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13 Evaluating the quality of criminal justice programmes

Andrew Day

Introduction

It is probably fair to say that criminal justice programmes are scrutinised more closely these days than they have been at any time in the past. It is widely accepted that not only do all areas of public service have to deliver services that meet the needs of their clients and the broader community, but they also have to demonstrate that the services and programmes that are offered achieve their intended outcomes. Managers and policy makers alike have become interested in issues of effectiveness, accountability and transparency, and despite concerns expressed by some practitioners that their professional autonomy is being eroded, terms such as ‘best practice’ and ‘good practice’, originally developed to assist business and manufacturing to be more internationally competitive, are now commonplace across criminal justice settings.

In healthcare settings, including forensic mental health, notions of ‘empirically supported’ and ‘evidence based’ treatment have been around for many years. Although these terms can sometimes be used rather loosely, specific criteria have been developed to describe the level of evidence that is required for an intervention to be described in this way (see, for example, work conducted under the auspices of the Cochrane and Campbell collaborations). Whilst this approach to quality assurance has not escaped criticism (e.g. Pawson, 2006), research knowledge is now routinely applied to professional healthcare practice through clinical practice guidelines. These are ‘systematically developed statements formulated to assist health practitioners, consumers and policy makers to make appropriate decisions about health care’, and are ‘based on a thorough evaluation of the evidence from published research studies on the outcomes of treatment or other health care procedures’ (NHSRC, 2000, p. 21). In essence, such guidelines are a set of practice-based action statements that need to be adhered to if a service is to make any claims of applying ‘best practice’.

In prison and probation and parole settings, the notion of evidence-based practice is perhaps most apparent in relation to the identification of a series of offender rehabilitation practice principles that have been derived from meta-analytic reviews of the outcomes of a series of programme evaluations (e.g. Andrews and Bonta, 2010). The resulting principles have been widely
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endorsed by prison and probation services around the western world (Ogilv and Davis, 2004; Wormith et al., 2007); form the basis for most programme accreditation, inspection and review processes; and have directly informed the writing of programme standards. In brief, practitioners who work in prison and probation settings are generally expected to focus their therapeutic efforts on those who are most likely to reoffend (the higher risk offenders), target those factors that are directly associated with offending, and deliver interventions in ways that have been shown to be most likely to bring about change. Although these three core principles (of Risk, Needs and Responsivity) are the most well known, Bonta and Andrews (2007) and Andrews et al. (2011) have identified a total of eighteen different evidence-based principles that are thought to be associated with improved service outcomes (adapted from Matthews et al., 2001):

1. Effective interventions should be behavioural in nature.
2. Levels of service should be matched to the risk level of the offender.
3. Offenders should be matched to services designed to improve their specific criminogenic needs such as antisocial attitudes, substance abuse, family communication and peer association.
4. Treatment approaches and service providers should be matched to the learning style or personality of the offender.
5. Services for high-risk offenders should be intensive, occupying 40 to 70 per cent of the offenders' time over a three- to nine-month period.
6. Programmes should be highly structured, and contingencies enforced in a firm but fair way.
7. Staff members should relate to offenders in interpersonal sensitive and constructive ways and be trained and supervised appropriately.
8. Staff members should monitor offender change on intermediate targets of treatment.
9. Relapse prevention and aftercare services should be employed in the community.
10. Family members or significant others should be trained in how to assist clients during problem situations.
11. High levels of advocacy and brokerage should occur when community services are appropriate.

Type of method

At first glance, then, the task of evaluating the quality of criminal justice systems might appear to be reasonably straightforward: (a) ensure that there are programmes and services to match the range of needs that the client group presents with; (b) ensure that every programme offered is evidence-based and has been evaluated to establish its effectiveness with the local client group; and finally (c) audit delivery to ensure that programmes are delivered according to a set of quality standards or practice guidelines, where these are available.

This approach to quality assurance seeks to shift from individual, case-specific, and intervener-based performance measures to a system of performance measures that are more systematic and comprehensive. Indeed, performance measurement systems are becoming a key tool for assessing the effectiveness of criminal justice systems, and have been widely used in many countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Bonta et al., 2011). In these systems, performance measures are used to assess the extent to which programmes achieve their objectives, and to identify areas for improvement.

Background

Over the last 20 years, there has been a considerable commitment to the development of rehabilitation programmes across the globe. Indeed, offender rehabilitation is a key component of correctional practice, with the goal of reducing recidivism and increasing public safety. This is often achieved through programmes that address the criminogenic needs of offenders, such as education, vocational training, and drug treatment, as well as through the provision of parole and supervision services. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based practice in correctional settings, with a focus on programmes that have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism.

