

# Crime Scene

## *Psychology Behind Bars and In Front of the Bench*

The Official Organ of the Criminal Justice Section of the Canadian Psychological Association

---

---

### **Section Executive:**

#### *President*

Daryl Kroner, Ph.D.  
KronerDG@csc-scc.gc.ca

#### *Secretary/Treasurer*

Karl Hanson, Ph.D.  
HansonK@sgc.gc.ca

#### *Past President*

David Nussbaum, Ph.D.  
David\_Nussbaum@camh.net

#### *Editor Crime Scene*

Jeremy Mills, Ph.D.  
MillsJF@csc-scc.gc.ca

#### *Student Representative*

Joseph Camilleri  
camilleri\_j@hotmail.com

#### *Directors at Large*

J. Stephen Wormith, Ph.D.  
wormith@duke.usask.ca

#### *Carson Smiley, Ph.D.*

SmileyWC@csc-scc.gc.ca

#### *Doug Boer, Ph.D.*

BoerDO@csc-scc.gc.ca

---

---

## What's Inside

### **Editor's Note**

### **View from the Top ~ President's Comments**

Babblefuddlements

### **Submission**

Actuarial methods in risk appraisal: Not all Lawn Mowers are created equal

by Douglas P. Boer, Ph.D.

### **Recently Defended Ph.D. Thesis**

Active encouragement: Perceived coercion into correctional treatment.  
by David J. C. Kolton, Ph.D.

### **Recent Publications**

### **Introducing Craig Bennell, Carleton University**

### **Members on the Move**

### **Upcoming Conference on Specialized Services for Sexually Abusive Youth**

---

---

## **The Editor's View**

We are a little late in distributing this issue of Crime Scene. Unfortunately, we had to wait a

little for some incoming contributions. Speaking of contributions, we had little forwarded to us for the current issue. I will assume it is because everyone has been busy and they will be forwarding to us their accomplishments very soon.

This issue has a response to Vern Quinsey's "The Parable of the Mower". We certainly look forward to a discussion of current issues in Crime Scene, so if you see something you would like to weigh in on by all means drop us line.

Meanwhile, consider making a contribution to the next issue that will be due out in late April.

JM

---



---

## View from the Top

Daryl Kroner, *President*

### Criminal Justice Knowledge and Babblefuddlements

There are two questions, and their respective answers, with which we as Psychologists need to contend. Whether we are just starting out or well down the psychology path, responses to these questions should be periodically pondered. First, how much do we know? And from this, what should be communicated?

The second question may appear to be straightforward, and we would like everyone to cling to what we say with the sweet reasonableness of a terrier dog. But determining what should be communicated can be quite difficult given a couple of factors. One, not all psychological knowledge is meaningful to the issue at hand. Second, the only opportunity to communicate your knowledge is going to be when your content is considered by others to be "hot" (a reversal of McLuhan).

These two questions are not new, but sorting through and answering these two questions forces us into some reflective thought. Such an

exercise with these two questions is made more difficult by the plethora of information out there, which by itself contributes to greater uncertainty of what is known.

How much do we know? The answer is simple. We do have a knowledge base. And, because of careful thought and research, this knowledge base goes beyond common sense (although it has been argued that there is not much that is common in common sense). Much has been researched about causes of crime, causes of specific crimes (such as sexual offending), risk assessment (whether a release assessment or police approaching a domestic dispute), effectiveness of programs, jury selection, public attitudes, police selection, etc.

Many findings addressing these criminal justice areas have been replicated and these results are easily accessible. These findings have increased dramatically over the last 10 years, increasing the confidence of such cumulative results and potential knowledge.

Many are the reasons why credible and useful knowledge does not make it into applied settings, some of which include power structures, one-eyed dogmatism, credibility of the messenger, incongruence of new information with old, fear of new information, etc. I want to focus only on one reason why this type of knowledge does not make it into an applied setting; that is, the arguments used by others that prevent credible and useful knowledge from dissemination and application.

These arguments, in the form of Babblefuddlements, are used by those who try to discredit what is known. What is a Babblefuddlement? First, it is an argument that is lacking in the understanding of general knowledge and the everyday role this knowledge has. Second, even though something is lacking, much is said in this state of confusion. Hence, Babblefuddlement. Below are four Babblefuddlements that have blocked the path and prevented the application of psychological

knowledge to an applied situation.

