

# **SECTION C**

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **7. RESEARCH RESULTS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The assessment of criminal behaviour is a key element and the first and most important step in addressing and correcting offending behaviour. Offender assessment is the basis of any offender classification, intervention, risk management and/or pre-parole assessment. This practice guides custodial therapists such as educationalists, psychologists and social workers to purposefully target individualised needs and risks in order to correct antisocial and criminal behaviour. The ultimate aim of offender assessment practices is to reduce criminal and reoffending behaviour. This aim is consistent with research findings worldwide related to offender assessment practices in custodial settings (Cornwell 2003b:84-89; Government Gazette, No. 26626, 2004:34; Hesselink-Louw & Holtzhausen 2003:111; Simourd 2004:306-307; Sumner 2004:211).

Chapter Seven captures the research findings of the project and evaluates offender assessment in corrections. The role, contribution and benefit of criminologists in offender assessment and in corrections are outlined in the study. Offender needs and risks for general (non-specific), sex and other violent offenders are examined, and four selected case studies are empirically assessed and analysed from a criminological perspective to demonstrate the dimensions of assessment in corrections. Assessment tools relevant to offender assessment practices are also illustrated in the study.

The following section evaluates the research objectives and provides possible recommendations to stimulate future research. The study is concluded with a brief summary and a conclusion.

## **7.2 Research results**

This research project was guided by primary and secondary research objectives. The following section examines the validity of the objectives and to which degree they have been achieved in the study.

### **7.2.1 Primary objective: Offender assessment from a criminological perspective**

National and international research findings, as well as existing international offender assessment structures, were examined and interpreted in order to draft a framework for offender assessments from a criminological perspective. This criminological analysis and assessment of criminal behaviour include individual offender needs and risks, causes of, and contributory factors to crime, high-risk situations, triggers, intervention and risk management indicators, propensity to reoffend, and theoretical explanations of criminal behaviour. Four selected case studies were analysed, assessed and theoretically explained in Chapter Six. Through the analysis contributory factors, triggers, high-risk situations, risks, and motives for crime and/or criminal behaviour were identified for classification, intervention, risk management and pre-parole purposes. This outlines the value of criminology and the input of criminologists in offender assessment practices in corrections.

According to Anderson and Dyson (2002:15-16), Curran and Renzetti (2001:2), Messner (2004:95), Schmallegger (2003:92-93), and Siegel (2005:3-4), criminology is a scientific discipline that uses empirical methods to study, describe, explain, identify, evaluate, analyse and assess the nature, extent, cause, and control of criminal behaviour. Criminology is an inter-disciplinary science that studies crime and criminality in a holistic manner to determine the origin, onset, causes, motives, triggers and contributory factors to crime, and to provide theoretical explanations of criminal behaviour - this is the unique contribution of criminology and criminologists in offender assessment practices. The value, unique input and contribution of criminologists in offender assessments are furthermore supported by fellow practitioners (Snyders, Head and Chairperson of the Department of Psychology, University of South Africa, personal interview 30 September 2004) in South Africa, and international experts and forerunners in offender assessment practices (McGuire, Professor of Forensic Clinical Psychology, University of Leicester, England, personal interview 18 October 2004; Motiuk, Director General, Research Branch, Correctional Service Canada and Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University, Psychology Department, Canada, personal interview 13 February 2004).

From this it is evident that the primary objective of the study was achieved and that the practice of offender assessment was explored, described and explained from a criminological perspective.

## **7.2.2 Secondary objectives**

This section evaluates the secondary objectives that are identified in the research project.

### **7.2.2.1 Determination of needs and risks for general, sex and violent offenders**

Specific needs and risks for general, sex and violent offenders are examined in Chapters Three and Four of the study. The following section evaluates the findings of needs and risk assessment indicators for general, sex and violent offenders.

