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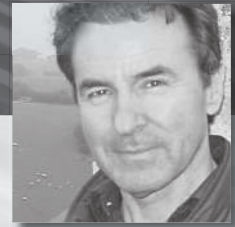
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# PROMOTING HUMAN GOODS AND REDUCING RISK

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## Introduction

Rehabilitation should be concerned with equipping offenders with the capabilities and values to live prosocial and personally meaningful lives. This depends on the acquisition of accurate knowledge of the social and physical world, development of a robust understanding of their own values and standards, the ability to pursue their own personal good in specific environments, and being able to utilise the resources they require to overcome routine obstacles in the pursuit of that good. These two sets of capacities are embedded in a narrative identity that reflects peoples' commitments, personal projects or goals, and subsequent activities. Narratives are stories of past experience and sets of expectations about future experiences and lives. They both guide the actions of individuals and shape their experiences and lives (Kekes, 1993; Ward & Stewart, 2003). A person's sense of who he is emerges from his personal projects and activities in the world.

In brief, human beings have the ability to shape or create themselves to a certain degree depending on their values, abilities, knowledge, opportunities, and resources. Thus a viable narrative identity crucially depends on individuals' capabilities, resources and opportunities. It spells out the kind of commitments a person has, what is of importance to him, and ultimately what kind of person he becomes. At the heart of narrative identities are values of various types: basic commitments and their associated strategies for living. In truth, rehabilitation is a deeply value laden enterprise (Ward & Marshall, in press; Ward & Stewart, 2003).

The possibility of changing the way offenders behave is once again on policy and political agendas and signals the reemergence of a more constructive approach to crime. In fact, the shift from a strictly punishment model to one that incorporates rehabilitation is arguably

one of the most significant events in recent correctional policy (Gendreau, 1996).

## The Debate

Despite the change heralded above, the issue of offender rehabilitation is a controversial and contested one. The flashpoints include debate over the effectiveness of rehabilitation and claims that even if treatment does reduce reoffending, offenders do not deserve the opportunity to learn new skills and ultimately a chance at better lives. Instead, the argument goes, they should be humanely contained and the focus of sentencing on retribution rather than treatment.

In my experience such exchanges revolve around two fundamental attitudes toward crime and individuals

who offend: (a) the view that offenders are outsiders, moral strangers who do not merit any empathy or concern and therefore whose interests are of peripheral concern when designing intervention programmes, and (b) the view that offenders are essentially human beings and as such deserve the chance to redeem themselves and to live worthwhile and better lives. Both sets of attitudes are evident in the various arenas of the correctional system, penetrating to the core of containment and rehabilitation policies (Garland, 2001). In my experience, this level of analysis is often missed and therefore commentators frequently fail to get to the heart of the issue of rehabilitation and its discontents. Fundamentally, it is a matter of human interests, rights, and goods.

## The Risk Management Perspective

The first attitude toward offenders is associated with policies concerned with risk detection and management, the focus is squarely on estimating the degree to which individuals constitute a menace to the community and then setting out to reduce or minimise their risk factors in the most cost efficient manner. Individuals are viewed as *bearers of risk*, potential agents of harm or hazards. The rehabilitation approach most closely aligned to the risk management perspective is the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model (RNR-Andrews & Bonta, 2003). Indeed, as stated above, empirical research supports the utility of the RNR of offender treatment, a perspective that focuses primarily on the management of risk (Andrews & Bonta, 1998).

The assumptions underlying the RNR model are well established in criminal justice agencies and non-government agencies throughout the western world to the point where it can be regarded as the received or orthodox position concerning rehabilitation. In essence, the RNR proposes that correctional interventions should be structured according to three core rehabilitation principles: risk, need, and responsivity (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Hollin, 1999). Perhaps the most well known rehabilitation assumption is that the most effective and ethical approach to the treatment of offenders is to target *dynamic risk factors* (i.e., criminogenic needs) that are causally related to criminal behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; Hanson, 2001). This is termed the *need* principle. A second important guiding assumption is the *risk* principle which specifies that the treatment of offenders ought to be organised according to the level of risk they pose to society. That is, the higher the level of the risk the greater the dosage or intensity of

treatment should be. The third major assumption is the *responsivity* principle which is primarily concerned with the problem of matching the delivery of correctional interventions to certain characteristics of offenders, for example, motivation, learning style, and ethnic identity. The intent of the responsivity principle is to ensure that therapeutic and other types of correctional interventions are implemented in a way that is likely to make sense to offenders and thus enable them to absorb the program content and make the changes necessary in their lives to desist from further offending.

