

Does Public Support for Rehabilitation Really Mirror that for Repression?

Cracking a Deep-Rooted Criminological Myth

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Self-identifying references

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Abstract

For over a century scholars and practitioners have conceived of rehabilitation as the progressive mirror image of repression. Elaborating on previous warnings and anomalous findings, a representative survey of the Dutch population (N=1,892) points out that this received view is flawed. When measured separately, no significant correlation exists between support for rehabilitation and support for repression, rehabilitation is equally popular among the constituencies of conservative and progressive political parties, and no negative relationship exists between rehabilitation and authoritarianism. Abolition rather than rehabilitation proves to constitute the progressive opposite of repression. By way of conclusion, we discuss the remarkable persistence of the myth cracked in this paper, even in the face of convincing earlier contradictory evidence.

Keywords

Public opinion, punishment, repression, rehabilitation, abolition

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“I was offered a compromise, which I wouldn’t accept.” “What kind of compromise?” “Re-education. Reformation of the character. The code-word was *counseling*.” “And are you so perfect that you can’t do with a little counseling?” “It reminds me too much of Mao’s China. Recantation, self-criticism, public apology. I’m old-fashioned, I would prefer simply to be put against the wall and shot. Have done with it” (Coetzee 1999: 66, emphasis in original).

Introduction

For at least a century, social scientists have conceived of rehabilitation (or resocialisation, reintegration, or treatment) as the progressive mirror image of repression (or retribution or punishment) (e.g., Durkheim 1906, 1934; Mead 1918; Garland 2005). No less than a quarter of a century ago, (Duffee & Ritti 1980: 349) have already argued that this deep-rooted

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conception is seriously flawed, however: ‘While correctional practitioners and academicians alike have often conceptualized retribution (or punishment) and treatment (or rehabilitation) as opposites along *one* dimension, statistical analysis of the public data indicates that such is not the case. [...] As remarkable as it might seem, retribution and rehabilitation seem to be values that must be handled, accommodated, or satisfied independently of each other’ (emphasis in original). Duffee and Ritti’s warnings have not had much impact on research practices, however, and the habit of conceiving of repression and rehabilitation as each other’s mirror image is alive as ever today (as noticed as well, e.g., by Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher 1997; Moon *et al.* 2000; Sundt, Cullen, & Applegate 1998). Therefore, in this paper, we study whether this intellectual habit is as problematical as Duffee and Ritti held it to be or whether their warnings have been neglected rightly. We thus study whether rehabilitation really constitutes the mirror image of repression and, if not, how to explain this circumstance. We do so by means of an analysis of survey data collected for this very purpose among a sample of the Dutch population.

Hypotheses

The deep-rooted conception of rehabilitation as the progressive mirror image of repression gives rise to a variety of debatable measurement strategies in the relevant research literature. American public opinion polls, for instance, often rely on a limited number of questions (typically as few as one or two) about repressive measures. If a substantial part of the population supports those measures – and indeed, typically a majority does –, this is taken to indicate that only limited support for rehabilitation exists, thus effectively inferring rejection

of rehabilitation from support for repression. But of course, as Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate (2000: 6-8) rightly comment in their review of the relevant research literature, ‘progressive opinions cannot be discovered if they are not measured by an opinion survey’ (see also, Matthews 2005: 192). Another debatable measurement strategy is asking respondents whether they prefer either punishment or rehabilitation, assuming the former to indicate ‘punitivity’ and the latter its absence (De Konink & Scheepers 1998). In a more elaborate version, support for repressive measures (e.g., capital punishment, raising of sentences, penalizing minors as if they were adults, et cetera) is taken to indicate high levels of punitivity, support for rehabilitative measures (e.g., re-education, treatment, providing a house or a job, et cetera) is taken to indicate low levels of punitivity, and equal support for both types of measures is taken to indicate a middle position (e.g., Berghuis & Essers 1986; Van Dijk 1985; Steinmetz, Klijn, & Van Andel 1984). All of those measurement strategies share the assumption that rehabilitation and repression are polar opposites.