Bonta and Andrews (2007) have identified a range of evidence-based principles that are thought to be associated with improved service outcomes. These principles include matching services to the risk level of the offender, targeting specific criminogenic needs, and delivering interventions in a structured and systematic manner. These principles are thought to be more effective than individual, case-specific approaches to rehabilitation, and are increasingly being used in correctional settings around the world.

This approach to rehabilitation is exemplified by the work of Morgan and colleagues (2010), who conducted a review of 374 correctional programmes. They found that 1 per cent of the programmes failed to reach even moderate levels of effectiveness, with many programmes failing to achieve even the most basic levels of performance. This highlights the need for a systematic approach to rehabilitation, where programmes are designed and delivered with a focus on evidence-based practice, and where outcomes are monitored and evaluated regularly.
This approach to quality assurance is illustrated in this chapter through reference to a system of programme review and audit that has been developed to assess the quality of correctional (prison and/or probation and parole) programmes whose primary aim is to reduce the risk of reoffending. Although a range of performance measures has been developed to assess a broader range of criminal justice system outputs and outcomes (see, for example, the standards developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators in the USA), this particular method represents a standardised way for assessing the quality of offender rehabilitation programmes against criteria that are empirically based.

**Background**

Over the last 20 years criminal justice services around the world have made a considerable commitment to the development and delivery of a suite of offender rehabilitation programmes offered in both institutional and community settings. Indeed, offender rehabilitation has re-emerged as one of the primary goals of correctional agencies around the world and programmes which have been specifically designed to reduce the risk of reoffending are now commonly, if not routinely, offered to offenders serving medium or long-term sentences (Heseltine et al., 2011). In addition to these offence-focused programmes (such as those offered to violent and sexual offenders), the number of transitional support services and programmes for those leaving prison has also grown dramatically (Borzycki, 2005).

It is now widely accepted, at a policy level at least, that the general principles of Risk, Needs and Responsivity (RNR) should be used to guide service delivery. However, considerable concerns have been expressed about the policy implementation gap that exists in many criminal justice services. As Andrews and Bonta (2010, p. 46) put it: ‘Unfortunately, in the “real world” of routine correctional practice, adhering to the principles is a challenge’. An illustration of this can be found in the results of a meta-analysis of the effects of community supervision conducted by Bonta et al. (2008). They found little evidence that current supervision practices reduce recidivism, explaining these somewhat disappointing findings by reference to what were apparently low levels of adherence to the principles of risk and need, and an underuse of behavioural techniques and prosocial modelling methods (Listwan et al., 2006). The implementation gap is, however, not a problem that is peculiar to probation and parole: a review by Morgan et al. (2007, cited by Andrews and Bonta, 2010, p. 51) of 374 correctional programmes concluded that the majority (61 per cent, n = 230) failed to reach even a basic level of adherence to the RNR principles, with less that 1 per cent (n = 6) of forensic mental health service documents making any reference to targeting criminogenic need. They concluded that the majority of the programmes reviewed did not adequately assess offender risk, need or responsivity factors, did not utilise effective treatment models, did not use behavioural strategies and did not adequately train staff members or evaluate their performance.
Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 162) have further noted that criminal justice programme effectiveness is often ‘compromised by staff drift and organisational resistance at both the frontline and administrative levels’, and that the issue of programme integrity is an ‘ongoing problem of major proportions’. Such observations highlight the need to develop methods that can reliably assess programme quality, identify areas that require development, and ensure that those interventions which are offered are those that are known to be the most effective.

**Type of research question addressed**

The questions addressed in this chapter relate to how the quality of a particular programme or treatment can be assessed by an audit and review process. An assessment tool is used to illustrate how such questions might be answered by comparing programmes against accepted principles of good practice.

**Design principles and issues**

The Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI-2000, Gendreau and Andrews, 2001) is a particularly useful protocol to use in any attempt to determine the quality of offender rehabilitation programmes. It is a 131-item assessment/audit protocol which assesses programmes against eight different domains: organisational culture, programme implementation/maintenance, management/staff characteristics, client risk/need practices, programme characteristics, core correctional practices (including relationship and skill factors), interagency communication and evaluation. The principles of effective intervention outlined on page 272 serve as a template, and the goal of the assessment is to ascertain the extent to which these principles have been implemented. It is important to note that any administration of the CPAI-2000 should be conducted by trained assessors, and this is recommended in circumstances in which there is a need for a thorough external review of programme quality, or indeed to establish the extent to which a particular programme might be suitable for evaluation. Nonetheless, checklists have been developed by accrediting bodies (e.g. the Home Office), and can be easily adapted for use by an individual service.

