



Where has all the psychology gone? ☆



A critical review of evidence-based psychological practice in correctional settings

Theresa A. Gannon ^{a,*}, Tony Ward ^b

^a Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology, School of Psychology (CORE-FP), Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, England, United Kingdom

^b School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, P.O. Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

ARTICLE INFO

Available online 28 June 2014

Keywords:

Corrections
Dual relationship problem
Evidence-Based Practice
Risk–need–responsivity
Rehabilitation
Science–practice gap

ABSTRACT

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) represents the gold standard for effective clinical psychological practice. In this review, we examine ways in which EBP tenets are being neglected by correctional psychologists worldwide. We examine three key aspects of EBP currently being neglected: (a) individualized and flexible client focus, (b) the therapeutic alliance, and (c) psychological expertise. We also highlight two highly related issues responsible for correctional psychologists' neglect of EBP. The first relates to policy makers' and correctional psychologists' overreliance on the Risk–Need–Responsivity Model to guide correctional practice. We argue that the narrow focus and implementation of this model has resulted in a severe identity problem for correctional psychologists that has severely exacerbated the *dual relationship problem*. That is, the tension psychologists experience as a result of engaging in psychological practice while also obliging the risk and security policies of correctional systems. The second issue concerns psychologists' response to the dual relationship problem. In short, psychology, as a discipline appears to have acquiesced to the dual-relationship problem. In our view, this constitutes a 'crisis' for the discipline of correctional psychology. We offer several recommendations for injecting EBP back into correctional psychology for the individual, psychology as a discipline, and correctional policy makers.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1.	Introduction	436
2.	The development of the modern day correctional psychologist	436
2.1.	The risk–need–responsivity model (Andrews & Bonta, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2010a)	436
2.2.	Correctional pressures	436
2.3.	The dual relationship problem	437
3.	Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)	437
3.1.	Why EBP is inherently superior to RNR	437
3.1.1.	EBP acknowledges a breadth of research	437
3.1.2.	EBP acknowledges the psychologist as active facilitator	437
3.1.3.	EBP promotes psychological identity	438
4.	Where has all the psychology gone?	438
4.1.	Individualized focus and flexibility	438
4.2.	Neglect of individualized focus and flexibility within correctional settings	438
4.2.1.	Stringent manualization	438
4.2.2.	Exclusive focus on offending behavior	438
4.2.3.	Exclusive focus on security and risk	439
4.3.	Therapeutic alliance	439
4.4.	Neglect of the therapeutic alliance within correctional settings	440
4.4.1.	Psychological engagement with security or punishment focused tasks	440
4.4.2.	No touching policies	440

☆ We would like to sincerely thank Dr. Jane Wood, Dr. Gwenda Willis, and Ms. Helen Butler for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript.

* Corresponding author at: Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology, School of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NP, England, United Kingdom.

E-mail address: T.A.Gannon@Kent.ac.uk (T.A. Gannon).

4.4.3.	Security information reporting procedures	440
4.5.	Psychological expertise	441
4.6.	Neglect of psychological expertise within correctional settings	441
4.6.1.	Growing reliance on paraprofessionals to implement psychology	441
4.6.2.	Neglect of the wider expertise research literature	442
5.	Putting psychology back into corrections	442
5.1.	Recommendations for individual psychologists working in corrections	442
5.2.	Recommendations for correctional psychology as a discipline	443
5.3.	Recommendations for correctional policy makers	443
6.	Concluding comments	443
	References	443

1. Introduction

The role of the correctional or forensic psychologist has evolved steadily from decades of struggle between punishment and rehabilitation proponents. Ultimately, the psychologist has secured an important place in contemporary western world corrections. Yet, despite correctional psychology having evolved over many decades, we believe that the correctional psychology discipline is facing a crisis. In this manuscript, we highlight one fundamental aspect underpinning this crisis—that is, correctional psychologists' mounting neglect of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). The lack of attention to EBP within such a highly important field is potentially harmful not only to the profession of psychology, but also to society who must inevitably deal with the devastating effects of re-offending associated with inadequate psychological treatment.

