

Why “What Works” Matters Under the “Broken Windows” Model of Supervision

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THERE IS LITTLE doubt that the system of criminal justice has been exposed to widespread dissatisfaction over its performance for nearly three decades (Garland 2001). Since the early to mid-1970s, escalating disaffection with the effectiveness of crime control policies has produced a notable “toughening” in sentencing codes, a much greater reliance on the use of incarceration (Mauer 2000), and the hardening of public attitudes towards the treatment of those who break the law. Despite the ascendancy, however, of what Simon (1998) refers to as a politics of “populist punitiveness,” the vast majority of offenders remain subject to supervision in the community, whether on probation or some form of parole or post-release control. How they are supervised carries enormous implications for public safety and community wellbeing. Even more, it is imperative that the expectations of the public and the outcomes they embrace be accounted for in the strategies and methods adopted by probation and parole administrators.

Unfortunately, what matters to the citizenry is rarely addressed in the policies and practices that govern offender supervision. In part, this is due to the long-standing insulation of the criminal justice system from accountability for producing results that connect to the concerns of the community. It is also rooted in a lack of understanding about, if not indifference toward, what outcomes actually matter to the public. If this issue is raised at all, there is a presumption that the agency knows what communities desire when it comes to supervising offenders. It is presumed that the public expects an approach

to supervision that places a paramount, if not exclusive, emphasis on surveillance, monitoring, and control. Agencies incorporating this type of philosophy assume—in line with their perception of public opinion—that “nothing works” in dealing with criminal offenders. They also accept the notion that the public no longer supports the goal of rehabilitation.

Do these presumptions comport with public opinion? Perhaps surprisingly, given the uncompromising tone of political and media discourse on the subject, a range of expectations confounding the arguments of liberals and conservatives alike coexist in the general public. A recent analysis of public opinion on crime and punishment found that at a very general level the public, at least at “first impulse,” supports punitive crime control policies (Cullen, et al. 2000). The extent of their support, however, is “mushy,” not rigid. Though retributive concerns play a role in their desire to see the punishment fit the crime, so do concerns with utility. If the public is convinced that offenders will make restitution, engage in community service, or seek to improve themselves, they will support such interventions. In striking contrast to the sustained criticism of treatment programs over many years, the citizenry support rehabilitation as a rationale for correctional intervention—if there is a payoff that contributes to the betterment of offenders and public safety. This support does not hold, however, for offenders who have committed acts of criminal violence.

Other research findings are even more suggestive of what the public expects from the justice system. A series of focus groups, pub-

lic forums, and surveys conducted in Vermont, Connecticut, and Iowa revealed that the respondents desired a system of justice that achieved outcomes connected to local community values and norms. The citizens, in fact, expected the system to achieve a small core of outcomes. These results included the community’s safety from violent crime, offenders’ participation in programs designed to repair the community for the harm their actions caused, and effective treatment to facilitate the safe integration or return of offenders to the community. However, these are the very outcomes that the respondents felt the system was not accomplishing.

From this research it was evident that the public did not believe that the vast majority of offenders are being held to account for their criminal actions. The public wants the damage caused by crime to be repaired. They want what was broken, fixed; what was stolen, returned; what was destroyed, replaced. Even though some victims do not believe that they can ever be paid back in full for the harm done them, they want programs that work so others will not be victimized in the future. They want a system that works. They will not accept “nothing works” when offenders reside in their neighborhood either on probation or after serving time in prison.

In essence, the community expects the system of justice to achieve certain outcomes over all others. First, the public wants the truth above all else. Not “truth-in-sentencing,” per se, but reliable follow-through on what the system says it is going to do. Whatever the sentence, they expect the offender to abide by its requirements. Second, the citi-

zenry expects to derive some sense of meaning from the processes of justice. This requires that the sentence fit the crime, the offender, and the circumstances. Third, citizens want some good to come of justice. This means that the practice of justice must create value for the victim, the community, and the offender. Finally, they very strongly hold that public safety is the bottom line. They are willing to assist in achieving this outcome and to be partners in co-producing the outcomes associated with justice.

