The vast majority of this increase can be attributed to policy changes and not to increased criminal activity (Blumstein and Beck 1999).

The new focus on the goals of retribution, incapacitation, and deterrence heralded changes in laws, policies, programming, and management. Decisions by correctional officials, parole boards, and judges were limited by guidelines and mandatory sentencing. Laws were designed to send more offenders to prison for greater periods of time. Three-strike laws punished repeat offenders. The “war on drugs” targeted drug offenders for increased punishments. Programs like boot camps, intensive supervision, urine testing, and electronic monitoring increased the harshness of punishments and the control and surveillance over offenders. The programs were designed to restrict the activities of offenders so they would not be able to continue their criminal activities (e.g., incapacitate) and to make punishments so onerous (deterrence) they would not want to continue such behavior in the future.

Evaluating what works

While many accepted the mantra of nothing works to change offenders and the changes in correctional policies, others continued to try to understand the causes of crime, how to change offenders and what research techniques would enable us to successfully identify effective programs and policies. For example, in addressing the conclusions found in the Martinson report, Farrington et al. (1986) stressed that more rigorous research of better implemented programs would successfully demonstrate what was effective in preventing or reducing the criminal activities of delinquents and offenders.

Over the past few decades, the rigor of research has increased. The number of randomized experiments in crime and justice has been growing as has the support for such experimental methods (Garner and Visher 1988). For example, in an early report, Farrington (1983) examined the number of randomized experiments of crime and justice interventions with offending behavior as the outcome and found that only 35 studies were published between 1957 and 1981. In a later review updating the 1983 paper, Farrington and Welsh (2005) found 83 experiments had been conducted since the earlier review. An improvement, but considering the resources involved, the numbers of lives impacted, and in comparison to other fields such as medicine, still a limited number of randomized control trials.

When Martinson and his colleagues completed their assessment of correctional research in 1975, they used state-of-the-art methodology. Since that time, not only has there been an increase in the number of randomized trials but also new techniques have been developed for assessing the effectiveness of correctional programs. One of these techniques is meta-analysis, a method used increasingly in the physical and social sciences. It is a quantitative analysis used to examine a group of studies to determine if they are effective in achieving an identified outcome or outcomes (Lipsey and Wilson 2001). The technique requires the calculation of “effect sizes” for each study. These effect sizes reflect the difference in outcomes for the treated and control groups and are used to compare treatment and control groups in statistical analyses with the studies being the unit of analysis. The analyses may indicate lower recidivism for the treated group or the comparison or find no difference between groups. Some of the problems inherent in literature reviews are solved by meta-analyses. Like literature reviews, meta-analysis is a method used to draw conclusions

about groups of studies; however, in contrast to literature reviews, meta-analysis uses a specific statistical methodology. Quantitative data are used in the analysis to draw conclusions about effectiveness and to examine whether differences between groups vary as a function of participant characteristics, program components, or research design.

Another innovative method for determining the effectiveness of crime and justice interventions was developed by Sherman and his colleagues for the report to the U.S. Congress titled, “What Works, What Doesn’t and What’s Promising” (Sherman et al. 1997, 2002; Welsh et al. 2002). These researchers used a two-stage process, commonly called the Maryland Scoring Method, to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to conclude that a program was effective in reducing crime. The first stage necessitated the collection of all studies of a particular treatment and rating each for the quality of the research design and the significance and direction of the results. The quality of the research design was a measure of internal validity using a five-point scale, a score of 5 reflected the “gold standard” randomized trial. The second stage involved an examination of the total group of studies identified to determine whether there were sufficient numbers of studies with strong enough research designs to warrant a conclusion that the program was effective. Thus, the quality of the research, the number of studies, and the significance of the results were used to determine evidence of effectiveness.

Using the Maryland Scoring Method and Meta-analyses, my colleagues and I examined interventions used in corrections. We investigated whether there was sufficient evidence to conclude that the interventions were effective in reducing the future criminal activities of delinquents and offenders. I summarized this work in a book, *What Works in Corrections* (MacKenzie 2006). This work along with more recent meta-analyses can be used to identify what interventions are effective in reducing recidivism. Today, such research work is often referred to as “evidence-based” corrections (MacKenzie 2000, 2001). Important in determining effectiveness is both the significance of the research (e.g., the difference between the recidivism of the control group and the experimental group) and also the quality of the research design. Using this research and more recent meta-analyses, it is possible to draw some conclusions about “What Works.”

