

Serious Mental Illness, Substance Use Disorder, and Criminal Thinking in Offenders in Community Settings: Implications for Policy and Practice

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Track: Clinical

Level: Intermediate

Room: TBD

CE: CPA/BBS/BRN (1.5)

Narrative

The scientific “mad or bad?” debate dates back to asylums of the European Enlightenment era. Although science has advanced our understanding of the intersection of criminality and mental illness in offenders, practitioners and policy makers largely do not only fail to engage in this debate, they also fall short of significantly lowering recidivism in mentally disordered offenders. Mentally disordered offenders have some of the highest recidivism rates among all offender populations, in part because they also have high rates of a co-occurring substance use disorder. However, interventions that aim at improving their mental health and leading to more stability, which is currently the focus of many interventions in the criminal justice sector, have not yielded significant improvements in recidivism rates for this group. Different scholarly inquiries have been conducted into practices that can effectively lower recidivism in mentally disordered offenders, particularly those that engage in violent behavior. To date, CBT, social learning and cognitive skills approaches along with DBT, anger management and psychiatric medications have received *some* support in the literature but results tend to be mixed. Moreover, many providers are limited in their ability to provide these interventions because they often have to hire inexperienced and inadequately trained staff due to funding restrictions and labor market fluctuations. Moreover, clinical staff are not well trained to target criminal thinking and attitudes because it is generally outside of their scope of education and practice. Universities and colleges offering clinical education programs have yet to recognize the importance of incorporating criminogenic risks and needs, risk-need-responsivity models and the like, in working with psychiatric patients who are also offenders. In California, changes in laws and policies have resulted in a close collaboration between the criminal justice sector---courts, judges, attorneys, law enforcement agencies -- and treatment providers of mental health and substance use services. Representatives of both sides naturally focus on different aspects when working with mentally disordered offenders. To be able to foster a more effective treatment and reentry landscape, treatment providers need to realize that providing mental health services alone does not effectively target criminal thinking and attitudes in mentally disordered offenders. To be effective, they must find ways to incorporate interventions they have not been trained and/or contracted to deliver. Similarly, law enforcement and prosecution have to acknowledge that punishment through detention and incarceration will do little to treat and stabilize the offender’s mental health and that interventions that target their criminal thinking and attitudes may not be deliverable when the offender is struggling with symptoms that stem from their mental disorder. Law enforcement, courts, Probation Officers and other criminal justice staff may mistake behavior that results from the offenders’ mental disorder as criminal in nature, and treatment staff may mistake behavior that stems from criminal thinking and attitudes as symptomatic of the offender’s mental disorder. Creating systems where all involved parties are able to meaningfully exchange information, collaborate and create satisfying outcomes for everyone seems to be a

daunting task but efforts are underway. San Diego County started the “Justice Involved Services Training Academy” (JISTA) several years ago to bring both sides closer and start training treatment providers on criminogenic risks and needs that are not typically targeted by treatment.

BIO

Mona Minton, PhD

Mona Minton is the General Manager of Programs and Clinics at The Neighborhood House Association located in San Diego, CA. She has an extensive background working with children, adolescence, adults and older Americans struggling with chemical dependency, homelessness, life skills and mental health disorders.

Mona speaks and understands multiple languages (English, Spanish, Hindi and Gujarati) and currently serves on 6 committees throughout the East/Central San Diego and North County regions, lending her expertise to address a variety of socio-economic, gender and cultural issues. While working for other organizations such as Circle of Friends, Department of Family Services, North County Serenity House, Mental Health Clinics and Psychiatric Units, State Prisons, and San Diego County Jails, Mona has made significant contributions in women and men’s prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery programs.

Born and raised in India until age 8, she is passionate about improving the quality of life for women, children and families. Her multi-cultural background enables her to view treatment options from varying perspectives that address socio-economic, gender inequality and stereotypes common to women of color.

With over 18 years of experience in clinical research and development, Mona is accustomed to working with diverse groups such as but not limited to the homeless and incarcerated population, and changing demographics that provide counseling and supportive services for drug and alcohol dependency, domestic violence, sex offenders, adolescence support, trauma and mental health.

Mona has experience working with the judicial system as an advocate for children, battered men, women and older Americans. She worked with the Child Protective Custody Department of Family Services of Las Vegas for five years and has four years of experience working at the High Desert State Prison in Las Vegas. She has also worked with San Diego County jails for over 7 years, all of which, she feels has broadened her understanding of individual’s issues as it relates to incarceration, reentry, recidivism and post re-release linkages.

After being inspired by her own personal experiences of drug use, 13 years in recovery, being in and out of court systems, family relationships, trauma and being a cancer survivor, Mona remains dedicated to men and women’s wellness, family advocacy and sharing her expertise with those in need.

Mona has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy.

Andrea Dauber-Griffin, PhD

Andrea Dauber-Griffin is the Senior Program Director of Project In-Reach and Project In-Reach Ministry at the Neighborhood House Association. The In-Reach programs provide pre-release

engagement, discharge planning and post-release wrap around services to offenders with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders in County custody.

Andrea has a background in research, teaching and coaching and has focused her energy on applying her theoretical and practical knowledge to advancing policies and programs to improve services for individuals living with serious mental illness in San Diego County detention facilities. She is passionate about policy and advocacy and has fostered closer collaboration between the San Diego and Los Angeles Reentry Roundtables. As a member of the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, she has set out to explore how Sociology can contribute perspectives and knowledge to developing clinical interventions for communities, organizations and groups.

Andrea has a Ph.D. in Sociology and a Masters in American and Slavic Studies. She is working towards her Masters in Forensic Psychology.

Learning Objectives

1. List criminogenic risk and needs
2. Identify criminal thinking patterns
3. Analyze recent research on the integration of criminality and serious mental illness in mentally disordered offenders
4. Describe the difficulties associated with treating mentally disordered offenders in criminal justice/treatment settings from a structural point of view instead of a clinical point of view
5. Describe examples of offender behavior that may be understood as exhibition of symptoms of a mental disorder or as criminal conduct