#### **□ Needs assessment targets**

It was found that various needs assessment targets for general, sex and violent offenders overlap. These overlapping targets were grouped under “general needs assessment targets” in Section 3.7 of Chapter Three (page 96). The corresponding targets were integrated to avoid confusion and replication, and to provide a more holistic evaluation of offender needs assessment criteria. Overlapping needs assessments targets for general, sex and violent offenders include: Demographic details, criminal history, level of intelligence, offence analysis, victim characteristics, family background, developmental history, cognitive functioning, education, employment, associates and/or companions, substance abuse, attitude, victim empathy, skills, financial management, leisure and recreation, antisocial personality, mental illness, previous treatment, support system, high-risk situations, offender needs, responsivity and community functioning. Recent and relevant research findings support the integration and interpretation of these targets (Corrado *et al* 2003:180; Haapasalo & Moilanen 2004:141; Hildebrand *et al* 2004:13-15; McGrath *et al* 2003:7; Prentky & Righthand 2003:6; Simourd 2004:306-323; Sumner 2004:220-223; Williams 2003:84-85, 89).

Needs assessment criteria such as criminal history, offence analysis, developmental history, attitudes, associations, cognitive functioning and victim empathy are included in the general assessment targets for non-specific, sex and violent offenders. It was, however, found that these targets should be examined thoroughly when sex offenders are assessed because of the different focus and meaning that they hold for

sex offenders. This finding is supported by relevant research findings on sex offender assessments (Prentky & Righthand 2003:4; Sumner 2004:222-223; White & Smith 2004:183-184). Section 3.8.1.4 (Chapter Three, page 111) examines these targets.

It was furthermore found that specific offender-related and offence-related needs assessment targets exist for sex offenders. They include: Sexual deviancy and arousal patterns, sexual fantasy, anger and hostility, power, control and impulsivity, skills, intimacy, loneliness and attachment styles, reinforcers and triggers, paraphilias, assertiveness, denial, minimisation and rationalisation, low self-esteem and sexual preferences. Sex offender needs assessments should therefore, focus on both general and specific targets as highlighted in the study. Research (Burdon & Gallagher 2002:92; Fisher *et al* 1999:475; Lee *et al* 2001:228; Marshall & Fernandez 2003:135; Roberts 2003:82-83; Schlesinger 2000:31; Siegel 2004:436-437) confirms that these assessment targets are unique and relevant to the assessment of sex offenders. This finding also corroborates with the criminological assessment and analysis of case study D (Section 6.5, Chapter Six, page 309), where sexual preferences, deviant arousal patterns, multiple paraphilias, deviant sexual fantasies, anger, hostility, loneliness, poor self-management strategies and low self-esteem were identified as important needs for the intervention, management and rehabilitation of the offender.

Needs assessment targets for violent offenders are discussed in Section 3.8.2.3 (Chapter Three, page 122) of the study. Targets such as socio-economic status, family and personal background, school experiences, skills and high-risk situations correspond with the targets set out in the “general needs assessment targets” for non-specific, sex and violent offenders.

However, these targets should be examined thoroughly when assessing violent offenders because of the different meaning that they hold for violent offenders. This finding is supported by recent and relevant research findings regarding the assessment of violent offenders (Corrado *et al* 2003:180-181; Dowden *et al* 1999:4, 15-16; Haapasalo & Moilanen 2004:127, 129, 141; Loza 2003:193; Markowitz 2003:145-146).

Offender-specific and offence-specific needs assessment targets for violent offenders include: Cultural perspectives, school maladjustment, impulsivity and self-regulation deficits, anger, aggression and anxiety, violent fantasies and breach of parole and/or

supervision. These unique targets were highlighted in case studies A (socio-economic status, family and personal background and school experiences) and C (socio-economic status, family and personal background, school experiences, skills and high-risk situations) in Chapter Six (Section 6.2, page 256 and Section 6.4, page 291) of the study.