A study by Langworthy & Whitehead (1986: 580) unintentionally raises doubts about whether those established research practices can stand up against critical scrutiny. Having asked their respondents to choose between punishing criminals and rehabilitating them into useful, honest citizens, no less than eleven percent ticked both options (and thus needed to be excluded from the analysis due to missing values). Respondents apparently experienced the opposition constructed by the researchers as artificial and otherworldly. What is even more telling, is that the researchers had explicitly instructed their respondents to select no more than one option. Without this instruction, even more than eleven percent might have ticked both options. Conceptualizing support for punishment and rehabilitation as opposites seems not without problems, then. Indeed, a recent review of research into Americans’ ideas about crime concludes that ‘... the central tendency in public opinion is to be punitive *and* progressive – to endorse the use of a balanced response to lawbreakers, which includes an

effort to do justice, protect society, and reform offenders' (Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate 2000: 9, 60, emphasis in original, see also Flanagan 1996: 92; Matthews 2005: 191).

Correlations between support for repression and for rehabilitation, measured as separate scales, raise questions that are more direct. Those correlations vary from weakly negative (Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher 1997; Carroll *et al.* 1987; Duffee & Ritti 1980; Ortet-Fabregat & Pérez 1992) to weakly positive (De Keijser 2000; XXXXX). Due to differences between studies with respect to place, time and sample composition, it is not easy to pinpoint the causes of the variation that exists, but the conceptualization and measurement of support for rehabilitation seems to make a difference. Weakly negative correlations with support for punishment are found if rehabilitation is conceived of 'structurally' (i.e., as improving offenders' life chances) (Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher 1997; Carroll *et al.* 1987; Duffee & Ritti 1980; Ortet-Fabregat & Pérez 1992). Weakly positive ones are found if it is conceived of either 'interpersonally' (i.e., as strengthening perpetrators' social ties with community) or 'psychologically' (i.e., as treatment of offenders' destructive emotions, ideas, and behavior) (De Keijser 2000; XXXXX). If we follow Lynch's (2000: 45) argument that rehabilitation is a three-dimensional concept that incorporates all of those three dimensions – i.e., a structural, an interpersonal, and a psychological one –, support for rehabilitation is thus expected to yield a non-significant correlation with support for repression (*Hypothesis 1*).

If rehabilitation does not constitute the progressive opposite of repression, what does? From the postmodern perspective of Foucault, the only relevant difference between them is rehabilitation's greater effectiveness: obedience no longer needs to be imposed 'from without', but rather emerges from a deeply felt desire to conform, effectively washing out perpetrators' will to deviate (Ritzer 1997; Rose 1988). Foucault thus emphasises what repression and rehabilitation have in common: the acceptance of the necessity to socially control individuals (see also, Matthews 2005: 180). This suggests that it is not so much

rehabilitation that constitutes the opposite of repression, but rather the abandonment of attempts at social control. Indeed, abolition – i.e., restriction of criminal law and its enforcement – constitutes the logical consequence of what Garland (2005: 479/80) refers to as a ‘liberalism of fear’. The latter ‘insists upon robust civil liberties as a necessary bulwark against the possibility of state violence and the over-reach of state officials’. A ‘conservatism of fear’, on the other hand, is born ‘out of a fear of disorder, of unruly people, of the threat of criminal violence and victimization. The politics to which this gives rise takes the state to be a *protector* rather than a threat, and calls upon state officials always to do *more* rather than less to control individuals and repress troublemakers’ (emphasis in original). If, indeed, abolition rather than rehabilitation constitutes the mirror image of repression, we should find a strong negative relationship between support for abolition and support for repression (*Hypothesis 2*).