In this manuscript, we examine (1) the development of the modern day correctional psychologist; paying particular attention to the highly popular *Risk–Need–Responsivity Model* (RNR; Andrews & Bonta, 2010a), (2) the gold standard EBP model of clinical practice, (3) three key areas of research informing EBP currently being ignored within correctional practice, and (4) key ways in which EBP can be injected into correctional psychology at the individual, discipline, and policy level. A number of previous reviews have critiqued the RNR Model (see Polaschek, 2012; Ward, Melser, & Yates, 2007). However, none have examined how widespread use of RNR—and neglect of the EBP model—is seriously eroding the identity of psychology. We argue that the root cause of EBP neglect stems from psychologists' acquiescence to the risk and security orientated policies of correctional systems as well as misunderstandings about the nature of EBP. We also argue that—despite inherent contextual challenges—correctional psychologists can and should use EBP in order to conduct best practice psychology within correctional settings.

In this review, we will use the term *correctional psychologist* to refer to individuals who are trained and registered to conduct independent psychological practice within correctional settings (i.e., forensic, clinical, and counseling psychologists).

2. The development of the modern day correctional psychologist

Since the turn of the 20th century, correctional systems have been characterized by immense tension between punishment and rehabilitation proponents (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). Initially, rehabilitation enjoyed a relatively secure place within corrections. In the mid 1970s, however, punishment advocates took center stage when Martinson (1974) published his now famous article in which he analyzed the treatment effects of 231 rehabilitation programs and declared that rehabilitation appeared to have little impact on offender recidivism. Following this article, amidst a backdrop of steadily increasing prison populations and vocal punishment advocates (e.g., Von Hirsch, 1976), public and political dissatisfaction with 'ineffective' rehabilitation ensued (Andrews & Bonta, 2010b).

2.1. The risk–need–responsivity model (Andrews & Bonta, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2010a)

A decade following publication of Martinson's (1974) article, correctional psychology was placed firmly back on the map when Andrews, Bonta and colleagues undertook a series of systematic research studies showing psychological treatment to be efficacious within correctional settings (see Andrews & Bonta, 2010a, 2010b; Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990). The key rehabilitation theory that resulted from this work was the RNR model (Andrews & Bonta, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2010a). RNR specified that effective correctional rehabilitation required adherence to three main principles of risk, need, and responsivity. In brief, the *risk* principle stated that higher intensity programs were required for offenders deemed to be at higher risk of reoffending, the *need* principle stated that treatment should focus on criminogenic needs (i.e., those needs empirically associated with recidivism reduction), and the *responsivity* principle stated that treatments should be molded to ensure good fit with the characteristics and learning abilities of offenders. Finally, a fourth principle of *professional discretion* indicated that practitioners could override any of the principles under exceptional circumstances. The RNR is incredibly popular within correctional rehabilitation programs worldwide (Craig, Dixon, & Gannon, 2013), and is widely regarded to be "the received or orthodox position concerning rehabilitation" (Ward, Collie, & Bourke, 2009, p.299).

RNR's popularity with policy makers appears to rest on three key factors. First, research shows that program adherence to all or even some of the RNR principles significantly reduces recidivism (Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009) enabling policy professionals to make accountable decisions. Second, RNR principles are simple, and so can be implemented to large groups of offenders within highly structured cost effective manualized treatment programs. Third, the key focus of RNR is on risk reduction and management which resonates well with the security oriented culture of correctional establishments (Ward, Gannon, & Birgden, 2007; Ward, Melser, et al., 2007; Ward & Salmon, 2009).

There is no doubt that evidence-based RNR helped to reintroduce the value of offender rehabilitation—and of the psychologist—to corrections. However, the RNR was never intended to replace correctional psychologists' governing models of clinical practice. Instead, the RNR was intended to provide policy makers with a clear focus for correctional policy in the form of program selection (Andrews & Bonta, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2010a).

2.2. Correctional pressures

Over the past few decades, incarceration rates have increased dramatically. For example, in the US, nearly 220 individuals in every 100,000 were incarcerated in 1980 (Cahalan, 1986). By 2010, however, despite falling official crime rates (Zimring & Hawkins, 1991), this figure

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10252366>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10252366>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)