□ **Risk assessment targets**

It was found (as with the needs assessment targets in Chapter Three), that similar overlapping risk assessment criteria exist for general, sex and violent offenders. These targets are listed as “general risk assessment indicators” in Section 4.8.2 (Chapter Four, page 159) of the study. These targets form the basis of classification, risk management and pre-parole assessments. Corresponding risk assessment targets for non-specific, sex and violent offenders include: Demographic details, criminal history, crime analysis, victim characteristics, motive, developmental history, school experience, education, employment, responsibility, substance abuse, intelligence, criminal associates, antisocial personality disorder, reckless and risk-taking behaviour, manipulative and predatory lifestyles, cognitive functioning, skills, financial management, leisure time, accommodation, responsivity, escape, attitudes, support structure, goal achieving, community integration and suicide or suicide attempts. Research findings support the grouping and interpretation of overlapping risk assessment targets for general, sex and violent offenders (Ferguson 2002:475, 481; Ge *et al* 2001:731; Hildebrand *et al* 2004:14; Loza 2003:187; Mann *et al* 2002:7-8; McGuire 2001:213; Nafekh & Motiuk 2002:26; Starzyk & Marshall 2003:95).

Risk criteria for sex offenders are discussed in Section 4.9.1.1 (Chapter Four, page 172 of the study. Targets that correspond with the general risk assessment criteria are marital status, victim characteristics, offence history, family and developmental background, employment, risk-taking behaviour, attitudes, treatment history, cognitive functioning and antisocial personality disorder. These targets are included in the risk assessment of sex offenders because of the different focus and meaning that these targets hold for sex offenders. This finding is sustained by relevant research findings on risk assessment practices applicable to sex offenders (McGrath *et al* 2003:7; Prentky & Righthand 2003:6; Roberts 2003:92; Scalora & Garbin 2003:310; Starzyk & Marshall 2003:97; White & Smith 2004:183; Wrightsman & Fulero 2005:132-133).

Targets such as sexual sadism, sexual preference for children, paraphilias, sexual preoccupations, sexual fantasies, deviant sexual arousal patterns, anger and hostility, impulsivity, intimacy and relationship problems, empathy deficits, self-management strategies, difficulties cooperating with supervision and parole failure are unique risk assessment criteria for sex offenders. This finding is outlined in the criminological analysis of case study D (Chapter Six, Section 6.5, page 309) and is supported by various research findings on risk assessment practices for sex offenders (Council for Sex Offender Treatment 2004:3; Eitle *et al* 2004:96; Guay *et al* 2004:330-332; Hanson & Harris 2001:4; Hollin 2001:358; MacAulay 2001:6; Mayzer *et al* 2004:138-139; Starzyk & Marshall 2003:101).

Risk assessment of violent offenders is discussed in Section 4.9.2.2 (Chapter Four, page 185) of the study. Assessment targets such as social class, offence analysis, motivation and developmental history correspond with the general risk assessment targets for non-specific, sex and violent offenders. These corresponding targets are included in the risk assessment of sex offenders because of the different focus and meaning that they hold for violent offenders. This finding is supported by research findings on violent offenders (Hollin 2001:73; Loza 2003:184; Mann *et al* 2002:14, 36, 46-47; Sullivan *et al* 2003:183).

Unique risk assessment criteria for violent offenders include: Race and culture of violence, types of violent crimes, the use of weapons, aggressive and controlling behaviour and bizarre aspects. This finding corresponds with the criminological risk assessments of case studies A (race and aggressive and controlling behaviour), and C (race and culture of violence, various types of violent crimes, use of weapons and aggressive and controlling behaviour) in Chapter Six (Section 6.2, page 256 and Section 6.4, page 291) of the study. Research findings also support the finding and interpretation of unique risk assessment targets for violent offenders (Benda & Tollett 1999:111; Bonta *et al* 1996b:42-43; Haapasalo & Moilanen 2004:141; Serin & Preston 2001:146; Wrightsman & Fulero 2005:129-131).

It is evident from the above discussion that this research objective was successfully achieved.

### **7.2.2.2 National and international research findings on offender assessment**

An extensive overview of international developments in offender assessment practices was undertaken in Chapters Three (National and International Research on Offender Needs Assessment, page 83) and Four (International Research on Offender Risk Assessment, page 142) of the study.

