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Criminal Psychology
A Critical Textual Analysis

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Abstract

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.

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