These findings resonate with meaning for those whose responsibilities lie in crafting sensible policies and practices for offenders under community supervision. Given the current state of the field, is it possible to create supervision strategies and correctional programs that provide a significant payoff in achieving the goals of public safety and reducing offender recidivism? The performance of probationers and parolees under supervision has been and remains poor to dismal. Even more, the profession of probation and parole suffers from a fundamental lack of clarity about purpose and mission. As noted elsewhere, the practice of probation and parole is in need of a "new narrative" (Corbett, 1996; Rhine, 1997; Dickey and Smith 1998).

Redirecting Under the "Broken Windows" Model¹

During the past several years, a growing body of work has emerged addressing the need to reinvent or retool how offenders are supervised in the community (Petersilia 2002). Many of the key components that are advocated are remarkably similar (see: Smith and Dickey 1998; Clear and Corbett 1999), especially the emphasis placed on an "activist" style of community supervision. What follows presents an overview of one such approach increasingly referred to as the "Broken Windows" model.

In 1999 the Reinventing Probation Council (a group of probation leaders and practitioners led by John DiIulio), with support from the Manhattan Institute, the American Probation and Parole Association, and the National Association of Probation Executives, published a manifesto entitled *Broken Windows Probation: The Next Step in Fighting Crime*. This was followed in 2000 by the issu-

ance of a longer monograph entitled *Transforming Probation Through Leadership: The 'Broken Windows' Model* (2000). These reports were written to encourage a critical and constructive reassessment of the current mission and practice of probation. The core argument is applicable to parole or post-release supervision, as well. These reports called for a redirection of the field through a transformation of the focus and conduct of community supervision.

The "Broken Windows" model offers clear direction to those administrators and practitioners seeking guidance on how to achieve outcomes that speak to both public safety and offender reform. This model, however, operates within the larger framework of community justice. It views the community as the primary customer. At its center, the product sought is not services to the offender, but public safety. As one of its key strategies, however, the model embraces the "what works" literature in corrections, arguing that effective treatment programs contribute tangibly to public safety. This feature has been overlooked in some of the discussion that has ensued around this approach (Taxman and Byrne 2001).

The remainder of this article elaborates on the "Broken Windows" model and the need to incorporate correctional programming that draws from the well-known literature on "what works." Both are essential to securing outcomes important to the community and to the long-term success of the model.

It is helpful and necessary to clarify the use of the "Broken Windows" metaphor. This metaphor refers to an innovative approach to community policing; one that attends to the problems of social disorder, especially in public spaces, by engaging the citizenry in the mission and practice of policing. In its more progressive forms, this style of policing views citizens as partners in crime control, as well as customers of the services police provide. In a number of urban centers across the country, what has emerged is a proactive, problem-solving, order-maintaining role for the police, not just a commitment to the activities traditionally associated with law enforcement alone.

The application of this metaphor to probation and parole points to the importance of a comparable redefinition for community supervision. At its core, the "Broken Windows" model states that the work of probation and parole must move well beyond the management of individual caseloads and en-

gage the community in the business of community supervision. Its vision, reflecting the assumptions of community justice, is neither control-oriented nor offender-centered. Rather, it seeks to connect probation and parole practitioners as willing partners in working with and contributing to the quality of community life. The model embraces the vision statement on community justice issued by the American Probation and Parole Association, arguing that communities and victims must become active participants in co-producing the outcomes associated with justice.

The monograph develops seven key strategies for reengineering offender supervision. The last strategy focuses on the importance of leadership in engineering changes in the field that are responsive to outcomes that matter to the citizenry. Of the strategies necessary for transforming the conduct of community supervision, the "Broken Windows" model argues that leadership, in the final analysis, is the most important of all. It is critical for leaders in the field to attend to the importance of creating public value in the work that they do. This entails "embracing accountability" for producing results that contribute to public safety and community well-being. Ultimately, those who provide leadership must consider how and in what ways their actions move their agencies toward the creation of public value. The remaining six strategies discussed below, if implemented faithfully, and in partnership with others, will contribute tangibly to outcomes that are valued by the public.

