

# **The Psychology of Criminal Conduct**

Sixth Edition

**James Bonta and D. A. Andrews**

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT

SIXTH EDITION

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*and*  
D. A. ANDREWS

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# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT

*The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, Sixth Edition, provides a psychological and evidence-informed perspective of criminal behavior that sets it apart from many criminological and mental health explanations of criminal behavior. Drawing upon the General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning theory, James Bonta and Donald Andrews offer a coherent theory of criminal behavior that is in Rosenfeld and Penrod's *Research Methods in Forensic Psychology* empirically supported throughout the book. They provide an overview of the theoretical context and major knowledge base of the psychology of criminal conduct, discuss the eight major risk/need factors of criminal conduct, examine the prediction and classification of criminal behavior along with prevention and rehabilitation, and, finally, summarize the major issues in understanding criminal conduct. This book also offers the Risk/Need/Responsivity (RNR) model, a model of offender assessment and treatment that has guided developments in the subject throughout the world.

In this edition, the first since Andrews' death, Bonta carefully maintains all the book's original contributions while presenting these core concepts succinctly, clearly, and elegantly. Appropriate for advanced undergraduates and graduate students as well as for scholars, researchers, and practitioners, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, Sixth Edition, improves upon and extends the content of this important work with further refinements of the authors' body of work.

**James Bonta** served as Director of Corrections Research at Public Safety Canada from 1990 until 2015. He received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ottawa in 1979. Bonta was a psychologist, and later Chief Psychologist, at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, a maximum-security remand facility for adults and young offenders. Throughout his career, Bonta has held various academic appointments and professional posts and was a member of the Editorial Advisory Boards for the *Canadian Journal of Criminology* and *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association, a recipient of the Association's Criminal Justice Section's Career Contribution Award for 2009, the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, 2012, the Maud Booth Correctional Services Award, 2015, and the 2015 Community Corrections Award from the International Corrections and Prisons Association.

The late **D. A. Andrews** was a noted criminologist affiliated with Carleton University throughout his academic career. His work on the psychology of criminal conduct produced what became known as the "theory of correctional intervention," which set the standard for successful intervention practices in the field of corrections worldwide. He was a founding member of Carleton's Criminology and Criminal Justice Program and a Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association. He received numerous awards for his

work in the criminal justice field, including recognition from the American Probation and Parole Association, Correctional Service Canada, the International Community Corrections Association, and the American Society of Criminology. After his retirement, he remained active in the criminal justice field as a Professor Emeritus and Distinguished Research Professor.

## PREFACE

This sixth edition of *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* (PCC) reflects a number of significant changes. The most significant is the passing of my co-author, colleague, and friend, Don (D. A.) Andrews on October 22, 2010. Over five editions of this text we had many lively discussions of content, organization, and how best to convey our view of criminal behavior. For this edition, I have tried to keep true to our past discussions.

In terms of the content and organization of the present edition, there are three important changes. First, I tried to present the content in a less complex manner, hoping to reach a broader audience. *PCC* brings a hopeful message to the criminal justice system. It is a message that says that criminal offenders can be helped to become more prosocial and that a criminal justice policy that is evidence-informed can lead to safer communities. This message, I believe, needs to be told to as many as possible. At the same time, I am cognizant that researchers and scholars respected *PCC* for its rigor and complexity. Thus, I attempted to strike a balance between “readability” and thoroughness. I leave it to the reader to judge how well I succeeded in this goal.

The second change, and related to the first point, is an almost complete rewrite and reorganization of the theory chapters that appeared in Chapters 3 and 4 of the fifth edition. Previous reviewers thought that our critical review of mainstream criminology was no longer necessary. Our point had been made that psychology must be considered in any theory of criminal conduct. In 1994 when the first edition of *PCC* was published, Don and I felt strongly that criminology had become too ideologically driven and that the evidence on the psychological, biological, and immediate social contexts as major correlates of criminal behavior was being ignored. Too much emphasis was placed on class and social structure, and we were sharply critical of this approach and challenged it with evidence. I hope that the reviewers were correct that this is no longer needed. Thus, the discussion of theory is rolled into one chapter with a brief summary of criminological theories and an overview of the theoretical perspective taken in this text: the General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning theory. Associated with this change is that the Risk-Need-Responsivity model of offender assessment and rehabilitation now has its own chapter.

Third, my assessment of the evidence has led me to de-emphasize the “Big Four” risk/need factors. In previous editions of *PCC*, we differentiated the Central Eight risk/need factors into the top four and the more moderate correlates.



I think that an argument for such a differentiation can no longer be justified based on the research.

Those familiar with the fifth edition of *PCC* will notice other changes, such as placing all the research methodologies and statistics needed to understand the evidence in support of *PCC* into one chapter (Chapter 2). Of course, new research is presented, and emerging issues are discussed (e.g. staff training in evidence-informed supervision practices). I hope the reader will find this edition as informative as the previous one.

Words of thanks are in order for the many colleagues from around the world who so generously sent me their most recent publications. Their contributions were an enormous help in the preparation of this book. I would like to have listed all of their names here, but I was afraid that I would miss some. However, there are a few colleagues that deserve added recognition because they read sections, some a whole chapter, and gave me their feedback to ensure accuracy and readability. My appreciation for their work is extended to Paul Gendreau, Karl Hanson, Chris Lowenkamp, Paula Smith, Yvette Thériault, Scott VanBenschoten, and Steve Wormith. Of course, I want to thank my longtime editor, Ellen Boyne (since the first edition); my new editor, Pam Chester; and editorial assistants Irene Bunnell and Eve Strillacci for their support and patience as I prepared this edition.

Work on the first edition of *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* began in 1993, and it was published in 1994. During the various editions, my family has been an enormous source of encouragement. Over the years, my children Carolyn and Mark left home to pursue new lives and careers in different cities. However, they were still on my mind when I wrote. Through all six editions, my wife, Christine, was there to support my work on the book. As I write in the text, for every behavior there is both a reward and a cost. When I write, I feel a sense of accomplishment, a reward, but it also means that there is a cost—mainly less time with my wife and our family. I am grateful to her for her patience, understanding, and support, as this enabled me to have the necessary time to write this book. I dedicate this edition to her.

James Bonta

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