**A worked example: reviewing a prison programme to treat violent young offenders**

The example provided here is a review of a high intensity cognitive-behavioural rehabilitation programme that is offered in a prison setting to young offenders who have been convicted of violent offences. Programmes for violent offenders are routinely provided in forensic and clinical settings and the rationale for, and content of, such programmes has been described by a number of researchers and practitioners who treat the needs of...
practitioners (e.g. Polaschek and Collie, 2004). Given the heterogeneity of violent offenders, interventions tend to be broad-based, diverse in the selection of therapeutic targets and tailored to the characteristics, risk levels and demonstrable needs of participants, as well as their readiness to address their behaviour (Serin and Preston, 2001).

Programme description

Structure

The programme itself is delivered three times per week over a period of seven months. It is described in the manual as a cognitive-behavioural group-based programme which aims to help participants understand their violent behaviour, establish remorse and empathy towards victims, and develop a relapse prevention plan to manage their risk of violence. The programme is intended to be offered to those who are assessed as moderate-high or high risk of reoffending. Offenders who are ineligible for the programme include those with active psychiatric symptoms, limited cognitive ability or limited English speaking skills.

In addition to the sessions with offenders, family members are given information about the programme and invited to attend a parenting workshop which aims to improve their communication skills. Prison officers are also given regular briefings about the programme.

Content

The programme content is well documented in a programme manual, and procedures are in place that clearly articulate the client assessment and selection processes, and summarise both session content and broader offender management issues. The programme comprises three main phases: the first phase aims to heighten motivation to change; the second to help participants identify and challenge their thinking styles that led to violent offending; and the final phase to equip them with the skills that are required to help them manage the risk of reoffending. The programme encourages participants to look at issues relating to their past experience, types of thinking and attitudes to violence, and participants are invited to adopt a model of conflict resolution which they then practise. The programme is, therefore, reasonably typical of the type of programme that is often offered to violent offenders (see Polaschek and Collie, 2004).

Self-assessment

As part of the review process, programme developers and staff were invited to complete a self-assessment exercise, which asked them to respond to a series of questions pertinent to each of the principles of effective intervention outlined
above. The following are sample questions relating to how participants for the programme are selected:

1. Is it easy to establish the target client population?
2. Are client selection criteria available?
3. Have risk and needs been assessed?
4. How is risk assessed (both general risk and risk of violence)?
5. How are criminogenic needs assessed?
6. Is level of risk matched to programme intensity?
7. How are responsibility factors assessed?
8. How are responsibility factors considered in programme delivery?

Programme checklist

Responses to each of these questions were then used to inform follow-up interviews with programme staff which aimed to identify areas of strength, as well as those aspects of the programme that could benefit from further development. The overall assessment is then summarised in a simple checklist in which a rating of present represents a clear indication (as evidenced either in the manuals or from the interviews) of the extent to which the programme exhibits each required feature. Partially present represents a degree of ambiguity as to whether or not the programme exhibits that feature (for example where discrepancies exist between the manual and practice are noted), and absent is used when there is clear evidence to indicate that the characteristic was not present. A final rating of unknown is included to cover circumstances in which insufficient information is available to make a judgement. In Table 13.1, the ratings for one category of the assessment are reproduced, relating to staffing needs. It identifies staff support and supervision areas that required further development in this particular programme.

Strengths and limitations of the approach

The approach described here represents a relatively straightforward and efficient approach to quality assessment that allows both service providers and service managers to reflect on and review their current processes (e.g. Indiana Probation Services, 2010). It can help to identify programme strengths and deficits, evaluate funding proposals, assist programme staff to articulate what they do and understand the logic that underpins programme activities, identify credible rationales for treatment and stimulate relevant research. It is not, however, necessarily a thorough or objective assessment of programme quality or, indeed, any guarantee that the programme will be successful in meeting its objectives.

A particular strength of using an audit approach such as that offered by the CPAI-2000, however, is the existence of evidence to support the validity of the approach. Two studies have examined the extent to which CPAI scores correlate with reductions in recidivism (Lowenkamp et al., 2006, Nesovic, 2003; cited by Smith et al., 2009), both of which found that total CPAI scores correlated...
Table 13.1 Programme checklist (staffing considerations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme elements</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Partially present</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staffing considerations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Area of study/training relevant to programme delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualised training needs analysis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Documented staff training needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed staff training course manual</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff receive formal training in theory and practice of intervention employed, along</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>with additional on-the-job training, workshops etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria for ensuring staff competence at the end of training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidelines for review of staff performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal qualities of staff outlined</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing supervision for staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff able to modify or adapt programme structure as required</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual specifies number of staff required to deliver programme</td>
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</table>

positively with reductions in recidivism in those who completed the programme. Such studies are important as they demonstrate that programmes which adhere closely to best practice principles are those which are likely to be more effective. In other words, achieving higher levels of integrity is likely to be important if programmes are to succeed in producing their intended outcomes.

