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An Initial Assessment of the Importance of Responsivity Factors in Rehabilitative Treatment for High-Risk, Persistent, Violent Adult Male Offenders : A Review and Meta Analysis of Global Treatment Programmes

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree in Masters of

Arts
in
Psychology

at Massey University
New Zealand.

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2013

ABSTRACT

Whilst considerable attention has been placed on researching what contributes to a fall in reoffending, this has been limited to younger, lower risk male offenders and focussed on risk and criminogenic needs. Little research exists about the less easily measured process factors which address the Responsivity principle and even less about what is effective with the highest risk violent adult male offenders.

However much information has been published about the characteristics of such men and interpersonal difficulties and complex needs would both seem to be significant responsivity issues to engaging successfully in treatment. This thesis offers a preliminary exploration into the impact of attention to the therapeutic alliance and the flexibility of treatment to respond to individual needs. An associated issue is whether non completion rates are linked to each of these factors and subsequent reoffending rates.

The statistical significance of this meta analysis suffers from a small numbers of studies with this high risk population and a lack of reporting of quality information about these matters. To this end a systematic review of studies is appended to assist the reader to have a fuller picture.

The aim of this study is to invite more interest to understanding the responsivity principle in action. Consistently over the past 30 years studies report very modest treatment effect sizes for a wide range of offenders. Presumably better treatment outcome rates are possible. If treatment effect sizes are to increase, one course of action could be to experiment with the under explored areas of responsivity. Another possibility is to examine the extreme outliers in treatment effects and understand the reasons for these. Both of these approaches are incorporated in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been inspired by the men and women I have worked with in the past and continue to work with. Your courage to face what needs to change in your lives and the trust that you have and continue to place in our therapeutic alliance, has enriched my life and my clinical practice.

To my supervisor, Dr Mei Wah Williams and the extremely helpful and generous Harvey Jones, thank you for your assistance in getting this writing to fruition.

To my whanau here and in Otautahi, much aroha and thanks for your support, encouragement and belief in me and this work.

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