There is a growing acceptance that there are psychological and social variables reliably associated with offending and its reduction. Offenders have a number of skill deficits and life problems that can be successfully resolved through participation in structured therapeutic programmes utilising the principles of the RNR model. Despite some dissenting views (e.g. Whitehead & Lab, 1990), most recent comprehensive reviews of what works in the correctional domain agree that some types of rehabilitation programmes are particularly effective in reducing reoffending rates (e.g. Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Andrews & Dowden, 2005).

## Critical Comments

Despite the strengths of the RNR, clinicians and researchers have recently challenged certain aspects of this approach and argued that concentrating on reducing dynamic risk factors (criminogenic needs) is a *necessary* but *not sufficient* condition for effective correctional interventions (Ellerby, Bedard, & Chartrand, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Ward & Stewart, 2003). One of the major concerns is the perceived narrowness of the RNR model and its failure to adopt a more constructive or positive approach to treatment. It has been argued that it is necessary to broaden the scope of correctional interventions to take into account the promotion of human goods. That is, experiences, activities, or states of affairs that are strongly associated with the well-being and higher levels of personal satisfaction and social functioning.

Researchers, clinicians and correctional workers who are critical of the RNR model point to its rather impoverished nature and inability to provide those involved with rehabilitation with sufficient tools to engage and work with offenders in the process of behaviour change. What they mean by this claim is that a set of principles that are essentially oriented toward risk management and the allocation of scarce rehabilitation

resources are unlikely to help deal with the complexities and demands of forensic practice.

In brief, those critical of the RNR model assert that: (a) motivating offenders by concentrating on eliminating or modifying their various dynamic risk factors is extremely difficult. One thing individuals want to know is how can they live better lives, what are the positive rewards in desisting from crime?; (b) the RNR model tends to neglect or underemphasise the role of narrative identity and agency (i.e., self-directed, intentional actions designed to achieve valued goals) in the change process. Thus an important component of living an offence-free life appears to be viewing oneself as a different person with the capabilities and opportunities to achieve personally endorsed goals; (c) the RNR model appears to be associated with a rather restricted and scientifically obsolete view of human nature. It seems to ignore the established fact that human beings are biologically embodied organisms who quite naturally seek and require certain kinds of experiences and activities (i.e., human goods) in order to live balanced and personally fulfilling lives; (d) the RNR model does not appreciate the relevance and crucial role of treatment alliance in the therapeutic process. Any type of enduring change depends on the capacity of the offender to trust his or her therapist enough to absorb the skills and “lessons” imparted in therapy. This means that despite the claims of proponents of the RNR model, so-called noncriminogenic needs such as personal distress and low self-esteem are essential clinical targets; failure to address them is likely to result in a weak therapeutic alliance. Researchers have demonstrated that the creation of a sound therapeutic alliance requires an array of interventions that are not directly concerned with targeting risk and it has been established that a good therapeutic alliance is a necessary feature of effective therapy with offenders; (e) the RNR model is fundamentally a psychometric model (i.e., derived from and in part based on data from reliable and valid measures of criminal behaviour) and tends to be preoccupied with offenders’ risk profiles (or traits) and downplays the relevance of contextual or ecological factors in offender rehabilitation. This is a serious mistake and ignores the fact that offenders like all human beings are embedded in various social and cultural systems that facilitate and constrain their behaviour; and finally (f) the RNR model is often implemented in practice in a “one size fits all” manner and fails to adequately consider the specific needs, values, and issues of individual offenders. Indeed, the typical way in which the RNR model is operationalised is at

variance with its own principle of responsibility! At the very least, the fact that the RNR model is implemented in a large scale, heavily manualised and prescriptive manner makes it hard to accommodate the unique characteristics of offenders. In its most inappropriate form the RNR model is translated into a psycho-educational format where offenders are “taught” how to behave in a heavily didactic and counterproductive way (Green, 1995).

## The Good Lives Perspective

The second attitude toward offenders takes a more humanistic stance toward the explanation of crime and the reintegration of offenders. According to this perspective in the course of their daily lives offenders, like all other people, attempt to secure beneficial outcomes such as good relationships, a sense of mastery, and recognition from others that they matter (Ward & Gannon, 2006; Ward & Stewart, 2003). The claim is that offences rarely occur simply because individuals are unable to control themselves or because they want to wreck other people’s lives just for the thrill of it (Maruna, 2001). There is characteristically a purpose, a logic in what offenders do and why they do it. In short, offending can reflect the search for certain kinds of experiences; namely, the attainment of specific goals or goods. Furthermore, offenders’ personal strivings express their sense of who they are and what they would like to become. Narrative identities, for offenders and for all people, are constituted from the pursuit and achievement of personal goals (Bruner, 1990; Singer, 2005). This feature of offending renders it more intelligible and in a sense, more human. It reminds us that effective treatment should aim to provide alternative means for achieving human goods.