Some of those who reject the received view of rehabilitation and repression as opposite alternatives nevertheless assume that the former constitutes the progressive mirror image of the latter (e.g., Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate 2000: 9). This assumption is quite remarkable. After all, if repression and rehabilitation do not constitute opposite alternatives, they are also unlikely to receive support at the conservative and progressive ends of the political spectrum, respectively. To be sure, it is virtually uncontested that repression is especially favoured at the conservative end of the political spectrum (Meloan 1983; Stinchcombe *et al.* 1980; Zeisel & Gallup 1989; XXXXX). Rehabilitation is lacking such a clear ideological profile, however. It does not consistently generate most support at the progressive end of the political spectrum. If it is conceived of either ‘interpersonally’ or ‘psychologically’ (in Lynch’s terms), it proves as popular among conservatives as among progressives (Horwitz 1984; Zedner 1994: 232; Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate 2000: 40; XXXXX). Our argument in the foregoing rather suggests that abolition is politically

contested, with the progressive and conservative ends of the political spectrum characterized by support and rejection, respectively. We expect, in short, that abolition and repression receive most support at the progressive and conservative ends of the political spectrum, respectively, while rehabilitation lacks a clear ideological haven (*Hypothesis 3*).

If the foregoing hypotheses are confirmed, the difficult question of why rehabilitation is lacking a distinct ideological profile emerges. How, then, to explain this remarkable circumstance, that so strikingly contradicts the received view? What may be decisive is that repression and rehabilitation are neither completely different, as the received view has always assumed, nor basically identical, as Foucault's postmodern position holds. Obviously, both positions are not so much wrong, but rather one-sided. What repression and rehabilitation have in common is that, unlike abolition, they both take the necessity of social control for granted – the shared point of departure that Foucault emphasises. They are not identical, however, because repression rests on the assumption that human beings are evil by nature, whereas rehabilitation's ambition to socialise people into new identities and life styles relies on the assumption that human nature is essentially pliable, open and undetermined (Bauman 2000; Lynch 2000; Rose 1988). Repression assumes that the causes of crime reside within criminals, who are seen as essentially evil people that need to be punished for their misdeeds. Rehabilitation instead assumes that criminals can be reformed, because human nature is essentially open and pliable: bad social circumstances can make any person a criminal, just like favourable conditions can transform a criminal into a decent citizen. Those contrasting beliefs about human nature underlie the deep-rooted conviction that repression and rehabilitation are each other's mirror images.

Research into internal and external attribution of crime suggests that, indeed, repression and rehabilitation are polar opposites in this respect. As it happens, (internal) attribution of crime to personal traits proves to result in support for repression and a rejection

of rehabilitation (Cullen *et al.* 1985; Carroll *et al.* 1987; Rood-Pijpers 1988; Timberlake, Lock, & Rasinski 2003), belief in human malleability seems to produce support for rehabilitation and rejection of repression (Rose 1988; Bauman 2000; Lynch 2000; Vollebergh 1991; Meloen, Van der Linden, & De Witte 1996; XXXXX) and rehabilitation appears more popular in case of young offenders, because those are believed to be more malleable than adult ones (Moon *et al.* 2000: 45). Internal crime attribution is thus expected to affect support for repression positively and support for rehabilitation negatively (*Hypothesis 4*) and external crime attribution to affect support for repression negatively and support for rehabilitation positively (*Hypothesis 5*).

Those dynamics of attribution suggest why rehabilitation fails to receive more support from progressives than from conservatives. Just as conservative political thought, after all, repression assumes both the desirability of social control and a conception of human nature as evil (e.g., Middendorp 1991). This makes it completely understandable that conservatives tend to support repression, while it does not receive much support at the progressive end of the political spectrum. Although rehabilitation shares with repression the assumption that social control is necessary, it simultaneously rejects the conservative conception of human nature as evil. Precisely this disjunction of two ideas that tend to go together in political thought may be responsible for the circumstance that, contrary to what is commonly assumed, rehabilitation is no more favourite at the progressive end of the political spectrum than at the conservative end. In this case, after all, those two ideas work in opposite directions, thus preventing a favourite status of rehabilitation in progressive circles. We expect, in short, that the expected positive effect of a conservative pattern of attribution (i.e., strongly internal and weakly external) on support for repression is further reinforced by a conservative preference for social control. A progressive pattern of attribution's expected

positive effect on support for rehabilitation is expected to be cancelled out by a typically progressive dislike of social control, however (*Hypothesis 6*).

