

Based on george parks

Law, Criminology



Based on George Parks (2007) December article for Correction Today, the application of Relapse Prevention Therapy (RPT) as a primary cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) in corrections and recidivism . He recognizes that RP affords the implementation of evidenced based interventions in corrections but requires further refinement if it is to be expanded from its current application in offender programming. This would require further testing of RP programs and more importantly, a philosophical shift in criminal programs for the effectiveness of rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Criminality is an issue that is continuing concern of any society. Considering the evidence suggesting the increase in repeat offenders and the degree of their crime, the demand to develop effective recidivism programs is well justified. Parks (2007) discusses RPT clearly and provides significant information regarding its application prevailing principles and practices in its application. However, though his discussion on the impact of RPT and related CBT based interventions, he does not provide statistical or actual performance evidence. Though this does not imply that his opinion is less valid, the urgency and importance of the issue would have been better communicated with the presentation of such data.

Parks himself recognizes the need for new perspectives and insights to the issue of not only corrections and recidivism but also corrections and social support for offenders. There have been a numbers of suggestions to address the issue including the contradictions to RPT such as the increase in punitive measures for offenders.

In the case of restorative justice programs, there has been a similar increase in the support for their application but there has been hesitation on their full implementation because of perceived risks and the management participation on inmates. RPT has an advantage over other perspectives since there is already substantial evidence of its effectivity and relatively has lower risks since people involved in the interventions are limited to offenders' corrections and parole officers.

The research's orientation reflects a psychological perspective as evidenced by the focus on CBT approaches. It should be noted that orientation does not exclude other orientations, as it is apparent from Park's discussion that he recognizes the value of various perspectives in the development of recidivism programs. For example, he sites that crime cycles should be studied based on the conditions that create offense scenarios which include social, political and criminological perspectives or orientations.

The theoretical framework utilized by Park combines sociology and psychology. The latter is apparent in the programs the areas of correction he sees the potential for the application for RPT. This puts an emphasis on psychological strategies, indicated by his recommendation of CBT and CBT-based programs including RPT as well as Helen Annis's structured relapse prevention (SRP).

However, the actual intervention proposed utilizes sociological frameworks for implementation. He believes that there is significant change that offenders will be able to reform if they are able to learn the impact of their actions, their responsibility for it and the need for criminal justice programs to

apply penalties for those who offend them. Park's orientation also indicates his support for sociogenic collaborative programs in corrections and criminal recidivism.

Park's theoretical perspective and research orientation are consistent with each other. Like any other author or researcher, his research orientation is based on the theoretical perspective he employs in developing the study. Thus, the assumption that the researcher employs for the research are reflected in the orientation of the study, the way the collaborations for the program are constructed or are to operate and the determination of the desired outcomes of the programs. In the same way, an insight to the theoretical perspective of the author allows credible estimates to how the research will approach the subject matter.

The literature review completed by Park and his opinion of them reflect his theoretical perspective and research orientation. In particular, his citation of the works of Annis, David Wexler, James McGuire, John A. Cunningham, Edward Zamble and of course the proponent of RPT, G. Alan Marlatt.

Though Park does not make any distinct or overt contrary position against any research mentioned or otherwise in his studies, he constantly reiterates his belief of the need for further studies before extensive application of RPT can be done. One point he points out is the lack of large-scale cohort studies to support the intensified application of RPT in recidivism.

As previously mentioned, one of the limitations of Park's study is the lack of quantitative data. Though considering the extent of the assessment he made of the existing literature, there is sufficient corroboration for the regard he

has for RPT, CBT-based programs and the existing researches for the subject. Park's analysis of the research and its related issues and concerns reflects his own extensive research and interest in the issue.

His insights and conclusions are not surprising because similar conclusions about corrections, rehabilitation and recidivism are reflected in other researches. However, unlike some opinions on the issue, Park believes that offenders should be given allow the opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration. His sentiment is not just for humanitarian reasons but also recognized that the success of such interventions will reduce demands for correction facilities and programs.

Written for popular readership, the research is quiet effective in delivering the need for correction and rehabilitation programs for offenders that will allow them to become productive and law-abiding members of society.

Considering this, then Park's avoidance of statistical or technical terms in RPT or CBT may be deliberate so as not to overwhelm his audience.

Furthermore, this supports his objective of communicating the issue as social concern that needs collaborations of various social institutions as well as the public.

The construction of Park's arguments first highlights the significance of RPT in criminal justice systems then reflects the importance of the issue in society and among individual members of it. He points out that the objective of any criminal justice system is should go beyond apprehending and punishing offenders and extends to efforts that offenders are able to reform and become productive members of society. He then enumerates the

requirements for the development of RPT programs that support these objectives and the insights that can be developed from existing research.

In this article, Park contributes to readers' understanding of the developing issue in corrections and recidivism, the perspective or researches being developed regarding it, and the potential of utilizing CBT-based interventions such as RPT. It highlights the need to review the relevance of programs and to streamline strategies to maximize the resources of criminal justice programs. There is also the realization of the increasing emphasis in rehabilitation of offenders instead of punitive measures which in turn reflects changes in social perspectives on criminality and corrections management.

Park's research is to be commended in its effort to reach a wider audience for an issue that has often been considered as a concern exclusively to the criminal justice field. Furthermore, his emphasis on the development of research, testing and collaborative programs lend a strong foundation as well as frameworks for the development of programs and interventions. The issue of recidivism, crime and rehabilitation is presented as an issue that affects all member of society not only offenders or their victims. In conclusion, Park's work should be considered as an important foundation for further researchers on the topic and provides ample foundation for the analysis and development of RPT applications in criminal justice programs.

REFERENCE

Parks, George A. (2007). New approaches to using relapse prevention therapy in the criminal justice system. *Corrections Today* 69(6) December: 46(4)