Chapter Three outlines the purpose of offender assessment, as well as offender needs assessment targets applicable to general (non-specific), sex and violent offenders. Both the Canadian (LSI-R) and British (OASys) assessment structures are examined and evaluated, and existing and developing offender assessment practices in Africa and South Africa are reviewed.

Chapter Four summarises international research on offender risk assessment. Different types of risk, the purpose of risk assessment, the prediction of future criminal behaviour, and risk assessment targets for general, sex and violent offenders are identified. Both the Canadian (LSR-I) and the British (OASys) offender assessment structures are used as a guideline in the criminological assessments (Chapter Six) of the study. Assessment indicators of these assessment structures were integrated into one assessment structure and used as a guideline in the semi-structured interview schedule. However, relevant South African indicators, such as ethnic group, culture, religion and political orientation were included in the interview schedule to outline and represent South African circumstances.

It was found that neither the Canadian nor the British assessment structures provide an adequate and in-depth needs and risk assessment for sex offenders. For example, factors such as sexual arousal patterns, sexual preferences, preoccupations and sexual paraphilias are not accounted for in the Canadian or the British offender assessment structures. These relevant targets were included in the criminological assessment (Chapter Six) after consultation with international research findings on this phenomenon (Alexander 2000:125, 275; Barbaree *et al* 2001:495; Eitle *et al* 2004:96; Fisher *et al* 1999:474-478; Guay *et al* 2004:330-332; Gretton *et al* 2001:427-429; Hanson & Harris 2000:1-6; Porter *et al* 2000:216-217; Prentky & Righthand 2003:4; Schlesinger 2000:10-15, 104-105, 229; White & Smith 2004:183-184). This is highlighted in Sections 3.8.1.4 (page 111) and 4.9.1.1 (page 172) of the study. The criminological assessment of case study D (Chapter Six, Section 6.5,

page 309) furthermore, highlights the integration and interpretation of unique needs and risk assessment targets for sex offenders.

South African research and forensic reports conducted by Labuschagne (1992:21; 2001:109, 113; 2004:1-14) were also included in the interview schedule and in the assessment of the case studies in Chapter Six of this research project. From this it is evident that a comprehensive study of national and international research findings on offender assessment practices were conducted.

### **7.2.2.3 Relevant assessment tools for offender assessment practices**

Chapter Five examines and explains important offender assessment tools, namely in-depth interviewing, observation, document analysis, theoretical application and explanation of criminal behaviour from a criminological perspective. Chapter Six demonstrates the implementation of offender assessment tools in the analyses and assessment of criminal behaviour.

Research (Alexander 2000:102; De Vos *et al* 2002:280-281; Hollin 2001:129, 350-351; Myer 2001:10-11, 13, 20; Pogrebin 2003:271) confirms that in-depth interviews, observation, document analyses and scientific explanations of criminal behaviour are the most effective methodological tools to gather information from offenders. These tools cannot be separated from one another and cannot be used in isolation to conduct research in corrections. For example, observation cannot be used in isolation to conduct research, but should rather be complemented with in-depth interviewing to enrich the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon that is studied and *vice versa*. Therefore, criminologists who are interested in working in custodial environments should have a sound knowledge of crime theories and should have mastered methodological skills to assess offending behaviour adequately.

In this regard, interviews are the predominant mode of data collection, observation enhances criminologists' understanding of criminal behaviour, document analysis corroborates information obtained from offenders, and criminological theories explain the origin, onset and contributory factors of criminal involvement (Alexander 2000:102-103; Bezuidenhout & Joubert 2003:80; Champion 2000:295; De Vos *et al* 2002:292; Hagan 2000:237, 243-246; Gretton *et al* 2001:431-432; McMurrin & Hodge 1994:36; Pogrebin 2003:276, 278). These assessment tools are demonstrated and evaluated in the criminological assessment of the case studies in both Chapters Five and Six of the study.

The value, illustration and application of the assessment tools (as demonstrated in Chapter Six), are also supported by Professor Ricky Snyders (Head and Chairperson of the Department of Psychology, University of South Africa), who evaluated case study D (Section 6.5, page 309) in Chapter Six. This research objective has therefore been successfully achieved.