At the outset, it is necessary to state that the strategies are interdependent with each other. They are grounded in and draw their effectiveness from community partnerships, community mobilization, and community collaborations designed to provide both short- and long-term public safety. In the short-term, it is necessary to address serious and violent offenders subject to community supervision with appropriate monitoring and control. In the long-run, it is essential to provide the appropriate balance of supervision and treatment interventions. Regardless of the span of time under consideration, the primary outcome that is sought is reduced victimizations in the future.

The first three strategies developed in the monograph include "placing public safety first," "supervising probationers in the neighborhood, not the office," and "rationally allocating resources." Recognizing that *the primary concern of the public is to be free from*

¹ What follows here and elsewhere in this article draws on material in the "Broken Windows" monograph and an article that was co-authored by Rhine, Hinzman, Corbett, Beto and Paparozzi (2001).

crime, the proponents of the “Broken Windows” model emphasize achieving public safety. What public safety means is drawn from Smith and Dickey, who define it as *the extent to which persons and property are free from attack or theft, that is, from the threat or risk of harm in particular places at particular times*. Consistent with a community justice vision, this is a definition that calls for a strategic approach to crime prevention, reduction, and control.

It is also a definition that involves a systemic, yet local focus on the social ecology of crime. The emphasis on social ecology informs a number of the strategies proposed under the “Broken Windows” model. In fact, incorporating an ecological focus is essential to redirecting and guiding the daily work of probation and parole officers. Doing so is inseparable from the pursuit of public safety as defined by Smith and Dickey. It redraws the parameters of what probation and parole officers do on a daily basis. Attending to local ecology requires a proactive and routine engagement in the wider arena of community and victim vulnerabilities in those locales and at those times of day where the threats to public safety are greatest. Even more, it requires the pursuit of community-centered and neighborhood-based approaches to supervision.

In a trend that has been evolving for quite some time, the supervision of probationers has been conducted in government office buildings in a fortress-like fashion far removed from where offenders live or carry on their lives. Many commentators have long observed that where the office may serve as the *base* of supervision, the neighborhood should be the *place* of supervision. As directed under the “Broken Windows” approach, a commitment to place-based supervision recognizes that the rate of crime actually reflects the aggregate of many different crime problems, scattered about in many different neighborhoods. The threats offenders pose to public safety are by definition “local in nature,” disproportionately affecting some neighborhoods, street corners and other public spaces, far more so than others.

A commitment to public safety and the adoption of place-based supervision strategies requires that resources be allocated with a sustained focus on managing the risk of harm posed by offenders at those times and in those places where the potential for victimization is greatest. Such an approach re-

quires that probation and parole officers widen the community net. They must reach well beyond the management of individual caseloads to devote a significant portion of their time to connecting offenders with prosocial peers, mentors and other adults in the neighborhoods where probationers live. At the same time, they must draw on the informal sources of social control to monitor and respond proactively to the public safety risks posed by such offenders. Within the “Broken Windows” model, probation and parole officers must redefine their role to serve as a “catalyst” for building these relationships, in effect aligning their efforts with the greater operational, resource and socializing capacities that communities provide.

Moving probation and parole officers out on the street helps them not only interact with offenders, but develop a much more informed understanding of the environment in which offenders and those around them live, work, and recreate. The effectiveness of supervision is undermined where probationers and parolees are able to maintain anonymity and social distance from their “POs” and from those in the community who may and often are better positioned to exert meaningful leverage and accountability over them.

The successful adoption of the first three strategies discussed above requires the pursuit of another strategy: the need to “develop partners in the community.” If the goals of crime prevention, reduction and control are to be achieved, and if reparation of the harm caused by criminal actions is to be addressed, then it is vital that community, faith-based and neighborhood groups, in addition to law enforcement and human service agencies, be involved in new and meaningful partnerships with probation and parole.

There are many potential partners for collaboration. The “Broken Windows” model argues that probation and parole practitioners must move such collaborations and partnerships from the margins to the center of what they do. When such relationships are established, field services agencies are better positioned to effectively supervise offenders, and to impose greater leverage and accountability over them. Each collaboration contributes to the provision of public safety and to more credible supervision practices, given their connection to the social ecology of neighborhood and community relations. Together, they enhance the limited leverage probation exercises over offenders by drawing on

the “social capital” furnished by local community groups and institutions.

