Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Criminal Psychology
A Critical Textual Analysis

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Psychology

at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Simon Christopher Webb
2005
The criminal justice system plays an important role in the reproduction of social power relations, and it embodies an official response to the problem of interpersonal violence. Andrews and Bonta's (2003) *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* is an influential text in this setting, informing the Psychological Services of New Zealand's Department of Corrections, and serving as a key text in the training of psychologists for work in this field. The present study is a critical reading of Andrews and Bonta's (2003) text in relation to the problem of violence. This critical reading begins with the development of a theoretical context for analysis. A subsequent analysis of the text focuses on three prominent discursive themes: a construction of the text's rational empiricism, of its advocating for treatment over punishment of offenders, and of the tension between critical and mainstream accounts of psychology in criminal justice settings. The relationship of these themes to discourses of violence is discussed.
Acknowledgements

Acknowledging only those who have contributed directly to the production of this thesis does not give a fair account of who has contributed most, because my being in a position to start it in the first place was due to the support, forbearance and teaching of many others. Since there are so many who have taught me or helped me in so many different ways, all I can do here is acknowledge the few who are still alive in body and have *always* been there for me: my kind, patient grandmother, my brilliant, genial father, and my wise, passionate uncle. Nevertheless I remember many others as I write this, with love and gratitude.

This thesis was supervised by Mandy Morgan and Leigh Coombes, and nothing I can say here would do justice to their contribution: it has been a great privilege to have been blessed with their company and tuition over the course of the thesis. At every stage of the process and in all respects they exceeded my highest expectations of graduate supervision, and I will always be grateful for their theoretical and technical advice, their readiness to teach about the process as well as the material, and their general support and encouragement.

I am also privileged to have had the opportunity to study at the School of Psychology at Massey University, and I am thankful for the financial assistance provided through the Massey University Masterate Scholarship. I also acknowledge the Gentoo Linux community and the contributors to OpenOffice.org for providing the free software with which this thesis was produced.

Lynley Hayward has been my closest friend and most trusted advisor throughout this project, and it would not have been possible without her encouragement and support. In this sense she is its co-author. Thanks also to Tylea, and to others who have been so patient with my being so busy. Māu tēnā kīwai o te kete, māku tēnei.
Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................................ 1

The Problem of Violence .......................................................................................... 1

The Text ..................................................................................................................... 3

Psychology and the Criminal Justice System ......................................................... 5

Critical Psychology .................................................................................................. 7

Methodological Strategy .......................................................................................... 9

Analysis .................................................................................................................... 14

Theoretical Context ................................................................................................. 14

Background to Positivism ....................................................................................... 15

Developments in Empiricism .................................................................................. 21

Problems with Positivism ....................................................................................... 26

The Linguistic Turn ................................................................................................... 31

Social Constructionism ........................................................................................... 38

Discourse and Power ............................................................................................... 42

Panopticism ............................................................................................................... 50

Postmodernity .......................................................................................................... 57

Relativism .................................................................................................................. 70

Postexistentialism ..................................................................................................... 78

Critical Psychology as Non-violent Praxis ............................................................. 81

Summary of Theoretical Position .......................................................................... 87

Close Reading .......................................................................................................... 88

Rational Empiricism ............................................................................................... 88

Treatment or Punishment ......................................................................................... 91

Sociology as Antipsychology .................................................................................... 97

Discussion ............................................................................................................... 113

References .............................................................................................................. 118