One weakness of the approach to audit outlined here relates to the limited scope of the process. It is a method that has been developed to assess individual programmes rather than systems of service delivery. Some of the broader issues that arise in relation to how programmes inter-relate, the interface between programme delivery and sentence planning, case management processes and the relationship between programme attendance and throughcare into the community are not addressed directly. In addition, the dependent variable used in the studies that have identified the principles of best practice in offender rehabilitation is that of reduced rates of reoffending. Some services, notably forensic mental health services, juvenile justice services, and many offender transitional support services, have aims that are substantially broader than reducing rates of reoffending. As such the approach to quality assessment outlined here may need to be supplemented with other methods of assessing quality that are linked to these other aims (e.g. improved health and well-being, social functioning, healthy development).

There are, of course, also many other types of criminal justice service than individual treatment programmes. The quality of some of these other initiatives is much more difficult to assess. Consider, for example, the use of mandatory arrest as a means of reducing rates of repeated assault in the area of domestic
or family violence (Sherman, Schmidt and Ragan, 1992). In the US (State of Minnesota) in the 1980s three groups of police officers responding to domestic violence reports were required to act in one of three ways: arrest the perpetrator, provide advice or send the perpetrator away. Evaluations of the initiative found that there was a significantly lower rate of repeat calls for domestic violence incidents amongst the group where arrest occurred, compared to the other groups. Other US cities subsequently adopted the same strategy and whilst the mandatory arrest policy reduced repeat domestic violence calls in some places, it unexpectedly increased it in others. Sherman et al. (1992) suggested that these results could only be explained by the different community, employment and family structures that existed in the various cities, and the example clearly illustrates how the effects of any intervention can vary by context. It also shows how aggregated estimates of effect size may be misleading when applied to a local population, and speaks for the need for ongoing local evaluations to be conducted.

Although the method outlined here represents one way to help programme delivery become more evidence-based, it is important to remember that criminal justice policy does not always aspire to be evidence-based (see, for example, Pawson’s 2006 analysis of the evidence supporting the effectiveness of Megan’s Law legislation in relation to community notification of sex offenders). Indeed, even when research does demonstrate that programmes are able to achieve their intended objectives, Pawson (2006, p. 7) suggests that there are precious few examples of it leading to actual decisions to ‘retain, imitate, modify, or discard’ programmes and, indeed, there are numerous examples of programmes that have been shown to be ineffective which are still funded, whereas others that are widely thought to be ‘successful’ are sometimes discontinued.

This is partly because most evaluation research occurs after policies have been put into place (i.e. following programme design and implementation), and partly because in practice most evaluators experience significant constraints to their ability to provide conclusive answers to the key questions, whether they be related to budget, timelines or methodology.

An important additional factor here is on ‘value for money’, and it has been suggested that ‘ultimately, the key considerations associated with continuing and/or rolling out [criminal justice programmes] will centre on cost and outcomes’ (Monash University and Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health, 2007, p. 91). This is likely to be particularly true in a socio-political environment (such as exists in most parts of the world) in which the value of services for offenders is not universally recognised (Ward and Maruna, 2007), and budgets for the development and delivery of programmes are typically modest. As such, decisions about the quality of criminal justice services and programmes can sometimes be influenced by economic, rather than evidence-based, considerations. An economic or cost–benefit analysis of a programme is an extension of other fo value ot to taxa: compare line eco costs as costs wi earnings sufferin

Future

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other forms of programme evaluation that involves a calculation of the monetary value of the costs and benefits of delivering a programme (in terms of the benefits to taxpayers and crime victims of future crimes avoided). Benefits can then be compared to the costs of programme delivery, in order to determine the bottom-line economics of different programmes. The potential benefits include reduced costs associated with the police, the courts and corrections, and crime victim costs which can be divided into monetary costs (e.g. health care expenses, loss of earnings) and quality of life cost estimates (e.g. a monetary value for pain and suffering; see Drake et al., 2009).