Just how successful individuals are in the construction of adaptive identities is crucially dependent on whether or not they possess the necessary capabilities, resources, and opportunities (internal and external conditions) to secure personally valued goals in certain circumstances. One of the advantages of looking at offending in richer and more constructive manner is that it is able to reconcile risk and goods orientated discourses. For example, criminogenic needs (dynamic risk factors) can be viewed as representing distortions or omissions in these necessary conditions; risk assessment points to obstacles in the quest for a good and satisfying life (Ward & Stewart, 2003). Because individuals are naturally predisposed to desire, and require, certain types of human goods for a fulfilling and satisfactory life, they

will still attempt to secure them despite the presence of such obstacles. This can result in dysfunctional or antisocial behaviour.

The standpoint that human beings are agents who assemble narrative identities, and engage in personal projects based on these identities, indicates that they have some degree of plasticity and the ability to shape their lives and circumstances. Furthermore, such identities once created, are *dynamic* and responsive to the varying contexts in which people live their lives. In short, individuals extract ideas and skills from social and cultural resources (e.g., webs of meaning, tools, supports) to construct a sense of who they are and what really matters to them (Woolfolk, 1998). Woolfolk states that “Each human life is ineluctably enmeshed in a web of meaning. The meanings we attach to our beliefs and behaviour are integral to them” (1998, p69). Furthermore he asserts that all of us are “partially constituted by our self-narratives, we are historical, moral, and aesthetic works in progress” (p103).

The array of attitudes and assumptions comprising more constructive views of rehabilitation is evident in theories of rehabilitation such as the good lives model (Ward & Gannon, 206; Ward & Stewart, 2003).

## Good Lives Model

The Good Lives Model (GLM) is a theory of rehabilitation that endorses the viewpoint that offenders are essentially human beings with similar needs and aspirations to non-offending members of the community. The GLM is based around two core therapeutic goals: to promote human goods and to reduce risk. According to Ward and his colleagues, a focus on the promotion of specific goods or goals in the treatment of offenders is likely to automatically eliminate (or reduce) commonly targeted dynamic risk factors (i.e., criminogenic needs). By contrast, Ward argues that focusing *only* on the reduction of risk factors is unlikely to promote the full range of specific goods and goals necessary for longer term desistance from offending.

According to the GLM, offenders are naturally disposed to seek a range of primary human goods that if secured will result in greater self-fulfillment and sense of purpose. In essence, a primary human good is defined as an experience, activity, or situation that is sought for its own sake and is intrinsically beneficial. The possession of primary good enhances people's lives and increases their level of functioning and personal satisfaction. The justification of personal aspirations

and actions ultimately has to stop somewhere and from the perspective of the GLM it is the existence of primary goods that provides the foundation and certainty associated with individuals' most cherished beliefs and values. Examples of primary human goods are relatedness, mastery, autonomy, creativity, physical health, and play (Emmons, 1999; Murphy, 2001; Nussbaum, 2000; Ward & Stewart, 2003). Primary goods are rather abstract and generally people do not specify them as goals when talking about the things that are most important to them. In fact what they most often refer to when asked about their reasons for acting in certain ways or engaging in personal projects are the *means* utilised in the attempt to achieve certain outcomes. Thus, instrumental goods are means for achieving primary human goods and only have value because of their association with the former. For example, the primary good of relatedness could be sought through different types of personal relationships such as friendships or romantic relationships. The available research indicates that all primary goods need to be present in individuals' lives to some extent if they are to achieve high levels of well-being (e.g., Emmons, 1999). However, there is also room for individual preferences with respect to the weighting of the various goods. It is typically the case that individuals vary in the importance they accord to the various goods with some placing greater importance on mastery at work and others on feeling connected to the community. This is an important issue because the differential weighting of a good tends to reveal peoples' core commitments and therefore is indicative of their narrative identity. Quite literally, our fundamental value commitments give shape and direction to our lives. Individuals' overarching or more heavily weighted goods reveal the kind of person they wish to be, and the kind of lives they want. This claim is dependent on the assumption that to some degree people are *self-constituting*, that is, they create themselves by the way they lead their lives and the meanings they attach to their experiences.