Babblefuddlement #1:

*This is a unique situation (usually "such" a unique situation) for which we need to use only extraordinary actions and interventions.*

Assumption: The information that comes to bear on this issue can only be local. Wrong. Constructs and behavioural principles are transferable from situation to situation. For example, there is generalizability of well-researched psychological constructs and principles. Knowing that a client is a psychopath will allow prediction in several situations (i.e., PCL-R predicts institutional and post-release antisocial behaviours). Social learning principles have readily been applied to criminal behaviour with considerable success, most notably in the assessment of risk to re-offend.

Babblefuddlement #2:

*Thank-you for your perspective, but you really don't understand the complexity of this situation.*

Assumption: The knowledge needed to address this issue can only be known by a few. Wrong. It has been well established that human decision making uses only two or three heuristics. Thus, even the important considerations that go into decision making can be commonly articulated and communicated to the average person. Granted, sometimes this takes considerable skill, but the point is that it's wrong to think that ideas cannot accurately represent what is going on and be understood by most people. To deny access to understanding a phenomenon results in any science being a farce.

Another slant on this Babblefuddlement is that the situation can only be understood by those who have had certain experiences. Now, this may be true of "felt understanding." But when it comes to applying ideas in an applied setting the experience cannot be the sole source of understanding.

Babblefuddlement #3:

*What you are presenting is your story and there are other stories to be told.*

Assumption: Knowledge is created and is just your construct. For whatever reason there seems to be a cutting scepticism about some sense of objective knowledge. The problem with this scepticism is that sources of information are compartmentalized without validity examination. The certainty of basic principles are questioned. Having a well-thought-out, empirically-based rationale becomes just "your" perspective. Wrong. Not all constructs are equal, and some have a stronger empirical bases than others. In the \$1/20 social psychology experiments, reinforcement theory gave way to cognitive dissonance. Try finding a consistent alternative explanation to depression!

We have mechanisms for judging the validity of constructs and the power of the data results. Now, our knowledge (even scientific knowledge) is not totally objective, or value-free. It has been well established that neutrality in scientific endeavours is a myth, but this should not detract from the validity of the knowledge.

Babblefuddlement #4

*We have no idea of what is going on, so how we frame this is the most important thing that we have to do.*

Assumption: Language and its presentation are the most fundamental part of what is going on. Wrong. This perspective reveals a deep scepticism about what we do know and leaves a group or community to construct our world. This, then, really limits the intervention options. What significant intervention can be done on a "sound bite"? The focus becomes optics at the exclusion of sound thought.

You may think that these Babblefuddlements are not all that common. Wrong. Just sit in almost

any case conference or strategic planning meeting (confession time, these Babblefuddlements came from case conferences and meetings that I have attended!). You may also think that these Babblefuddlements are not all that serious. Wrong again. If the Babblefuddlements win, there is no science-based psychology.

Where do we go from here?

In other words, what are the options? As much as some may like it, we can't go back to the view that psychology and its tools (yes, I include constructs) has the most significantly viable, empirically-based, option for producing a safer society. Nor can we sit back in a pool of relativism and do nothing to counter these Babblefuddlements.

But telling ourselves to take some middle road provides little guidance and will not do. There are some basics (i.e., assumptions) that need to be acknowledged and then goals and activities that assist in maximizing psychology's contribution to criminal justice issues.

Now for three assumptions needed to counter the above Babblefuddlements:

1. Criminal justice outcomes, as negative as they can be, have some sense of order. Outcomes (behaviours, personal decompensation, or otherwise) are not the result of randomness.
2. Having value-added knowledge (not just facts, or another perspective) of a situation is of benefit.
3. There is a Reason, a greater common good that ensures a place for such psychological knowledge: a fairer and safer society. Yes, we need to have a passion for this ideal. Just having a passion, though, without the first two assumptions in place will result in a perpetual state of Babblefuddlement #3.