My reviews of meta-analyses and the studies using the Maryland Scoring Method leads me to conclude that the following types of correctional programs have been demonstrated through research to be effective in reducing future delinquent and criminal activities: academic and vocational education; cognitive skills programs (Moral Reconciliation Therapy; Reasoning and Rehabilitation; cognitive restructuring); cognitive behavior and behavioral treatment for sex offenders; Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) for juveniles; drug courts; and drug treatment for those in the community and in correctional facilities. All these programs have human service components that address individual deficits and programs that are directly associated with criminal behavior, called “criminogenic needs” by correctional psychologists. Furthermore, these criminogenic needs are changeable and not fixed or, in the language of correctional psychologists, they are dynamic and not static. From this perspective, effective programs address changeable deficits or problems directly related to criminal behavior; in other words, using the lingo of correctional psychologists, the programs address “dynamic criminogenic needs (Andrews and Bonta 2006).” In addition, as discussed below, effective

programs address cognitive issues and can be assumed to bring about a change in thinking. Programs that focus on deterrence, incapacitation, and control have not been found to be effective.

Deterrence, incapacitation and increased control

The increased emphasis on more rigorous evaluations and the improved quality of these evaluations occurring in the past 20 years had several valuable outcomes. First, as described above, research has given us knowledge of what programs are effective in reducing recidivism. Second, the existing incapacitation and deterrence interventions were submitted to rigorous tests to determine whether programs operating under these paradigms were effective in reducing recidivism. There is no evidence that either increasing the onerousness of punishment or increasing control over offenders and delinquents reduces recidivism (MacKenzie 2006). Such programs do not address the criminogenic needs nor do they create cognitive change. Investigations of popular correctional interventions reflecting this paradigm, such as boot camp prisons, intensive probation and parole supervision, electronic monitoring, and drug testing are not effective in reducing recidivism.

In a review of meta-analyses of aversive sanctions and supervision, Lipsey and Cullen (2007) conclude that such sanctions do not inhibit subsequent criminal behavior and a “significant portion of the evidence points in the opposite direction.” (Lipsey and Cullen 2007, p. 302). That is, such sanctions increase future criminal behavior. For example, Scared Straight is one program that has consistently been found to increase recidivism. Additionally, existing policies increasing the length of prison sentences do little to deter criminal behavior and such sentences may actually be criminogenic (Nagin et al. 2009; Lipsey and Cullen 2007). Furthermore, many unintended consequences of existing policies have occurred because the large number of young people being sent to prison decimated some urban communities, and had negative impacts on many living in the devastated communities (Clear 2007). A large number of those suffering under these draconian policies were young minorities from inner cities. Taken as a whole, this research suggests these punitive punishments have harmed not only the individuals sanctioned but also the communities from which they come. As Dr. McCord’s experiment demonstrated many years ago, misdirected government programs have the power to do harm, and, furthermore, research can provide information about the harm so policy makers can reevaluate their decisions on the basis of the results of the studies.

Increasing environment opportunities: focus on social programs

Disappointingly, interventions designed to increase environmental opportunities for offenders by assisting them in obtaining employment or housing in order to help them adjust to community life have not significantly reduced their return to criminal activities. Many reentry programs focus on providing assistance in these areas. In-prison work programs and correctional industry are also expected to reduce recidivism by giving offenders future employment opportunities (MacKenzie 2006; Visher

et al. 2006). While these interventions, unlike the more punitive punishments, have not caused harm by increasing later criminal behavior or damaging communities, they have been a disappointment because they have not been effective in reducing future criminal activities. In general, these studies show no difference in recidivism when the recidivism of those who receive the opportunities is contrasted with the recidivism of a comparison group. In my opinion, the reason they have not been found to be effective is because they are designed to give opportunities to people, and these people are not prepared cognitively to take advantage of the opportunities.