Data and measurement

Data

We have tested our questionnaire in a small pilot study with fifty-nine respondents (mostly sociology students, acquaintances, and relatives). Although this pilot has led us to drop, change, or rephrase particular items, radical changes to the questionnaire proved unnecessary. It has therefore been used to collect data among a nationally representative sample of respondents aged 18 years and older, maintained by CentERdata (University of Tilburg, The Netherlands). Panel members fill out questionnaires of social scientists on a regular basis by means of an Internet connection made available by CentERdata. The data collection for the current project has taken place in the spring of 2005, yielding a 71 percent response rate and a sample size of 1,892 respondents.

Women, the young, and the poorly educated are somewhat underrepresented. We have decided not to correct for this by mechanically applying a weighting procedure, because the deviations from the population are only marginal, because the application of weights may worsen rather than solve the problem of bias (with no way to find out which of both occurs), and because none of our hypotheses relates to gender, education, or age.

Measurement

Support for repression is measured by means of six Likert items ('agree strongly' through 'disagree strongly' and a separate 'don't know' category) that together constitute a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.85$, see Table 1 for details).

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Support for rehabilitation is measured with twelve items, four for each of Lynch's three dimensions discussed above: 1) improvement of offenders' life chances, 2) strengthening perpetrators' social relationships with community, and 3) treatment of offenders' destructive emotions, ideas, and behaviour. As Table 2 demonstrates, those twelve items produce a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.75$).

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Support for abolition is also measured by means of Likert-type items. In this case, six items are used, that indicate either the extent to which one approves of the abolishment of prohibitions or the extent to which one disapproves of strengthening the powers of criminal investigation. Although this scale's reliability is only modest (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.56$), all factor loadings exceed 0.45 (Table 3).

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

We use political party preference and a scale for authoritarianism (Adorno *et al.* 1950) to measure the distinction between conservatism and progressiveness. *Political party preference* is measured with a question into the political party one would vote for 'if parliamentary elections would be held tomorrow'. Following Budge & Klingemann (2001), the Christian-Democratic (CDA) (13.2%), Orthodox-Christian (SGP, ChristenUnie) (6.4%), Conservatives (VVD) (10.7%) and Rightist-Populist (LPF, Groep Wilders) (5.3%) parties are treated as conservative and the Liberal-Democratic (D66) (3.6%), Social-Democratic (PvdA) (19.0%), Socialist (SP) (9.7%), and Green (GroenLinks) (8.7%) parties as progressive.¹

Authoritarianism is measured with seven items, selected from a short version of the classical F-scale (Adorno *et al.* 1950), that together constitute a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.73$).²

Internal crime attribution is measured by means of seven Likert items that together constitute a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.76$). Three of those items relate to faith in human malleability, three to the belief that offenders are predestined to crime and one to the conviction that offenders and non-offenders are two different sorts of people.³ *External crime attribution* is also measured with seven Likert-items, three of which relate to attribution to unfavourable economic conditions and four to unfavourable social conditions (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.76$).⁴

Victimization and *fear of victimization* are included as controls. An index based on the number of times a respondent has been a victim of vandalism, theft, or violence during the previous year ('never', 'yes, once', 'yes, twice', 'yes, more than twice', or 'do not know') measures the former.⁵ An index based on respondent's estimation of the likelihood that he or she will become a victim of vandalism, theft, or violence in the year that lies ahead ('very small', 'small', 'not small, not great', 'great', 'very great', or 'do not know') measures the latter.

Age, gender, degree of urbanization, and education are included as additional controls, because 'available research suggests that females, the young, and the educated are generally the least punitive in their attitudes toward criminal sanctioning [...]' (Cullen *et al.* 1985: 312, see however: Schwartz, Guo, & Kerbs 1993: 11; McCorkle 1993: 243). Age is measured in years, ranging from 18 through 91 and 51.6 percent of the respondents is *male* and 48.4 *female*. The highest completed *level of education* has been coded into six ordinal categories: 1) primary education (5.1%), 2) lower secondary education (26.7%), 3) higher secondary education (13.8%), 4) intermediary tertiary education (20.4%), 5) college (23.3%), and 6) university (10.7%). Finally, *degree of urbanization* has been measured with a single question about the extent to which one lives in an urban environment: 1) not at all (16.9%), 2) little (21.4%), 3) somewhat (21.6%), 4) much (24.3%), 5) very much (15.9%).