A good example of the relationship between identity and goods emphasis is those individuals who weigh the primary good of mastery at work highly. Such individuals tend to cultivate the development of work-related expertise and look for opportunities to tackle difficult problems and to impress others with their commitment and achievements. Therefore, it is to be expected that he or she would prize attributes and experiences that are closely associated with this good. These would include spending time at work, being engaged in further training and skill enhancement opportunities, being a good communicator (depending on the job),

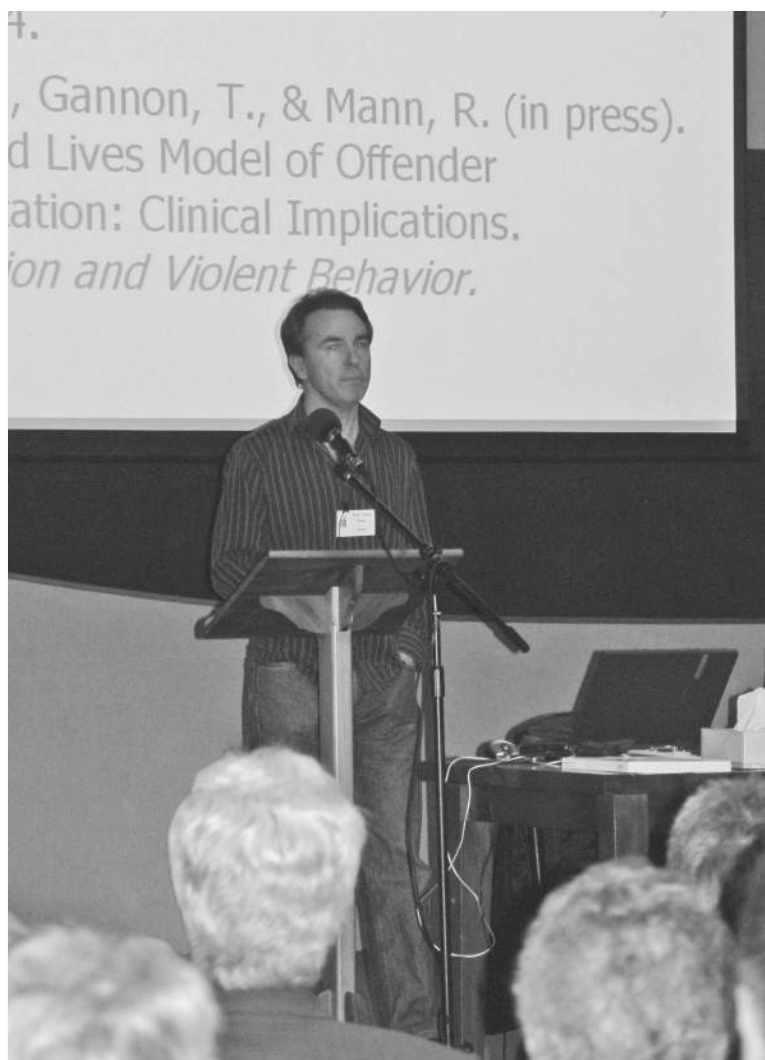
developing a strong sense of fidelity at work, wanting to be viewed as reliable and competent and so on. These activities and experiences, in turn, serve to constitute the person's narrative identity: by pursuing experiences and activities that realise the good of mastery at work, the person *becomes* a certain type of individual with specific interests, lifestyle, and goals. This is a fluid, dynamic process that draws upon each individual's personal memories and repertoire of meanings and also the opportunities and cultural resources available to him (Woolfolk, 1998). Thus, an individual living in a violent and impoverished neighbourhood may struggle to find prosocial social ways of living and thus little chance of

constructing a more adaptive identity. The presence of negative and *false* gender (e.g., males are "hard" and emotionally controlling), class (e.g., if you are poor, there is no escape), or racial (e.g., Maori are violent by nature) stereotypes means that there may be little opportunity to construct a different view of himself and others. There may be few discursive (meaning creating resources: norms, knowledge, practices) and material resources he can utilise in the hope of turning his life around.

## Summary

In summary, the GLM has a twin focus with respect to therapy with sexual offenders: (a) promoting goods and (b) managing/reducing risk. What this means is that a

major aim is to equip the offender with the skills, values, attitudes, and resources necessary to lead a different kind of life, one that is personally meaningful and satisfying and does not involve inflicting harm on children or



adults. In other words, a life that has the basic primary goods, and ways of effectively securing them, built into it. These aims reflect the etiological assumptions of the GLM that offenders are either directly seeking basic goods through the act of offending or else commit an offence because of the indirect effects of a pursuit of basic goods. Furthermore, according to the GLM, risk factors represent omissions or distortions in the internal and external

conditions required to implement a good lives plan in a specific set of environments. Installing the internal conditions (i.e., skills, values, beliefs) and the external conditions (resources, social supports, opportunities) is likely to reduce or eliminate each individual's set of criminogenic needs.