The theoretical basis for the idea that environmental conditions are important in reducing criminal activities comes out of the traditional sociological point of view in which social problems are the major explanation for criminal activities. From this perspective, it is important to focus on changing peoples' social environments by giving them employment and housing, not on individual differences such as thought processes and rehabilitation. The social bonds or ties to social institutions are assumed to be the keys to successful desistance from crime. Life-course theorists from this control theory tradition propose that attachments or bonds to marriage and employment are critical events leading to desistance.

In support of the control perspective, research finds a correlation between both marriage and employment and desistance from criminal activity (Sampson and Laub 1993). For instance, Sampson and Laub (1993) and Laub and Sampson (2003) studied a sample of delinquent boys at high risk for adult criminal involvement. Some of these boys desisted from criminal activity and this desistance was associated with stronger adult social bonds. Those who found stable jobs, satisfying marriages, and educational opportunities were less apt to continue their criminal activities. Further support for the correlation between adult social bonds and desistance comes from research using self-reports of criminal activities and life circumstances. When people who have been involved in criminal activities are living with spouses or when they are employed their criminal activities decline; conversely, when they are unemployed or not living with a spouse their criminal activities increase (MacKenzie et al. 1999; Horney et al. 1995).

From their research, Sampson and Laub (1993) and Laub and Sampson (2003) developed a theory of social bonds based on the findings of associations between desistance and social ties such as work, school, or marriage. However, little is said in the theory about the mechanism for change. It appears to be fortuitous. It is particularly wanting when it comes to guiding the work of those who are trying to design evidence-based correctional programs to successfully change offenders so they will desist from criminal activity. Taking an extreme and humorous example, it would be consistent with this perspective to throw large parties for exiting inmates where they would have the opportunity to meet nice people who would be potential mates. The question is: Would increasing their chances for marriage decrease their criminal behavior? From my perspective, meeting potential noncriminal spouses would not make people want to take on the responsibility of marriage and family commitments. They would have to be cognitively ready for these kinds of commitments.

Similarly, if someone is given the opportunity for employment it does not mean they will get home early enough to get sleep before they must get up for work, arrive at work on time, be ready to take orders from a supervisor, get along with coworkers, go to work every day, refrain from drug or alcohol use during work hours, or get up at

a reasonable hour so they can arrive at work on time. Quite possibly, the reason programs designed to increase employment opportunities are not effective is because they do not effectively change the individuals so they are cognitively prepared to take advantage of the opportunities.

The social bonds theoretical perspective does little to guide the development of correctional programs that will be effective in changing the behavior of offenders so they do not continue their criminal activities. The quest is how to assist, encourage, or coerce offenders to desist from criminal and antisocial activities. My perspective is that the programs that give people opportunities for work are not effective unless they are preceded by programs that address cognitions.

Cognitive transformations

As noted above, effective programs address cognitions. I propose the reason these types of programs are effective is because they successfully bring about cognitive transformations, and these transformations are required before the offenders are prepared to live new noncriminal lives. It is not the social conditions that have driven these people to become involved in criminal activities. Criminals come from poor urban inner city neighborhoods as well as wealthy suburbs and rural areas. Conversely, the majority of people living in all of these environments do not become criminals. There are various reasons people become involved in crime, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these trajectories. What is important is what we have learned from the research about how to change people so they do not continue in their lives of crime.

The way individuals think and process information influences whether they violate the law (Andrews and Bonta 2006; MacKenzie 2006). Deficiencies in social cognition (understanding other people and social interactions), problem-solving abilities, and sense of self-efficacy are all cognitive deficits or “criminogenic needs” found to be associated with criminal activity (Foglia 2000; Andrews et al. 1990; MacKenzie 2006). According to the cognitive transformation theory I am proposing, programs are effective to the degree they are capable of creating a cognitive change in thinking whether this is through changes in criminal thinking and criminogenic attitudes (Andrews and Bonta 2006), improved executive functioning and problem solving (Giancola 2000), or increased maturity and moral development (Batiuk et al. 1997; Duguid 1981; Gordon and Arbuthnot 1987).

Criminologists have proposed various theories to explain the cause of crimes and desistance from crime or the lack thereof. Many of these theories reflect the sociological tradition of criminology and the focus on social bonds or ties as the causes for criminal activity. Recently, these theories have been called into question. In particular, research such as my review of the “what works” literature examining the impact of various correctional strategies on later criminal behavior has not found that programs providing employment opportunities, assistance with job searches, or life skills are particularly effective if they are not paired with programs that address cognitions. While marriage, employment, and school may be correlated with reduced criminal activity, they are not the explanation for why someone chooses to become involved in criminal activity nor do they provide a blueprint for the development of correctional programs.