From these three assumptions, we can move to

the goal and activities that enhance the development of a construct driven, empirically-based knowledge system to predict, explain, and effectively intervene in events related to the criminal justice system. Alone, more research, more findings and more results on current criminal justice issues have limited utility. The availability of data and the mechanisms of gathering data are no longer an issue (I only mention "MacArthur," a huge data set that can be downloaded - Corrections Service Canada has a similar data set). Data (once reliability has been assessed) need to be turned into knowledge, and more importantly, value-added knowledge. Assumption #3 needs to be firmly in place for such a transition into value-added knowledge to occur, and to have an impact in the applied setting. Without this, every new research finding, policy clarification, and process improvement will have *less meaning* than the previous one. Knowing what the data are for allows for the development of a value-added knowledge that can readily counter the Babblefuddlements and inform the criminal justice system.

Also, we have traditions and a history in other areas of psychology to draw upon. The process of ideas > data results > construct > knowledge > social policy can be observed. Attention to such processes will serve us well. This is not to say that we should be totally inward-looking within our discipline. To bring answers and knowledge to criminal justice issues will involve creativity, looking outside our circle, and looking sideways at current issues.

These activities and the development of successive empirically-based constructs will give us a more accurate and realistic picture of criminal justice issues. This is the only way to develop value-added knowledge for use at the decision points within the criminal justice system. It is this type of psychology that needs to be fostered and communicated.

I have one prediction; the strength of these Babblefuddlements is going to increase. If we don't counter these Babblefuddlements, we will

assume a state of Babblefuddlement, which will turn into a trait.

---

---

It seems that Dr. Vern Quinsey's parable (Structured Clinical Judgment in Risk Appraisal: An idea whose time has gone - The Parable of the Lawn Mowers) reported in our September 2002 issue has struck a chord. Below is a response with another point of view.

### **Actuarial Methods in Risk Appraisal: Not all Lawn Mowers are Created Equal – Questions for the Parabalist**

**Douglas P. Boer, Ph.D.**  
Correctional Services of Canada

Ten years ago my mother-in-law bought an unsprung “standard” lawn mower to mow her one-acre lawn. It worked o.k. although it was hard to push around her hilly yard. In the last few years her lawn has developed a mole problem and one daughter bought a horse, which trots around leaving the turf in clumps along with other goodies to mow around. The old standard mower was no longer up to the task of mowing the changing lawn. This year I bought Mamka a new lawn mower. It has the same horsepower as the old one, but is self-propelled, and has springs – well, actually no springs – but you can adjust the height with a single lever while mowing. The newer “adjustable” mower mows the lawn well – regardless of the changing surface. The salesman was paid by the hour and didn’t seem to care if I bought the older standard style or the adjustable mower.

Your parable left me wondering about a few things:

Does your unsprung standard mower (you called it “mechanical” – well – all mowers are mechanical, springs or no) account for all the vagaries in lawns or are you assuming that all lawns are pretty much the same? Are you considering adding springs to your old model to help you cut the individual lawn better? As an orthodox standard mower user, wouldn’t you profess that standard mowers were too good and the adjustable features too poor to risk contaminating the old style with the new springs?

I guess the standard lawn mower would work well on the lawns it was designed for if they remained the same over time, but what if your lawn develops a mole-problem or a neighbor wants to borrow your mower to mow his hilly lawn? Isn’t it a leap of faith to assume that the standard mower would work on all lawns – even those on which it has not been tested? For example, can you assume that your standard mower will work well on native grasses or unusually weedy but nice looking lawns when there is no proof that it will?

Finally, I’m very brand-conscious and I noticed that one brand of standard mower says it can accurately estimate that 45% of the worst lawns will need mowing again in short order, while another brand says that

100% of such lawns will be need more care in the same time period. While these numbers both appear “high”, only one brand says this is “high” – the other doesn’t and this confusing. Both brands seem to rate the re-mowing rate of the nicer lawns equally, but really differ as the lawns get nastier. Is there some way to compare these brands?