Results

We test our first two hypotheses, that both address relationships between support for rehabilitation, repression and abolition, by means of correlations (Table 4). If rehabilitation would mirror repression, as assumed in the received view, we would expect to find a negative correlation between the two. This is clearly not the case, however. Consistent with our first hypothesis, no significant relationship exists between the two. Therefore, in striking contrast to the received view, favouring a repressive approach to criminals does not make people more (or less, for that matter) likely to approve of rehabilitation.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Our second hypothesis predicts that abolition rather than rehabilitation mirrors repression. Whereas support for repression does not correlate at all with support for rehabilitation, the former does correlate strongly and negatively with support for abolition (Table 4). Consistent with our second hypothesis, then, abolition rather than rehabilitation constitutes the mirror image of repression. Moreover, no relationship exists between rehabilitation and abolition, underscoring that although those two are clearly fundamentally different, they are definitely not diametrically opposed.

This brings us to the question whether the received view is also wrong in assuming that rehabilitation is particularly popular among the constituencies of progressive political parties, as our third hypothesis predicts. Table 5 presents the relevant findings. Although, hardly surprising, repression is especially supported by the constituencies of conservative political parties, rehabilitation is not particularly popular among those of progressive ones. It is in fact equally popular at both ends of the political spectrum. Instead, abolition once again constitutes the opposite of repression: it mirrors the latter in that it is especially popular

among the constituencies of progressive political parties. Although those findings are once again striking given the received view, they are nevertheless perfectly consistent with the research findings discussed above and convincingly confirm our third hypothesis.

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

How to explain the remarkable circumstance that rehabilitation is equally popular at both ends of the political spectrum? As argued above, this may be due to the circumstance that despite its progressive conception of human nature, it also takes the necessity of social control for granted – a conservative rather than a progressive ideological tenet. To study whether this is the case, we have conducted four multiple regression analyses, all of them including the statistical controls mentioned above. For both repression and rehabilitation, the first model assesses the effect of authoritarianism (replacing political party preference here) and the second one also includes crime attribution.

Hardly surprising after the foregoing, of course, high levels of authoritarianism increase support for repression and fail to affect support for rehabilitation. This once again confirms their ideological profiles as already demonstrated above. Consistent with this, authoritarianism affects abolition strongly and negatively (not shown in Table 6), once again confirming that it, rather than rehabilitation, constitutes repression's progressive alternative.

[INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

As Hypothesis 4 predicts, internal crime attribution produces support for repression and aversion to rehabilitation. Hypothesis 5 receives only mixed support, however. Although, as expected, external crime attribution strongly increases support for rehabilitation, it does not detract from support for repression. The absence of this negative relationship between external attribution and support for repression is puzzling, especially because Carroll *et al.* (1987: 113, 116) also failed to find it, a circumstance that makes it unlikely that we are dealing with a mere coincidence.⁶ Because both effects of internal crime attribution are

consistent with our hypothesis, those findings nevertheless enable us to conclude that those who support repression embrace a conception of human nature as essentially evil, whereas those who favour rehabilitation reject such a conception.

Finally, to test Hypothesis 6 we need to assess how the effect of authoritarianism changes after introducing internal and external attribution in the analysis. As to repression, it is clear that a conception of human nature as evil accounts for part of authoritarianism's positive effect. Hypothesis 6 is not confirmed for rehabilitation, however. Notwithstanding the relatively strong and predicted effects of internal (negative) and external attribution (positive), their inclusion does not change the non-significant effect of authoritarianism into a positive one. This means that, contrary to our expectations, the remarkable absence of a progressive ideological profile of rehabilitation is not caused by a progressive dislike of the conservative tenet of the necessity of social control.