Future directions of the approach

In many respects, the RNR approach has revolutionised correctional practice. It has promoted the idea of community safety as the primary driver behind correctional case management, and placed offender rehabilitation programming at the centre of the sentence planning process. There is a need to continue to build the evidence base from which statements about good criminal justice and rehabilitation practice can be developed (see Andrews, 2006; Bonta et al., 1998), and significant gaps in knowledge remain (Andrews and Dowden, 2007), as well as inconsistencies and deficiencies in how the model is operationalised. The audit approach described in this chapter relies on the completion of evaluation research that can be used to determine the basis for evidence-based practice, as well as the policy endorsement that is required to implement models of service delivery.

Critics of the RNR model have, in a range of different ways, drawn attention to how the model struggles to inform the actual process of programme delivery, and how psychological and behaviour change might take place (e.g. Day et al., 2006). There would appear to be scope for developing the notion ‘good practice’ in programme delivery to include aspects of therapeutic process. Assessments of quality programming are perhaps too focused on aspects of delivery such as adherence to programme manuals, and the quality of the relationship formed between the practitioner and the offender is often under-emphasised and under-valued (Kozar, 2010). In short there is a need to ensure that notions of quality do not become oversimplified.

There may also be lessons to be learned here from the development of clinical practice guidelines, such as those that are emerging for use in forensic mental health settings (e.g. Duggan et al., 2009), but have yet to emerge in relation to rehabilitation programme delivery. It is clearly important that those who are involved with the delivery of criminal justice services are able to apply the available research evidence in ways that directly guide their practice if outcomes for both programme participants and the broader community are to be maximised. Quality assurance and audit measures can be used to help the criminal justice system to run more efficiently, establish priorities and reinforce the mission, goals and objectives of service providers. In short, it makes it possible to describe successes and failures in quantifiable terms. The approach to quality assurance
that is outlined in this chapter represents one way in which this might be achieved.

**Further reading and resources**

For principles of effective rehabilitation see:

For programme audit methods see:

For systematic reviews, see www.evidencenetwork.org.

For a discussion of evidence based policy see:

For the evidence basis for offender rehabilitation programmes see:

For a performance based assessment process see standards developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators in the USA (www.pbstandards.org).

**References**


Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals

Edited by Kerry Sheldon, Jason Davies and Kevin Howells
Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals

This book explores applied research methods used in forensic settings – prisons, the probation service, courts and forensic mental health establishments – and provides a comprehensive ‘how-to’ guide for forensic practitioners and researchers.

It provides practitioners and researchers with grounding in the practical techniques appropriate for research in applied forensic settings. This includes knowledge and skills of the research process and the wide range of research methods (both quantitative and qualitative) being applied in this arena. The text provides a critical understanding of the problems, challenges and ethical issues that can arise and ideas for managing these. Specific attention is paid to empirical research within forensic populations and settings, including researching vulnerable groups (e.g. offenders and the mentally ill in secure settings), evaluating treatment programmes and the uses and problems of randomised controlled trials.

The book is clearly structured, with each methodology chapter describing the background of the approach; the type of research questions addressed; design principles and issues; the types of analysis that can be utilised; strengths and limitations of the method; future directions and further sources of information. Through the inclusion of case studies and illustrative examples from forensic researchers and practitioners who have extensive experience of conducting applied research, this book tackles real-life problems typically faced by researchers and practitioners.

Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals is an essential one-stop resource for practitioners (such as psychologists, nursing and medical staff, prison and probation workers, social workers and occupational therapists) who have an interest in research and in evaluating their own work and the services in which they work. It will also be of interest to students studying areas of applied research, such as forensic psychology or applied criminology, and those teaching them.

Kerry Sheldon has worked as Research Fellow at Rampton High Secure Hospital. She has worked for the probation service in sex offender treatment and as a lecturer in psychology and criminology. Jason Davies is a Consultant Forensic and Clinical Psychologist and Chief Psychologist in Rehabilitation/Recovery and Low Secure Services with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board. Kevin Howells trained initially as a clinical psychologist before specialising in forensic work. He has worked as a practitioner in a range of forensic mental health services in the UK and the USA as well as holding a number of academic positions and publishing extensively in the field.
Issues in Forensic Psychology
Edited by Richard Shuker and H.M.P. Grendon

Issues in Forensic Psychology is a book series which aims to promote forensic psychology to a broad range of forensic practitioners. It aims to provide analysis and debate on current issues and to publish and promote the work of forensic psychologists and other associated professionals.

The views expressed by the authors/editors may not necessarily be those held by the Series Editor or NOMS.

1. Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals
Edited by Kerry Sheldon, Jason Davies and Kevin Howells
Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals

Edited by
Dr Kerry Sheldon, Dr Jason Davies
and Professor Kevin Howells
KS: For Imogen
JD: For Susie, Bryn and Freya
KH: For Maya and Jay, natural investigators
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Editors

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Contributors

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Contributors

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Contributors

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Foreword

Finally, forensic user-friendly bi that the weekend around the home for Forensic Psychologists and expanding rapid academic discurs on forensic policy and outcomes. Research number of much make research possible on how to use research questions and methodologies on a discipline, personality disorder themes, such as a focus to investigate fostered anxiety for patients who may have mental retardation and lead them to research and pilot many different and effective treatment options. If you read and study based on evidence do not wait until tomorrow for joint with it. Read this now!
communications but has developed into a broader interest in the application of psychology to social issues. His primary research areas are the effects of mass communications especially with reference to crime, violence and pornography; racism and the profession of psychology; paedophiles, sex offenders and child abuse; and forensic psychology. His books in the field of crime and sexual abuse include Sex Offenders and the Internet (co-authored with Kerry Sheldon, Wiley, 2007) and Paedophiles and Sexual Offences against Children (Wiley, 1995). He is the author of Introduction to Forensic and Criminal Psychology (Pearson Education) and has published widely in the field of race and racism, statistics, computing and research methods. His latest book is Introduction to Qualitative Research in Psychology (2010, Pearson Education).

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Matt Tonkin is currently a PhD student at the University of Leicester. Previously he worked as a research assistant for the Peaks Academic Research Unit (PARU) at Rampton Hospital, where he contributed to research on self-harm, offence parallelism, behaviour and social climate. His PhD research is focused on whether offender behaviour can be used to link crimes that have been committed by the same offender (comparative case analysis). Matt has published several papers in this area and has also published papers on geographical and offender profiling.

Professor Tony Ward is head of the School of Psychology and Professor of Clinical Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He is due to take up a research chair in Clinical Forensic Mental Health at Deakin University, Melbourne, in June 2011. Professor Ward has previously worked
Foreword

Finally, forensic researchers have a tool box with many useful tools and a user-friendly how-to manual in it. I am not talking about the metal contraption that the weekend handy person, who happens to be a forensic researcher, carries around the house. I am referring to the present volume: Research in Practice for Forensic Professionals.

Research in forensic mental health and forensic social sciences has been expanding rapidly and is now much more multi-disciplinary. Many established academic disciplines now have a forensic hyphenated sub-discipline such as forensic-psychology, -psychiatry, -social work, -nursing and likely more to come. Researchers within these disciplines and, in particular, an increasing number of students, both undergraduates and postgraduates, are eager to undertake research projects and need methodological tools they can use and guidance on how to use them to answer research questions. As a discipline matures, more research questions will be put forth that require a wider range of sophisticated methodologies to investigate them. Most forensic reference books tend to focus on a discipline, such as forensic psychology; or a condition, such as antisocial personality disorder; or an intervention, such as a form of psychotherapy; or a theme, such as forensic mental health. The methodologies and techniques used as tools to investigate research questions within the discipline or the condition are scattered somewhere in the discourse and often are difficult to locate, particularly for students who are new to the area, or even for seasoned researchers who may not have ventured much beyond the tried and true. This book has brought together, under one cover, a wide array of forensic research methodologies and made them available at one’s fingertips. Students, course instructors and researchers alike will welcome the arrival of this volume.

Using qualifying the tools of research is only the first step; selecting the right one and knowing how to use it properly is quite another. Many don’t. As is often said, I tried and tried and still couldn’t make it work, read the manual. Tools are only useful if one knows what to use and how to use them effectively under real discipline involves real problems. The bumbling man standing ankle-deep in mud, with more gumbo from the kitchen sink, looking at a non-descript tool in his hand with a bewildered look on his face, comes to mind; the instruction manual, of course, is floating unopened on the water behind him. This volume not
Foreword

only guides and informs the reader what tools are available to tackle different research questions but also how to use them intelligently and strategically under the very trying environments that most forensic researchers likely find themselves in. To do forensic research in applied settings researchers invariably have to navigate a bewildering maze of academic and bureaucratic hurdles before they can even sit in the same room with their research participants. And that is just the beginning.

I remember an occasion when I asked and then waited patiently to interview an offender inside a high security prison for a research project. Finally, I was taken to a room set aside for the interview. On entering the room, I found the offender waiting for me sitting literally inside a six-by-six-by-six cage made out of stainless steel bars! My heart sank as I knew that I needed to try to explain my research project, which was intended to be participatory and collaborative in nature, to a complete stranger and seek his written consent while he was staring at me from behind those inch-thick steel bars! Though many may not be as challenging as this example, most secure forensic settings are difficult environments in which to conduct research to say the least. This volume has done a splendid job in providing readers with guidance and information on conducting forensic research in real-life practical settings.