Desistance theory

Recently, several desistance theorists have begun to acknowledge the importance of cognitive change in explaining why some offenders desist from criminal involvement (Giordano et al. 2002; Paternoster and Bushway 2009; Ward and Maruna 2007). For example, Giordano and her colleagues propose a cognitive transformation theory of desistance that emphasizes the actor's role in the transformation process. In their proposal, once a person is ready for change, an environmental "hook" initiates a change process leading to a new self concept and lifestyle. The individual must attend to new possibilities and move toward or select the catalysts for change. According to them, four stages of change must occur before someone moves away from a criminal lifestyle: (1) a shift in the person's readiness to change; (2) a "hook," or environmental opportunity such as employment or marriage must occur; (3) a new self concept replaces the old deviant view of self, and (4) the previous antisocial lifestyles are no longer viewed as positive, viable, or personally relevant. The exposure to a hook or opportunity influences the person to make a cognitive change and eventually the person realizes that the change is incompatible with continued criminal or other antisocial activities. The person develops a new view of the self and the old self is rejected.

This theory presents a major difference from control theory. Control theorists view individual's motivations to deviate as a constant while the degree of internal and external control varies (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). Increased control leads to reduced criminal activity, decreased control results in greater criminal activity. In contrast, Giordano and colleagues are emphasizing the person's role and self agency in making the change. However, the environmental opportunities or "hooks" are still proposed as the major necessary condition for bringing about the change. In contrast, I am proposing the cognitive change is the necessary precursor to a move toward a more conventional noncriminal lifestyle, and only after this change occurs will the person be ready to take advantage of the environmental opportunities. Subsequently, the person will move toward or find opportunities.

Recently, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) provided another explanation for desistance in their identity theory of desistance. In their opinions, a distinction can be made between one's working identity and the kind of person one wants to become or one's possible self. Intentional self-change is understood to be cognitive, internal, and individual with new social networks approached and mobilized after the emergence of a new, conventional identity. Offenders will retain the "offender" working identity as long as they perceive the net benefits to outweigh the costs. Change will be gradual and reflect a realization of failures and dissatisfactions connected with the current criminal lifestyle. This dissatisfaction leads to a process of identity change. Offenders begin to break away from crime and "play at" a new self identity as they begin to make initial attempts at a more prosocial life. Changes in friendship networks and intimate relationships as well as securing employment are important in helping the person maintain the fledging changed identity. The change in identity occurs in the mind of the person. They have weighed the costs and benefits of continuing the criminal lifestyle and have begun to behave in ways that conform to the new possible self identity.

Thus, in the identity theory of Paternoster and Bushway (2009), as I have proposed in discussing the cognitive transformation theory, the change occurs in the thought

process first, in this case self identity as a possible noncriminal, before the person secures a job, attracts a new marriage partner, or makes new friends. Unlike Sampson and Laub (1993), the structural supports in the identity theory are not the primary causal factor in producing desistance. Similarly, it differs from Giordano et al. (2002) in that the identity must change first before the individual will take advantage of environmental opportunities. However, none of these desistance theorists discuss how correctional programs might be designed to facilitate the transformation, change in identity, or increases in controls.

A third point of view emphasizing the need for cognitive changes comes from the work of Maruna (2001), who compared and contrasted the stories of ex-convicts who were actively involved in criminal activity with those who are desisting from crime and drug use. The intensive interviews revealed two common types of narratives: a “condemnation” story of active offenders and a “generative” story favored by desisters. Those who desisted reported taking control of their lives, whereas the active offenders continued to view themselves as passive products of an inhospitable environment. Maruna (2001) calls the desisters’ stories “generative” because they have a generalized disbelief in change and this is apparent in their personal narratives. Most insisted that they had not really changed and that they have been good people all along. They just made new choices. This is somewhat different from the identity model proposed by Paternoster and Bushway in which they discuss the importance of the change in self identity prior to the move away from criminal activities. However, it is another example of a theoretical perspective emphasizing the person’s self agency and the importance of cognitive changes in the move to a new noncriminal lifestyle. The desisters make new choices and these choices are not dependent upon social opportunities but on the individuals’ choices about taking advantage of opportunities. The opportunities do not control them in some fashion or fortuitously occur, instead the actors choose to change their lives.