Table 6 also reveals a finding that, although tangential to our purposes in this paper, nevertheless merits attention. As it happens, contrary to what is often assumed, victimization does not induce support for repression. Although this may seem surprising, in fact it is not. As it happens, any number of studies indicates that personal experience with crime has negligible effects on crime-related opinions (Taylor, Scheppele, & Stinchcombe 1979; Stinchcombe *et al.* 1980; Tyler & Weber 1982; Cullen *et al.* 1985; Van Dijk 1985; Berghuis & Essers 1986; Langworthy & Whitehead 1986; Carroll *et al.* 1987; McCorkle 1993; Sundt, Cullen, & Applegate 1998; Dekker & De Waal 1999; Kury, Obergfell-Fuchs, & Smartt 2002: 98, 101; Mayhew & Van Kesteren 2002: 79-84). We will come back to this finding in our conclusion.

Conclusion

Many criminologists and policy makers conceive of public support for repression and rehabilitation as two diametrically opposed options. It is thus assumed that severe punishment necessarily goes against the will of those who are in favour of rehabilitation and that the latter meets with resistance among the constituencies of conservative political parties. Those ideas have persisted ever since Duffee and Ritti, no less than a quarter of a century ago, pointed out how deeply problematic they are. Our analysis underscores that Duffee and Ritti were right. Support for repression and rehabilitation do not exclude one another at all and rehabilitation is equally popular among the constituencies of conservative political parties as among those of progressive ones. Duffee and Ritti's warning, issued a quarter of a century ago, was fully justified, then, and the habit of conceiving of support for repression and for rehabilitation as diametrically opposed options should have been abandoned long ago.

Abolition rather than rehabilitation constitutes the progressive mirror image of repression. Because abolition is especially popular in progressive circles, the latter are the most likely critics of plans to punish criminals more harshly. Conservatives are most likely to oppose a policy of abolition. A policy aimed at rehabilitation, however, is unlikely to lead to polarization between conservatives and progressives, because neither particularly likes or dislikes this type of policy. Unfortunately, it remains unclear why it is that rehabilitation is lacking a distinct ideological homeland. Perhaps this is due to our operationalisation of the necessity of social control. Indeed, although authoritarianism and traditionalism are strongly correlated and both carried by the poorly educated and the elderly (e.g., Middendorp 1991; XXXXX), recent research points out that it may nevertheless be necessary to distinguish the two carefully (De Koster & Van Der Waal, under review). Although they both emphasise a need for social control and both conceive of human nature negatively (and are as such both disliked by political progressives), moral traditionalism may nevertheless be more conducive

to support for rehabilitation than authoritarianism, thus effectively washing out any progressive sympathies for rehabilitation that emerge from optimism about human nature. We consider it a key issue for future empirical research to find out whether rehabilitation is more popular among moral traditionalists than among authoritarians.

Hutton (2005: 246) has recently argued that the relationship between support for repression and for rehabilitation constitutes a mere methodological issue. His analysis demonstrates that Scots are punitive with respect to general issues of crime and criminal justice, but are simultaneously in favour of rehabilitative measures when asked to give sentences for specific crimes and when asked to take the costs of sanctions into account. He concludes from those findings: 'Survey questions, issues framed in a structural way and the absence of information tend to generate more punitive responses, while methods which allow respondents to interact and engage in dialogue, issues framed in individual cases and the provision of more information, tend to generate more liberal attitudes'. Indeed, earlier studies have also found that broad and general questions instead of detailed questions about punishing specific offenders tends to increase respondents' punitivity (Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate 2000: 61). Nevertheless, our study has demonstrated that even if only general questions are used, support for repression and support for rehabilitation are not the opposites they are typically held to be.

How to explain the persistence of the widespread misconception addressed in this paper among social scientists surveying the public, even though quite a few pertinent findings indicated that it was wrong? While, of course, comparative studies convincingly demonstrate that what counts as crime varies between social contexts (Douglas & Waksler 1982), Coutin (2005) observes that this awareness of the social construction of crime is the exception rather than the rule among criminologists. This may well be a result of criminologists' typical embedding in or dependence on the system of criminal justice, a circumstance that easily

produces lack of intellectual distance, reification of conceptions of crime as codified in penal law (Schinkel 2002) and an overlooking of abolition as a policy option besides repression and rehabilitation.