Clearly, the monograph calls for a more complex form of community engagement for probation and parole. It also speaks to the need to hold offenders accountable for their actions and for maintaining prosocial, law-abiding behavior. Another one of the seven strategies discussed under the “Broken Windows” model addresses the enforcement and sanctioning dimension of probation work (that is, “provide for strong enforcement of probation conditions and a quick response to violations”). This strategy offers a no-nonsense argument for levying consequences for non-compliance with the expectations of probation (and parole).

In terms of enforcement, probation needs to provide aggressive surveillance and control for offenders whose behavior is deemed a threat to public safety, and to provide swift, timely and proportionate responses to all violations of the conditions of supervision. A carefully calibrated continuum of graduated or intermediate sanctions offers field staff a range of measured responses short of revoking and returning all such violators to prison. In addition, probation systems must adopt strict and proactive policies on apprehending absconders from probation. The demanding enforcement of offender accountability for abiding by the conditions of supervision represents sound practice. It is also responsive to the public’s expectation that the supervision of offenders in the community, especially probation, serve as a meaningful sanction within the justice system, not an ineffectual slap-on-the-wrist.

The enforcement component of the “Broken Windows” model has received much attention. The origin of the metaphor is inextricably linked to law enforcement (Kelling and Coles 1996). The Reinventing Probation Council intended its use to convey a progressive, community-centered style of policing. If surveillance, monitoring and control play an important role in probation and parole—and they do—it is also vital that programmatic interventions designed to change offender behavior form part of the overall strategy. In recognition of the latter, the “Broken Windows” model called for the adoption of a strategy grounded in the “what works” literature governing effective correctional programming. For reasons explained below, this strategy is essential to achieving outcomes that matter to the citizenry.

Why "What Works" Matters

Achieving public safety within a community justice framework means more than reducing offender recidivism. Nevertheless, its accomplishment is enhanced significantly through effective rehabilitative programming. Reducing the threat or risk of harm presented by offenders *requires* the development of programmatic interventions that connect them to environments that have prosocial supports and structure. For this to occur, probation and parole practitioners must incorporate the findings and principles established in the well-known "what works" literature in community-centered supervision strategies and daily practice.

A persuasive body of writing and research has been evolving for over 20 years published by academicians mainly from Canada and, to a lesser extent, the United States. In fact, it is possible to speak of the "Canadians' Theory of Rehabilitation" grounded in the social psychology of offending (Cullen 2002). This theory and the literature behind it clearly demonstrate that correctional programming can be effective; certain programs will, if designed properly and implemented with "therapeutic integrity," produce significant outcomes in reducing offender recidivism. In terms of offender supervision, the greatest reductions in recidivism are often associated with community-based programs, not programs found in institutional settings. The best interventions can reduce offender recidivism on average by 30 percent (Andrew and Bonta 1998).

Probation and parole administrators must draw on this impressive wealth of social scientific research to design and sustain programs that are effective vehicles for offender rehabilitation. The most effective programs target such dynamic risk factors as antisocial attitudes, values and beliefs, delinquent and criminal peers, self-control, self-management and problem-solving skills. Significantly, the research has identified three principles that are most closely associated with effective correctional programming: risk, criminogenic need, and responsivity.

The application of the risk principle enables field staff to identify offenders' risk levels and to thus target supervision strategies and resources appropriately. The level of risk is determined by taking into account a number of static and dynamic risk factors in predicting the likelihood of future reoffending. The assessment of risk answers the question of *who* to target for the greatest amount of

supervision. All too often, probation and parole agencies invest in risk assessment instruments that guide the classification of offenders into appropriate risk groups. However, risk classifications alone are insufficient if they are not combined and informed by the results of needs assessments as well.

If done at all, the assessment of the myriad needs that offenders bring with them to supervision is rather infrequently connected to factors known to predict the likelihood of future recidivism. The "what works" literature stresses the importance of assessing offenders' criminogenic needs. Such needs are unique and represent dynamic risk factors or behavioral areas that can be changed as a result of carefully designed programmatic interventions. The criminogenic need principle directs attention to what should be targeted for correctional intervention (e.g., antisocial attitudes, weak problem-solving skills). If these areas of need are properly addressed, the risk level presented by the offender should be reduced over time.