#### **7.2.2.4 A scientific analysis, understanding and explanation of criminal behaviour**

A brief overview of crime theories relevant to the scientific explanation of criminal behaviour is outlined in Chapter Five, while the application of theories to *holistically* explain criminal behaviour is demonstrated in Chapter Six of the study.

Scientific theories enable criminologists to assess, identify, analyse, describe, compare, explain and predict antisocial, deviant and criminal behaviour (Messner 2004:96; Schmallegger 2003:92-93; Siegel 2005:3). A sound knowledge of crime theories assists criminologists to determine the causes and motives of crime, and to explain criminal behaviour in a scientific manner. For this reason, it is of vital importance that criminologists should have a thorough understanding of traditional and contemporary theoretical developments, and have mastered the ability to apply relevant theories to various case studies. Criminologists should, however, take into consideration that the reader of the report, such as custodial and Parole Board officials, may not be acquainted with criminology, or have a criminological background. Therefore, the reader should not be burdened with a multitude of theories. Rather, theories should be presented in such a manner that they contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the reader (regarding the behaviour of the offender), and to shed light on the behaviour in question. This vital assessment tool is illustrated in the criminological assessments and theoretical explanations of the four case studies in Chapter Six.

The following diagram outlines the theoretical explanations used in Chapter Six of the study.

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Theoretical Explanation</b>
A	Loeber: Multiple pathways to crime
B	Gottfredson and Hirschi: General theory of crime
C	Weis, Catalano and Hawkins: Social development model
D	McCann and Pearlman: Constructivist self development theory

This diagram highlights the crime theories used to explain the criminal behaviour of the selected four case studies. These theories holistically explain the offenders' involvement in crime. They were applied in order not to overwhelm the reader with a multitude of theoretical explanations.

From the above explanation, it is clear that this research objective has successfully been demonstrated in the study, and was therefore achieved.

### 7.2.2.5 Identification of the causes and motives of criminal behaviour

Contributory factors (causes) and motives for criminality were determined in each case study in Chapter Six. The following diagram outlines the causes and motives representative of the selected case studies.

Case Study	Motives	Causes
A: Violent offender	Financial and material deprivation, greediness.	Dysfunctional family life, lack of supervision, poverty, divorce of parents, an absent father figure, broken home environment, criminal associations, criminal values, substance abuse, material and financial greediness, low self-esteem and susceptibility to peer influences
B Economic and violent offender	Financial greediness, acknowledgement, status, recognition and ambition.	Financial and material deprivation, low self-esteem, recognition, lack of responsibility, low moral values, risk-taking behaviour, sexual victimisation in prison, lack of self-management strategies, posttraumatic stress disorder, lack of trust in fellow inmates and custodial staff, social isolation and lack of a support structure in prison.
C Violent offender	Survival, independence, poverty, unemployment, financial need, maintenance of substance addiction and maintenance of a high life style.	Exposure to violence, childhood neglect, abuse and rejection, dysfunctional family life, negative father-son attachments, an absent father figure, over-dependence on mother, lack of recognition, acknowledgement, acceptance, attention, affection, a sense of belonging, poverty, unemployment, limited education and training, criminal associations, substance abuse, pro-criminal attitudes, lack of a support structure, revenge, an inability to maintain and form intimate relationships, and lack of motivation to change criminal lifestyle.
D Sex offender	Anger, revenge, resentment, hostility, rejection, helplessness and social isolation.	Childhood abuse, neglect, sexual victimisation, feelings of rejection, isolation, divorce of parents, negative and distant parent-child attachments, and absent father figure, parent-child conflict, poor parenting practices, lack of love, attention, compassion, acceptance, status, respect and security, lack of support, antisocial and criminal associations, substance abuse, school maladjustment, limited education, low self-esteem, low

		impulse control, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, cognitive distortions, inadequate personal relationships, poor self-management strategies, poor problem-solving, communication and conflict-resolution skills, anxiety, immediate gratification, feelings of anger and hostility, deviant sexual interests, and lack of insight and understanding into criminal behaviour.
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This diagram highlights the case studies' diversity of motives and the contributory factors to crime. The identification of motives and causes is scientifically supported by theoretical explanations and relevant research findings related to each case study, in Chapter Six of the study. From this it is evident that this research objective has been achieved.