This same blind spot for the social construction of crime may also account for a remarkable ‘instrumental’ bias among many of those who study crime-related public opinion. As it happens, our study has replicated the familiar finding that victimization does not cause support for repression (see also Tyler & Weber 1982). Yet, it seems as if many a criminologist cannot believe or accept this and hence insists on attempting to ground ideas about crime and punishment in ‘objective’ circumstances and personal interests by assuming instrumental reasons for supporting repression. This tendency is all the more remarkable since many studies, including our own, have convincingly demonstrated how important moral worldviews are for understanding ideas about crime and punishment (see also Tyler & Weber 1982). The blind spot that seems to stem from criminologists’ embedding in or dependence on the criminal justice system makes it fully understandable that the cracking of criminological myths such as the one discussed in the current paper fails to affect established research practices.

Notes

¹. The remaining response categories are treated as missing values: Other (namely: ‘Blank’, ‘Party for Elderly’, ‘Party for Animals’, ‘Peter R. de Vries’, or ‘Van Buitenen’) (0.8%), ‘I would not vote’ (3.5%), ‘I am not allowed to vote’ (0.7%), and ‘I do not know (yet)’ (18.6%).

². Those seven items are: (1) “Because of the many opinions on good and bad, it is not clear what to do” (21.1; 0.71); (2) “If people would talk less and work harder, everything would improve. (32.0; 0.65); (3) “There are two kinds of people: strong and weak (20.8; 0.64); (4) “Most people are disappointing once one gets to know them better (10.9; 0.64); (5) “Our social problems would largely be solved when we could expel criminals, anti-socials, and morons from society in one way or the other (13.5; 0.59); (6) “Because of fast changes, it is difficult to know what is good and bad (25.4; 0.56); (7) “What we need are less laws and institutions and more brave, never-ceasing, and devoted leaders in which the people can have confidence (54.8; 0.54).

³. With the percentage “agree (strongly)” and the loading on the first factor in brackets, the seven items that measure internal crime attribution are: (1) “Most inmates are born criminals” (9.5; 0.72); (2) “Once a thief, always a thief” (11.7; 0.70); (3) “Criminality is hereditary” (7.0; 0.69); (4) “Inheritance determines human behavior largely” (32.3; 0.67); (5) “Criminals are a special kind of people” (41.1; 0.62); (6) “If you are born poor, you will remain poor all your life” (10.1; 0.55), (7) “Personal characteristics do not change” (45.1; 0.53).

⁴. With the percentage “agree (strongly)” and the loading on the first factor in brackets, the seven items that measure external crime attribution are: (1) “Criminality is often caused by family problems” (43.7; 0.75); (2) “Criminals often come from broken homes” (41.2; 0.71) (3) “Most criminals lack schooling and education” (48.1; 0.68); (4) “Unemployment is an important cause of criminality” (58.7; 0.64); (5) “Abused children often drift astray” (30.5; 0.59); (6) “Parents who neglect their children contribute much to criminality” (79.5; 0.59); (7) “Poverty actuates people to criminal behavior” (50.2; 0.52).

⁵. The frequency distribution of the number of times a respondent has become victimized is as follows (percentages): (1) never (75.4); (2) one time (15.3), (3) two times (5.4), (4) more than two times (3.9).

6. It is important to point out that we find no support for (Garland 2005); see also (Hutton 2005): 246) suggestion that internal and external attribution mutually exclude one another. Contrary to this suggestion, both types of crime attribution prove *not* to affect support of repression inversely and the correlation between both types of attribution proves *positive* rather than negative ($r=0.32$; $p<0.001$, not shown in Table 6).

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*Table 1. Results of factor and reliability analysis on items indicating support of repression (N=1,652; percentages, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha).**

	% (strongly) agree	
• If judges would render higher penalties, we would have fewer criminals.	51.6	0.85
• Long prison sentences are a good solution for criminality.	51.0	0.81
• Severe penalties deter potential felons.	58.9	0.80
• A tough approach is needed in order to prevent crime.	84.1	0.73
• Minors committing serious crimes should be punished just like adults.	61.6	0.66
• The death penalty should be reinstalled.	21.3	0.64
Cronbach's α		0.84

*. All items translated from Dutch into English.

Table 2. Results of factor and reliability analysis on items indicating support of rehabilitation (N=1,520; percentages, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha).

