

FOUNDATIONS OF OFFENDER REHABILITATION

SHARON CASEY, ANDREW DAY, JAMES VESS
AND TONY WARD



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**Sharon Casey, Andrew Day,
James Vess and Tony Ward**



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About the authors

Dr Sharon Casey

Sharon Casey is a Senior Lecturer at Deakin University and member of the Clinical Forensic Group within the Deakin Forensic Psychology Centre. She was formerly Programme Director of the Master of Psychology (Forensic) programme at the University of South Australia. Her research interests include substance use, juvenile offending, scale development and validation, and psychology and the law. Dr Casey has worked extensively with correctional agencies both in Australia and overseas in the development, provision and evaluation of offender rehabilitation programmes and the provision of training. She currently holds an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (in conjunction with Corrective Services New South Wales) undertaking a longitudinal analysis of recidivism rates for offenders completing substance use rehabilitation programmes across different treatment modalities.

Dr Andrew Day

Andrew Day is Professor in Forensic Psychology and Director of the Forensic Psychology Centre at Deakin University. He has a clinical background, previously working as a clinical and forensic psychologist in both the UK and Australia and is particularly interested in the application of psychological thought and practice to the correctional setting. Professor Day is a member of the Australian Psychological Society's Colleges of Clinical and Forensic Psychology. His current research interests centre around the development of therapeutic regimes within prison settings, effective practice with offenders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural backgrounds in Australia, and the role that anger plays in aggressive and violent behaviour.

Dr James Vess

James Vess has over 25 years of clinical and research experience with forensic populations. He received his PhD in clinical psychology from Ohio State University in the United States, and then served in a variety of treatment, assessment and supervisory roles at Atascadero State Hospital, the maximum security forensic psychiatric facility in California. He was subsequently a Senior Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and Deakin University in

Victoria, Australia, where his research has focused primarily on risk assessment with violent and sexual offenders, as well as public policy dealing with high-risk offenders. He has remained active in forensic practice, and has provided expert witness evidence in a variety of High Court and Court of Appeals cases for Preventive Detention and Extended Supervision in both New Zealand and Australia. He is now a subject matter expert and project manager at the National Center for Telehealth and Technology in the Madigan Army Medical Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Tacoma Washington.

Dr Tony Ward

Tony Ward, MA(Hons), PhD, DipClinPsyc, is currently Professor of Clinical Forensic Mental Health at Deakin University, Melbourne Australia. He was formerly Director of the Kia Marama Sexual Offenders' Unit at Rolleston Prison in New Zealand, and has taught both clinical and forensic psychology at Victoria, Canterbury and Melbourne Universities. He has authored over 300 academic publications and his research interests include the rehabilitation and desistance process in offenders, cognition and offenders, evolutionary approaches to crime, and ethical issues in forensic and correctional psychology. Professor Ward is the developer of the Good Lives Model (GLM) and has published numerous books, book chapters and academic articles on this model since 2002. He is currently working on a research project with Dr Gwenda Willis and Dr Jill Levenson investigating the degree to which North American treatment programmes for sex offenders adhere to the basic conceptual underpinnings of the GLM.

Foreword

The field of offender rehabilitation has undergone a process of substantial change over the years, from an early period of largely atheoretical and empirically unsubstantiated optimism, through assertions that nothing works to a focus on what works for contributing to positive changes in offenders and reductions in recidivism. Relatively recent evidence suggests that certain types of interventions can have a significant effect in reducing reoffending and managing the risk posed by some types of offenders, although general recidivism rates remain high for many offenders, as well as for certain known subgroups within offender populations such as violent and sexual offenders. Despite a burgeoning professional literature on offender rehabilitation, what has often been missing is an explicit articulation of the theoretical underpinnings of offender rehabilitation, and the development of assessment and intervention approaches that are clearly based on these theories. In this book we review a variety of theories of offending behaviour and current models of offender rehabilitation. This is followed by a consideration of available theories of behaviour change. This is an area that we believe is sometimes insufficiently utilized in attempts to develop and implement effective rehabilitation programmes with offenders.