In comparison to the other desistance theorists, Maruna has taken an interest in how his findings might apply to correctional programming to more effectively reduce future criminal activity. His early work emphasized the offender self agency in the move away from offender to an ex-offender lifestyle (Maruna 2001). He seemed to suggest the change in lifestyle was a decision each person must make, little could be done externally to move the person toward this decision. However, more recently, he has worked with Ward and his colleagues on the Good Lives Model (GLM), a treatment program designed to increase the motivation of offenders to participate in treatment (Ward and Maruna 2007). They propose that the only way treatment can be effective is if the participant comes to visualize a different and rewarding noncriminal future.

To summarize, correctional programs can effectively reduce future criminal behavior. Effective programs address cognitions and prepare people for a transition into a noncriminal lifestyle. I am proposing this cognitive transformation must occur prior to the move away from criminal activities. Until this transition occurs, people will not be prepared to take advantage of environmental opportunities. Consistent with this perspective, desistance theorists, most notably Giordano and her colleagues, Paternoster and Bushway, and Maruna, have proposed several theories to explain how cognitive transitions or self identity occur and how these lead to a shift away from criminal activities. Thus, empirical research has demonstrated the type of correctional programs

that are effective in changing offenders, and, on the basis of this information, theorists have developed theories to explain how and why these programs are effective. Future correctional paradigms will need to incorporate these perspectives in policy decisions if one of the goals is recidivism reduction.

A New correctional paradigm

We are now on the brink of another major paradigm change in corrections. A combination of factors has impinged on corrections and these factors appear to be leading to a major change in correctional policy and practice. Driving this change is the evidence-based knowledge that correctional policies based on incapacitation and deterrence, popular since the 1970s and 1980s, have failed; they are not effective in reducing recidivism and they have caused harm to individuals and communities. Similarly, providing housing or employment to offenders is not effective in reducing criminal activity.

Rehabilitation and services that create cognitive change in criminal thinking can effectively prevent or reduce criminal behavior. Policy makers, correctional administrators, and researchers search for ways to use this scientific knowledge to reduce correctional populations without producing a corresponding increase in crime. The emphasis today is on “evidence-based” interventions—interventions that have been shown to be effective when tested with rigorous research designs and advanced statistical techniques (MacKenzie 2001, 2005).

The shift in correctional philosophy is influenced by many factors. A growth in research that demonstrates programs that follow treatment protocols are effective is evident. Broad-based awareness of the “revolving door”, as well as the impact of deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill on the correctional population, especially jails, is now commonplace knowledge. Recognition of specialized needs for sub-populations such as female offenders and those with co-occurring disorders has developed, along with an understanding of challenges posed by sentencing guidelines that provide little flexibility and do not consider how to integrate treatment into guidelines so some can be diverted from prison. Numerous methodological and statistical advancements also accompany these areas of substantive growth, such as an emphasis on measuring fidelity and on appropriate modeling of the myriad of services now provided to some offenders.

The most significant factor generating an interest in changing corrections is, perhaps, the downturn in the economy. The large number of offenders in prisons and jails and under supervision in the community represents a large financial cost. Federal, state, and local governments search for ways to reduce expenditures, and the correctional system is an appealing target. Policy makers are recognizing the high cost associated with the large incarcerated population and are seeking politically palatable methods of reducing the populations without appearing “soft” on crime, even utilizing the mantra “smart on crime.”

The mantras for corrections today appear to be “evidence-based” interventions and being “smart on crime.” These new perspectives will require close working relationships among policy makers, practitioners, and researchers if the goals of more successful and cost-effective correctional interventions are to be realized. Decisions

about risks and needs must be made to assist corrections and sentencing agencies in identifying the offenders who benefit most from treatments, who are appropriate candidates for alternative correctional strategies, and who can safely be released from prison or jails without jeopardizing public safety.