This rather brief examination of two broad approaches to offender rehabilitation indicates the importance of offenders establishing more adaptive narrative identities if they are to desist from further criminal activities. According to the GLM, therapists should concentrate on equipping individuals with the capabilities to secure primary goods in a personally satisfying and socially acceptable manner. This is essentially an evaluative and capacity building process.

## Narrative Identity and the Treatment of Offenders

But what are the implications of the GLM's emphasis on narrative identity for offender rehabilitation? In other words, how does the focus on values and capabilities impact on the assessment and treatment of offenders? First, treatment should be directed at the individual agent within his social ecology not at criminogenic needs per se. Criminogenic needs are used to indicate problems in the internal and/or external conditions required to implement good lives plans (i.e., fashion a new narrative identity). But they only serve to indicate what capabilities and social factors should be supplied in order to allow a person to live a better life. One that is inherently more fulfilling and socially acceptable. Values are directly involved in the assessment and treatment of offenders. Second, the assumption that there is a plurality of goods necessary for a good life and that individuals can legitimately vary in the importance they place on each of the goods, means that individual choice and preferences are important treatment considerations.

Third, if offenders' pursuit of primary goods (values) is directly or indirectly associated with their offending, then it stands to reason that alternative more adaptive ways of achieving these goods should be introduced. Fourth, accepting that the offender is a psychological agent with his own views about what is important to him means that it is imperative for therapists to cultivate attitudes of respect and openness. While it is clear that committing harmful acts toward others may diminish offenders' rights, their status as human beings with a certain basic value remains intact. Thus it is necessary for therapists to explicitly set out to create a sound therapeutic alliance and to monitor carefully their attitudes and personal responses to offenders. Failure to do this can result in punitive and ultimately ineffective practices. Effective therapy involves working positively with offenders.

### Case Examples

I would like to make my position more concrete by discussing two examples of the link between identities and offending from our own clinical experience. I worked with a man who obtained enormous satisfaction from teaching and shaping his step-daughter's personality and behaviour. He saw himself as a psychological architect who literally designed and created his step-daughter. The goods of mastery, creativity, and autonomy were directly

associated with this domination which ultimately lead to his sexual offending. The fact that these goods were realised in the domination and control of his step-daughter also points to the lack of material and personal resources in his life. That is, he did not appear to have the skills and opportunities to seek these goods in more socially acceptable ways. Another example concerns a man who sought relatedness and intimacy with vulnerable children. He saw himself as a caring, giving, and loving individual who could heal distressed and abused children. The goods of relatedness and mastery were directly involved and the image of himself as a kind of social worker was casually implicated in his sexually abusive behaviour. The fact that he was unduly suspicious of adults and also was relatively socially isolated meant that the interpersonal and personal resources required to achieve these important goods in socially acceptable ways were missing.

In both these examples the pursuit of primary goods in dysfunctional ways was linked to narrative identities. In the case of the former offender he considered himself a creative and dynamic individual who needed to express his feelings and aspirations. While the latter person's self-image was centred on what he considered to be his loving and caring nature. The successful management and treatment of both these men would be greatly facilitated by accepting the importance of their primary goods and associated narrative identities, but finding more socially acceptable ways of realising them – for example, by providing alternative ways of caring for others (adults!) and outlets for the need to teach and train other people. This means appreciating the need to focus on equipping both men with the psychological capabilities to pursue their various life plans or projects in personally meaningful ways (internal conditions), and also taking pains to ensure that their social environments support these initiatives (external conditions). The latter factor points to the need to work actively with the relevant community and social networks. Because the construction of narrative identity is an interpersonal and fluid process it is always necessary to work with the individuals concerned in their social and cultural contexts. It is in these contexts that offenders can establish meaningful relationships and draw upon the available discursive and material resources to help them in their attempts to desist from further offending (Maruna, 2001).

## Conclusions

I suggest that an adequate rehabilitation theory should be consistent with the features of human identity and functioning noted above. Strength based approaches such as the Good lives Model of offender rehabilitation focus on (a) the utilisation of individual offenders' primary goods or values in the design of treatment programmes and (b) aim to equip them with the internal and external conditions necessary to implement a life plan or project founded on these values. Offenders are psychological agents who want what most of us want, a chance at a life that expresses their fundamental commitments and hopes. We have been so intent on thinking about how to reduce offending and its destructive consequences that we have overlooked a rather fundamental truth: offenders want better lives not simply the promise of less harmful ones!

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