The theoretical and empirical framework for offender rehabilitation should also guide forensic assessment and case formulation. In this book we provide an approach to the assessment of offenders that draws from available theoretical and empirical sources of information. But assessment is optimally useful only when it is integrated into an aetiologically explanatory case formulation for the offender being assessed. Consideration is therefore given to the development of effective case formulation, which should always form the basis for treatment planning, intervention and ongoing risk management.

The second half of the book applies the approach developed in the first half to specific populations of offenders. The chapter on sex offenders presents the fundamentals of current risk assessment practice, and considerations of applying assessment findings and case formulation to sex offender treatment. This is followed by a similar set of considerations for the assessment, case formulation and intervention with violent offenders. Substance abuse is a common and widespread phenomenon among offenders of all types and a chapter is, therefore, devoted to examining the current state of knowledge in the assessment and

treatment of this set of problem behaviours. Female offenders have historically made up a relatively small portion of the total offender population, but their involvement in the criminal justice system is nonetheless substantial and may be growing. The chapter on female offenders considers the unique characteristics and concerns presented by this group, as does the following chapter considering a practice approach to the assessment and treatment of young offenders. Finally, the special needs and specific challenges of mentally disordered offenders are discussed. Each chapter includes a detailed case example to illustrate the approach to assessment, case formulation and rehabilitation that we are advocating.

The final chapter of the book presents some of the unique features of professional practice in the area of offender rehabilitation. Working in this area requires that the practitioner not only possess a solid set of clinical skills, but also specialized knowledge and awareness of the criminal justice context in which any work occurs. Consideration must be given to the special nature of informed consent, confidentiality, role boundaries and professional ethics when working with offenders. Our intent in writing this book is to present a specifically focused resource to the developing and practising professional that articulates the link between the theoretical and empirical foundations of offender rehabilitation, and provides a practical approach to working in this challenging but important field. We hope that you will find it a useful resource.

Acknowledgement

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Part 1

Theoretical foundations

1 Theories of offending

Stated simply, the role of theory is to inform practice, although the reality is that the interface between the two is not always as straightforward as one might hope. In this book we argue that interventions to reduce offending should be based on knowledge about the causes of crime, be informed by an empirically supported theory (or theories) of behaviour change, and be consistent with what has been shown to be effective in changing offending behaviour. Theory is, therefore, imperative in terms of describing and understanding the processes involved, in gaining knowledge, and accumulating evidence (Lippke and Ziegelmann, 2008); evidence which is subsequently the basis for developing effective and interpretable interventions. Before we discuss current practice models of offender rehabilitation, there is a need to consider key theoretical explanations for why people commit crime and, equally importantly, why they stop committing crime.

Theories of crime and criminal behaviour

There have been many theories postulated that seek to explain the causes and correlates of criminal behaviour. Several attempts have been made to thematically organize different theories according to whether they take a broad, large-scale and society-wide ‘macro’ view, or adopt a ‘micro’ approach that considers crime from the perspective of the individual. One particularly useful organizing scheme is that proposed by McGuire (2004), which consists of five discrete but interconnected levels of theory that range from the social to the individual; or from *structural* causes (i.e., offenders are victims of their circumstances in some way) to views of individual *agency* (i.e., people are responsible for their own life situation). Level 1 theories (e.g., social control theory) are macro accounts; Level 2 (e.g., differential opportunity theory) offers locality-based accounts; socialization and group influence processes are at Level 3 (e.g., differential association theory, social learning theory, developmental criminology); crime events and ‘routine activities’ are at Level 4 (e.g., routine activity theory, rational choice theory); and individual factors are at Level 5 (e.g., neutralization theory, psychological control theories, social cognitive theory). Table 1.1 provides a brief explanation of the main focus in research and theory construction for each unit of analysis, the broad objective theory in the particular area, and examples of various approaches at