Some of the most pressing issues are the identification and management of special populations such as the mentally ill, women, those with dual diagnoses, and drug-involved offenders. Furthermore, these interventions must be done “smartly” so that recommended programs and management of offenders neither become prohibitively expensive nor a threat to public safety. Decision making will require valid and reliable tools to guide evidence-based decisions about the risks offenders present to the community and their treatment needs. Research clearly demonstrates that these tools, when compared to clinical judgment alone, substantially improve predictions of reoffending and violent crime, and can be successfully used to decide which offenders do not have to be locked up in prisons or jails. In an effort to reduce costs, some jurisdictions are examining how to incorporate risk and needs assessments into all phases of justice decision making, from pretrial through sentencing and release. These instruments will assist decision makers in determining appropriate candidates for alternative treatment or management, with the benefit of reducing the costly use of incarceration when more effective evidence-based alternatives are possible.

Identifying effective treatment models for offenders with mental illness is another pressing issue for corrections. Staggering numbers of people in our jails and prisons struggle with mental health issues. Many inmates are still not appropriately diagnosed or treated for their condition(s) and, upon release, face challenges in the re-entry process, including maintaining compliance with medication and meeting their own basic needs. Pioneering work in the area of offenders with mental illness has led to an important distinction regarding the offenders themselves. These offenders are working with two deficits—criminal and mental health components. Accordingly, agencies, therapists, and program developers must work to address the treatment of underlying criminogenic needs of these offenders along with their mental illness in order to facilitate successful reintegration. Contrary to previous opinion, a fundamental assumption growing in the literature is that mental illness is not necessarily the cause of criminal behaviors resulting in incarceration. Instead, the same risk factors for the perpetuation of violence and other criminal acts, such as an established criminal history, antisocial personality, antisocial cognitions, and a tendency toward antisocial associates, are shared by both those with and without mental illness. Moreover, these factors are generally stronger predictors of recidivism than mental illness diagnoses themselves, although psychological conditions appear to be related to the poor functioning of the mentally ill in the community (Skeem et al. 2011). While offenders with mental health issues have been used as an example here, the message from the literature clearly indicates the need to work within a multidimensional treatment environment, which will require improved planning and coordination efforts.

Criminology has been criticized for its lack of focus on what goes on inside corrections programs (Petersilia 2003). While research has successfully identified therapeutic programs that are effective in reducing recidivism, much less is known about how to insure these programs are delivered with fidelity and/or therapeutic integrity, or the extent to which interventions conform to the manner of service intended by the developers of the service. Despite increasing knowledge and

statistical precision, correctional research continues to fail to question the “black box” itself. The lack of precision in understanding program content and/or processes has been noted within correctional approaches in general (see Bonta et al. 2008). When programs appropriately adhere to the principles of risk, need, and responsivity, they can effectively reduce recidivism, but many do not follow these principles (Andrews and Bonta 2006). Consequently, an ideal component of any correctional program evaluation is a relatively thorough, yet unobtrusive, assessment of program delivery, especially when a program is adopted from another jurisdiction or population, since portability of a promising program does not always follow (see Armstrong 2003). The next generation of correctional programs and related policies are poised to include a careful, rigorous evaluation of both content and outcome, given the increased interest of policymakers and practitioners alike in evidence-based practices that hold promise for increased economic efficiency.

In summary, we are on the brink of a new age in corrections (MacKenzie and Armstrong 2012). The old paradigm of punitiveness has failed and brought harm. As Dr. McCord found in her study, ideas that sound viable are not always successful in achieving their objectives. Obviously, rigorous research was valuable in giving us information about the failure of these interventions and the harm they caused. Punitive sanctioning policies have harmed individuals and communities. Research has also been important in informing us about more recent programs designed to assist offenders adjust to the community after a period of incarceration. These reentry programs focus on providing opportunities for employment and housing, while not actually causing harm, the interventions have been disappointing because they have not been successful in reducing recidivism. The research has been helpful in identifying the type of interventions that are successful in reducing later criminal activities. These programs attend to thoughts and attitudes and lead to cognitive transformations. Desistance theorists have begun to develop theories to explain why these interventions are successful. Taken as a whole, the research has begun to impact policy decisions. Changes are now on the way, but at this point it is unclear what the future will bring. Certainly, we must address the problems created by the old philosophy as we move towards smarter ways to address crime problems with new theories and evidence-based solutions. The question is: Where will this new paradigm take us?

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