The editors - Kerry Sheldon, Jason Davies and Kevin Howells – and the contributors should be congratulated for undertaking this project to fill an important gap in forensic research methodology. They have carefully selected a range of established and useful methodological tools commonly used in forensic research and presented them to the readers in a clear and easy-to-understand way with the extensive use of case studies and examples, from ethical considerations to systematic review of the literature to quantitative and qualitative models to single case and large-scale evaluative research and more: what a treat! All of them written by recognised researchers with extensive hands-on experience. The next time someone asks me a methodological question I can’t answer (and that is most of the time), I know where to look on my book shelf for an answer.

Some may say that methodologies are no more than mere implements to test and shape creative ideas; it is the ideas that rank supreme. But without the lowly hammer and chisel, we would not have the grand pyramids, would we? On occasions, after I read a useful and informative book, I say to myself, Why didn’t I think of this? This volume is one of such.

Stephen C.P. Wong
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Editors’ preface

‘Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.’
— Zora Neale Hurston (American folklorist, anthropologist and author)

The intention in pulling this book together was to capture the ‘poking and prying’ in forensic settings; to produce a research textbook which contained practical assistance and guidance to the novice researcher who may have only limited or rudimentary social research experience. It was also intended to act as a reference resource for the forensic practitioner and as a useful source for those with more advanced research knowledge. However, this book is unique in that it provides a resource for the everyday forensic practitioner — rather than the academic researcher — providing a ‘how-to’ guide to using applied research methods in settings such as prison, probation, court and forensic mental health. The book is therefore intended, first and foremost, to be practical and useful; it should, if we’ve done our job correctly, speak to the methods that forensic researchers need to know about in detail. And while it is likely that aspiring researchers will gain the most from the book, many contributors have developed their points in a sophisticated way to also be of value to more seasoned researchers.

Our hope is to help readers develop or refine their knowledge and skills in the research process and, more importantly, to develop a critical and evaluative understanding of the problems, issues and ethics which can be specific to empirical research with forensic populations and in forensic settings. This is important as employers of forensic practitioners increasingly require that their staff should be able to fully in research-led practice. As practitioners we do not just apply knowledge, we create it; although not always in systematic ways and often within wider dissemination. If practitioners understand research methods well then they are much more likely to be able to apply findings of other researchers into their practice, assessment and when giving professional advice to clients, colleagues and other professionals.

In summary, this book is intended to provide social researchers with the tools and guidance necessary to undertake research within the challenging confines of forensic environments such as prisons and secure health facilities. What the tools don’t do, however, is provide guidance on the other strand of forensic
practice represented most famously by the US crime drama C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation; this is a book aimed squarely at social scientists and psychiatric practitioners operating in a forensic setting, rather than forensic scientists undertaking work involving DNA profiling, ballistics, fingerprints or forensic pathology.

So how is the book structured? Well, we have attempted not to emphasise or recommend any one approach above another but rather each chapter attempts to provide a practical guide to the research approach or method it covers. The overall aim was to demystify, systematise and summarise relevant information and advice which can be useful when the researcher comes to use a particular approach; to formalise the reader's curiosity, if you will. Readers are also encouraged to critically examine the methods proposed. While we have attempted to be as comprehensive and all-inclusive as possible, the simple breadth of research within forensic settings has meant that there are inevitably some approaches we have missed. For this we apologise and will attempt to put right in the next edition. Yet the following chapters include contributions from a wide variety of practitioners involved in social science research in forensic areas. Thus it reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of research utilised by them, whether they are nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, probation staff or others. Our contributors have extensive experience of conducting applied research around the globe including in the United Kingdom, Ireland, America, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

In Chapter 1 Jason Davies, Kerry Sheldon and Kevin Howells discuss some of the theoretical, philosophical and practical issues surrounding research in forensic settings. This includes the common steps taken from initial idea to dissemination of findings and consideration of the challenges that can be experienced. Continuing this theme in Chapter 2 Tony Ward and Gwenda Willis discuss some of the ethical issues surrounding how research should be conducted; how data in forensic and criminal justice services should be collected, analysed and reported; and how researchers should act towards participants in their research projects.

The next three chapters explore risk, investigative and criminal justice research. The task of assessing potential for serious harm and risk of future offending is intrinsically difficult and subject to error. Violence risk assessment and management are the principle justifications for the existence of specialised forensic services; therefore, it is imperative that the practice of risk assessment and management is supported by research evidence. In Chapter 3 Michael Doyle describes how risk assessment and prediction might be studied by the forensic practitioner. In Chapter 4 Jennifer Brown outlines an approach to research that can accommodate different research questions, varying types of data and alternative theoretical constructs. She describes Facet Meta Theory, its origins and developments and the use of its associated multi-dimensional scaling techniques, and works through design principles. Following this, in Chapter 5 Matt Palmer, Ruth Hoey and Neil Brewer concentrate on research within court-based settings and discuss the methodologies used to conduct research in three prominent areas of relevance to trial and juror decision-making.