	% (strongly) agree	
<i>Life chances</i>		
• Offering good educational opportunities prevents people from wrongdoing.	59.5	0.57
• It is good that perpetrators of sex crimes are being treated psychologically.	85.9	0.56
• More and better detoxification centers should be provided for addicted criminal.	70.4	0.56
• Social services ought to tutor youth that has encountered judiciary much more intensive.	89.9	0.50
<i>Social integration</i>		
• Parents ought to be accounted for their responsibilities consequently in order to prevent juvenile delinquents from recidivating.	87.3	0.50
• Confronting perpetrators with the sufferings of their victims forecloses that they relapse.	62.1	0.47
• Judiciary should make the effort to forestall that ex convicts feel excluded from community.	48.9	0.46
• Support of family and friends is indispensable in order to preclude crime.	79.2	0.45
<i>Raising norms and values</i>		
• Re-education is an effective instrument for solving crime.	71.0	0.63
• Developing consciousness of norms is a very important form of crime prevention.	89.2	0.58
• Judiciary ought to convince criminals that they drift astray.	86.5	0.55
• Community service orders raise the feeling of responsibility of convicts.	54.4	0.47
Cronbach's α		0.75

Table 3. Results of factor and reliability analysis on items indicating support of decriminalization (N=1,510; percentages, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha).

	% (strongly) agree	
• Preventive searching ought to be prohibited.	8.7	0.73
• The implementation of the identification duty will result in unnecessary and unjust convictions.	13.6	0.62
• America violates the foundations of the constitutional state by detaining suspects of terrorism for years without a formal indictment.	59.9	0.53
• Judiciary ought to be granted better opportunities to connect data files.*	85.6	0.52
• Revealing suspects of sex crimes on the Internet causes cruel misunderstandings.	50.5	0.51
• We ought to legalize drug trade in our country because it will solve a large part of all criminality at once.	31.1	0.47
•		
Cronbach's α		0.56

* Item reversed.

Table 4. Correlations between the support for repression, rehabilitation, and decriminalization (Pearson's correlations).

	Repression	Rehabilitation	Decriminalization
Repression	1.00		
Rehabilitation	-0.06	1.00	
Decriminalization	-0.52*	0.05	1.00

* p<0.001

Table 5. Support for repression, rehabilitation, and decriminalization by political party preference (analysis of covariance, means).

Party preference	%	Repression	Rehabilitation	Decriminalization
Christian Democrats	17.3	3.45	4.03	2.48
Conservatives	14.2	3.72	3.94	2.41
Orthodox Christians	8.4	3.65	4.05	2.35
Rightist Populists	6.4	4.05	3.89	2.40
Liberal Democrats	4.7	3.20	4.01	2.75
Social Democrats	24.4	3.19	3.95	2.85
Socialists	12.6	3.21	4.01	2.88
Greens	11.5	2.84	4.02	3.13
Total mean		3.37	3.98	2.68
N	99.7	1,334	1,339	1,334
η^2		15.5*	1.2	17.5*
R ²		24.2	7.0	19.6

* p<0.001

^a Controlled for age, level of urbanization, gender, and educational level, victimization, and fear of victimization.

Table 6. Explanation of support of repression, rehabilitation, and decriminalization (multiple regression, betas).

	Repression		Rehabilitation		Decriminalization	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
Authoritarianism	0.41*	0.29*	0.00	-0.01	-0.18*	-0.12*
Internal attribution	-	0.22*	-	-0.14*	-	-0.10
External attribution	-	-0.02	-	0.29*	-	-0.02
Victimization	-0.06	-0.05	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.00
Fear of victimization	0.10*	0.08	-0.02	-0.03	-0.09	-0.08
Age	-0.18*	-0.18*	0.22*	0.25*	0.12*	0.12*
Urbanity	-0.12*	-0.11*	0.04	0.03	0.10*	0.10*
Gender	-0.08	-0.08*	0.12*	0.11*	0.01	0.02
Education	-0.09*	-0.09*	0.01	-0.04	0.04	0.04
N	1,667	1,603	1,675	1,612	1,668	1,601
R ²	23.9	27.1	5.6	13.5	6.5	7.4

p < 0.001