The principle of responsivity refers to something general and specific (Cullen 2002). "General responsivity" refers to treatment programming and modes of service delivery that employ cognitive-behavioral and social learning techniques and methods, and that rely on positive reinforcements over negative reinforcements by a ratio of 4:1. Specific responsivity addresses the issue of matching offenders' learning styles with a program structure and techniques that best meet the characteristics such individuals bring to the table. It emphasizes the significance of the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the offender and the correctional change agent (e.g., counselor, probation/parole officer).

In essence, this research demonstrates that effective programming is intensive and behavioral. It demands a good deal of offenders' time and thinking, up to 40 percent to 70 percent of their daily round of activities. In terms of duration, it lasts on average three to six months. Programs are most effective when they target high-risk offenders and their criminogenic needs. Program design and implementation are likewise critical. If programmatic interventions are to be effective, field staff and administrators must ensure a consistent and sustained focus on "therapeutic integrity." Those programs that work continue over a fairly long period of time and do what they set out to do.

The Need for Balance in Supervision

The findings from this research informed the call under the "Broken Windows" model for the adoption of treatment programs grounded in evidence-based correctional practice. The model clearly recognizes the importance of drawing on well-established theory and research that supports rehabilitative interventions targeting the reduction of offender recidivism. At the same time, the pursuit of such programming does not represent a stand-alone strategy, nor an argument for an approach to supervision that places an offender-centered accent upon simply doing more to better those who break the law.

One of the members of the Reinventing Probation Council has commented that it is a matter of employing "broken windows/broken buckets" approaches to supervision simultaneously. According to Hinzman, this offers "a quick way of saying that we should be doing what works, what the public expects us to do, and what will provide greater public safety and reduce victimization" (2000: 32). Each serves to reinforce the other, neither can be pursued independently of the other without compromising the capacity to achieve outcomes that matter to the citizenry.

What are the implications of relying on what is, in fact, a balanced approach to supervision? Several implications stand out above all the rest. First, the "what works" literature and research on intermediate sanctions demonstrates that enforcement, monitoring, and control alone are insufficient as an overall framework for driving the supervision of offenders in the community. For too long, the discussion of the role of supervision has been reduced to a question of whether probation and parole officers perform primarily a law enforcement or social work mission. Though holding offenders accountable for compliance with the conditions of supervision invariably requires an enforcement component, achieving public safety and the reduction of recidivism demands "high doses" of both surveillance and treatment (Petersilia, 2002: 497).

Second, effective correctional programming can be achieved as part of an offender's supervision in the community. Doing so, however, will require that probation and parole administrators and practitioners become well versed in the rather substantial literature associated with "what works" principles and findings. In so doing, they must take on di-

rectly the challenge of “technology transfer” (Cullen, 2000: 283). The concept of technology transfer refers to the transmission of social science research in a manner that affirms the value of informing everyday operational policies and practices with the findings of scientific knowledge. Administrators and field staff can no longer afford to rely only on experience and look skeptically at theory and research, if they are going to create supervision strategies and programs that have value.

Finally, at the heart of the “Broken Windows” model is the recognition of the importance of engaging the community in the business of community supervision. When tapped, there is often an expertise and a resource base at the local level that dramatically augments the inherently limited capacity of probation and parole to effect offender change and secure outcomes that matter to the community. Under the “Broken Windows” model, there is a heightened focus on achieving public safety goals through active partnerships with community and neighborhood groups and with law enforcement and human service agencies.

In the end, the model assumes that it is of critical importance to pursue the goals of crime reduction and rehabilitation. The practitioners of probation and parole are well positioned to draw on the “what works” tradition in fashioning effective programmatic interventions relative to offenders under their supervision. To the extent that they embrace the value of engaging the citizenry as full partners in the business of community supervision, they are likewise well positioned to accomplish the vision and objectives associated with the “Broken Windows” model. Doing both will contribute tangibly to out-

comes that matter to the citizenry: achieving public safety and reducing the recidivism of offenders.

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