### 7.2.2.6 Individual assessment of selected case studies

Academics, correctional experts and the Department of Correctional Services recognise the need to assess criminal behaviour individually in order to ensure the individualised treatment and intervention of serious and uncontrollable offenders (Du Preez 2003:190, 223; Draft White Paper on Corrections in South Africa 2003:22; Luyt 1999a:157; Mbete *et al* 2001:81; Papps 1999:43; Tshiwula 2001:137-138).

According to Wrightsman and Fulero (2005:132), individual assessment of troublesome, violent and sex offenders is fruitful to adequately pinpoint individual indicators for purposes of risk, intervention and management of offenders. Research (Draft White Paper on Corrections in South Africa 2003:59-61; Hesselink-Louw & Schoeman 2003:171; Hollin 2001:123) furthermore demonstrates that individual assessments identify offender-specific (substance abuse, unemployment and personal characteristics) and offence-specific (motives, causes, triggers and high-risk situations) needs and risks for the intervention, rehabilitation and management of offenders.

This research objective is illustrated in Chapter Six of the study. Each case study is individually assessed from a criminological perspective to demonstrate the different dimensions of offender assessment practices in custodial settings, namely classification (case study A, page 256), intervention (case study B, page 271), risk management (case study C, page 291) and pre-parole (case study D, page 309) offender assessments.

From this it is evident that this research objective has been achieved.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

It is clear from the study that certain guidelines have to be put in place in order to develop offender assessment structures that will address the needs of the institution (the Department of Correctional Services), the offenders, and the role players (professionals and practitioners) involved in offender assessments. This means that the role of the criminologist in custodial settings should be outlined and clear parameters according to which the criminologist should function must be developed. The following recommendations might assist in this task. They include the:

- ❑ Development of an assessment structure that will address the needs and risks of juveniles, females and disabled offenders.
- ❑ Development of assessment structures for different categories of crime, such as economic offenders, hijackers, paedophiles, serial rapists, infant rapists, serial killers, family murders, cash-in-transit robbers and kidnappers.
- ❑ The inclusion of assessment of offenders who are eligible for release under Section 276(1)(i) of the Criminal Procedure Act (meaning Correctional Supervision).
- ❑ Development of a user-friendly offender assessment structure that can be interpreted and scientifically measured to guide the refinement and development of other assessment structures in custodial settings.
- ❑ Establishment of clear guidelines for criminological report writing within the custodial environment. Such reports should be user-friendly and not overwhelm the reader with academic arguments and theoretical explanations.
- ❑ Determination of the role of criminologists in the Department of Correctional Services in order to outline their work description (such as in-depth assessment of dangerous and sex offenders, pre-parole assessments, determination of causes and motives of crime and correctional supervision assessments), and contributions.
- ❑ Training of criminologists should ultimately include Psychology as a major compulsory subject up to a third year level in order to enhance criminologists' understanding of, and insight into the cognitive functioning of, and psychological problems experienced by the offenders.
- ❑ Provision of Universities to train students to function within their professional parameters and/or the boundaries of their professions. For instance, criminologists are not therapists or counsellors, but professional academics

who are trained to identify, analyse, assess, explain, predict and compare criminal behaviour, behaviour patterns, trends and characteristics.

- Establishment of a professional society for criminologists to register in order to ensure that criminologists adhere to ethical, training and qualification standards and that they function within their professional parameters and/or boundaries. Such an association will enable criminologists to function in formal institutions, such as the Department of Correctional Services, where they will have to adhere to certain rules and regulations and where they can contribute to a multi-dimensional approach in the rehabilitation of offenders. Possible defensiveness from fellow professionals and practitioners (such as social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists) might be avoided through the professionalisation of criminology as a practical profession.
- Examination of criminologists who are interested in working in prisons to ascertain that they have a sound knowledge in: Criminology (categories, causes, trends, characteristics and victims of crime, and the criminal justice system), methodology (assessment tools), and crime theories, in order to determine the onset, origin, causes, triggers, high-risk situations and risks of criminal involvement and reoffending.