Qualitative personality-disorder research was a view of understanding a method with which to present their p

importance suite and are becoming more numerous. Neil Gordon in this qualitative method can be used to develop theory and approach - Griffith qualitative and quantitative in the present for the views to seek to do and their method.

Treatments of data as a hypothetical intervention functions and practical designs. In Chapter 11, focus on the range of applying and continuing this chapter how an assessment of the analytic method, there is a very important Michael Doyle.

Chapter 11 is about the evaluation in for the field manual the United Kingdom at the analysis of the data. Chapter 11, which discusses the tests of validity and reliability and how they have been implemented in the field.
of relevance to the court: eyewitness identification tests, interviewing of witnesses and juror decision making.

Qualitative studies with forensic populations, particularly involving personality-disordered individuals and especially psychopaths, are limited since there was a view that such individuals have very little to say that will aid our understanding and theory development. In addition the use of qualitative research methods with offenders and forensic patients brings the challenge of how to present their perspectives. However, qualitative methods now represent an important suite of methods and approaches to aid the construction of knowledge and are becoming increasingly popular with practitioners and researchers. Neil Gordon in Chapter 6 and Dennis Howitt in Chapter 7 explore a sample of qualitative methods available to forensic practitioners and describe how they can be successfully applied, not simply as exploratory tools but in order to develop theory and practice. Neil Gordon describes a particular methodological approach — Grounded Theory. Dennis Howitt conducts a larger comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods. Consistent with some of the other authors in the present volume, both Howitt and Gordon stress the need for new researchers to seek to develop an understanding between their epistemological position and their methodological choices.

Treatments should not be delivered if evaluation of their effectiveness is seen as hypothetical or only concerned with general effects or reported years after the intervention has been provided. However, establishing the ‘value’ of interventions and practice changes has traditionally been the preserve of group-based designs. In Chapter 8 Jason Davies and Kerry Sheldon discuss how single case experimental designs are ideal for answering research questions that aim to explore clinical treatment outcomes and discuss how single case methods have a range of applications which should be attractive to forensic practitioners. Continuing this individual change theme, in Chapter 9 Sean Hammond demonstrates how structured qualitative data can provide a good basis for actuarial assessment of change. In Chapter 10 Michael Dafforn describes functional analytic methodology; an approach regularly used in forensic settings. Although there is very little published research using this assessment approach in this context, Michael introduces a novel application of it.

Chapters 11 to 15 explore research approaches at the group level and include a focus on treatment evaluation, regime evaluation and programme quality evaluation in forensic contexts. Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are seen as the ‘gold standard’ when evaluating the efficacy of forensic programmes in the United Kingdom, but few have actually been conducted. RCTs also have a number of difficulties which are both conceptual as well as practical. In Chapter 11 Clive Hollin critiques some of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. In particular the chapter focuses on the interplay between the different types of validity when research uses a randomised design. In Chapter 12 Matt Howells and Kevin Howells explore the types of method, design and analysis that might be used to evaluate forensic environments and regimes. This may be particularly important to consider as treatment programmes may operate in
contexts (climates) which may be unhealthy, unsafe or unsupportive; factors which could negate benefits gained from treatment. In Chapter 13 Andrew Day outlines a relatively straightforward and efficient approach to quality assessment that allows both service providers and service managers to reflect on and review their current processes and services in terms of strengths and deficits. The final methods chapters discuss methods for aggregating data and drawing conclusions from findings reported by others. In this way they provide ways of reporting the cumulative knowledge and evidence base in a particular area. In Chapter 14 James McGuire outlines the kinds of methods employed in carrying out large-scale evaluation research, and describes how the findings of evaluation research can be combined and integrated. He focuses on meta-analysis, a procedure where data from several studies are statistically compared or combined. In Chapter 15 Michael Ferriter describes how systematic reviews are conducted and how they can be used to draw conclusions from a body of research evidence.

Ultimately, this book should provide you, as the reader, with the tools to conduct research within a forensic setting in an informed, conscientious and intelligent manner; it should allow you to formalise your curiosity, and ensure that your ‘poking and prying’ is done with purpose and success. And remember, as Einstein famously said, ‘If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?’

Kerry Sheldon
Jason Davies
Kevin Howells

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