#### **7.4 Conclusion and summary**

This study examines the practice of offender assessment from a criminological perspective. National and international findings, including the Canadian and British offender assessment structures, guided the researcher to individually assess four selected case studies to demonstrate the different dimensions (classification, intervention, risk management and pre-parole) of offender assessments in custodial settings. Offender needs and risk assessment targets for general (non-specific), sex and violent offenders were identified in Chapters Three and Four. Important assessment tools, such as interviewing, observation, document analysis and theoretical explanations were identified and demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six of the study. The criminological contribution to offender assessment practices, namely the identification of causes, contributory factors, motives, high-risk situations and theoretical explanations of criminal behaviour are illustrated in Chapter Six of the study.

The vital role of criminologists in corrections is also outlined. In this regard, the use of criminologists in custodial settings contribute to an inter-disciplinary approach towards the assessment, intervention and rehabilitation of offenders (Cornwell

2003b:84-89; Hesselink-Louw & Schoeman 2003:171; McGuire, personal interview 18 October 2004; Snyders, personal interview 30 September 2004). Individual assessments pinpoint offender-specific causes (origin, contributory factors, triggers and needs) and offence-specific (risks and high-risk situations) characteristics that ensure the individual treatment and management of offenders. Therefore, service delivery in the Department of Correctional Services is more effective because the personal needs and risks of offenders are addressed and rehabilitation programmes can be developed to correct offending behaviour.

Criminological assessments also assist Parole Boards in making informed decisions regarding the parole of dangerous offenders. These assessments contribute to a more balanced prediction of reoffending behaviour and to a reduced recidivism rate. The utilisation of criminologists in corrections can relieve the overwhelming workload of correctional practitioners such as psychologists and social workers and contribute to crime prevention and community safety. Possible employment opportunities for criminologists, and the recognition of criminologists as professional practitioners, will strengthen the demand for criminological skills and services within the correctional environment.

In conclusion, offender assessment is a key objective in the rehabilitation of offenders in the Department of Correctional Services (Department of Correctional Services Strategic Plan 2004/5 – 2006/7:35). Worldwide, the assessment of criminal behaviour is a reliable practice to challenge, address and correct criminal behaviour in custodial settings. Offender assessments direct custodial therapists such as psychologists and social workers and officials to rehabilitate offenders adequately (Simourd 2004:306-307; Sumner 2004:211; Wrightsman & Fulero 2005:126-133). This outlook is consistent with research findings, suggesting that offender assessment effectively abates, reduces and addresses criminal and reoffending behaviour (Bonta & Cormier 1999:236; Bonta 2002c:356; Ferguson 2002:474; Hollin 2001:22-23; Myer 2001:xiii; Sumner 2004:211).

Criminological assessments, and the utilisation and contribution of criminologists in corrections, are also highlighted by the National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr. LM Mti (see Appendix B). In addition, Venter, Managing Director of Mangaung Maximum Private Prison (Bloemfontein, Group 4, Global Solutions, South Africa) reiterates the importance of criminologists in Corrections (see Appendixes C and D).

Correctional experts in South Africa (Coetzee 2003b:19; Du Preez 2003:186; Luyt, personal interview 18 November 2003), fellow professionals and practitioners (Snyders, personal interview 30 September 2004) in South Africa, and international forerunners in offender assessment practices (McGuire, Professor of Forensic Clinical Psychology, University of Leicester, England, personal interview 18 October 2004; Motiuk, Director General, Research Branch, Correctional Service Canada and Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University, Psychology Department, Canada, personal interview 13 February 2004) stress that offender assessment is the key element to effective intervention purposes for offenders and that criminologists can play a significant role in the assessment of offenders.