---

---

## Recently Defended Ph.D. Thesis

### Active Encouragement: Perceived Coercion into Correctional Treatment

David J. C. Kolton  
Simon Fraser University  
June, 2002

#### Abstract

One of the issues facing treatment providers in a correctional setting is that offenders may feel *forced* to take part in psychological treatment. Providing psychological intervention in a coercive environment has legal, ethical, and clinical implications, yet, there is a dearth of empirical investigation regarding the issue. This study examined coercion into treatment among 273 inmates within the Canadian federal correctional system who entered violent or sexual offender treatment programs. The aim of the study was threefold: 1) to explore the existence of perceived coercion among inmates entering correctional treatment; 2) to examine the determinants of perceived coercion; 3) to investigate the relationship between perceived coercion and treatment outcome. The MacArthur Perceived Coercion Scales, as well as measures of pressures to enter treatment, the process of entering treatment, beliefs about treatment, and social desirability were administered. Results demonstrated that the construct of perceived coercion could be measured within a correctional treatment sample. Reports of perceived coercion were found in a large proportion of the sample; however, relative to other samples, offenders entering correctional treatment did not report experiencing their entry into treatment as being highly coercive. The analyses yielded the finding that negative pressures and a lack of procedural justice were the primary determinants of perceived coercion in this sample. Positive pressures such as persuasion and inducements were the most widely reported form of influence; however, they were unrelated to perceptions of coercion. Perceptions of coercion were not related to treatment retention or performance, with exploratory analyses revealing few relationships between treatment outcome variables and other variables of interest in this study. Although the coercion of offenders into correctional treatment is not illegal, clinicians are ethically and morally bound to consider ways of reducing perceptions of coercion. These results suggest that clinicians would be well served by attempting to gain compliance with treatment using positive pressures such as persuasion and inducements while also instilling a sense of procedural justice during the process of treatment entry.

For more information contact Dr. Kolton directly at [KoltonDJ@csc-scc.gc.ca](mailto:KoltonDJ@csc-scc.gc.ca)

---

## Recent Publications

Mills, J. F., Kroner, D. G., & Hemmati, T. (in press). Predicting violent behavior through a static/stable variable lens. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*

The present study examines the differential relationship of criminogenic domains to violent and non-violent recidivism in a sample of predominantly violent offenders. In addition, the criminogenic domains are also examined through a static/stable variable dichotomy. The results support previously published retrospective studies that found different domains associated with violent and non-violent offending. In addition, the results showed that stable variables add to the prediction of both violent and non-violent behaviour after accounting for the most salient static variables. The results are discussed within the context of improving risk prediction.

---

Mills, J. F., Loza, W., & Kroner, D. G. (in press). Predictive validity despite social desirability: Evidence for the robustness of self-report among offenders. *Criminal Behaviour & Mental Health*,

The aim of the present study was to investigate the assumption that the validity of self-report is vulnerable to self-presentation biases in offender samples. The participants consisted of 124 male offenders who volunteered to complete the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire. Lower scores on measures of social desirability were significantly associated with higher levels of risk (as measured by self-report and a rated actuarial instrument) and a higher likelihood to re-offend. Further, stepwise regression analysis revealed that social desirability added significantly unique variance in the prediction of violent recidivism. Discussion proposes that impression management may be an enduring person-based characteristic within an offender sample rather than a situationally determined response style. The variance associated with this

characterological information is proposed to be the source of the unique predictive variance.

---



---

## Welcome to the Criminal Justice Family

**Dr. Craig Bennell recently joined the faculty in the Psychology Department at Carleton University. Below is an outline of Craig's research interests.**

### THE POLICE RESEARCH LAB AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Although I have recently met some of you, I would like to thank Jeremy for giving me the chance to introduce myself to those I haven't. I am extremely pleased to have been hired by the Department of Psychology at Carleton University. Due to the fact that my research interests are in the area of police psychology, being located in the law enforcement capital of Canada is also very useful. My students and I are currently in the process of setting up The Police Research Lab at Carleton University and I would like to tell you a little about our activities. Most of our research focuses on issues that are pertinent to police investigations and, until recently, we have dealt primarily with the use and misuse of psychologically based investigative techniques, such as offender profiling. While we are still actively engaged in that research, we are increasingly getting involved in areas that can have more of an impact on how police investigations are carried out. For example, much of our current efforts are focused on the development, implementation and evaluation of decision support systems that can be used when carrying out law enforcement tasks. In addition, we are planning to conduct research in the future on novel training procedures (e.g., computer simulation training), especially in areas where there is little chance

for police officers to receive satisfactory on the job training (e.g., crisis negotiations). Due to the nature of our research, my lab promotes a multidisciplinary team-oriented approach and I invite all researchers and students who are interested in this area of research to contact me directly so that we may share research ideas.

Craig Bennell  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Psychology  
Carleton University  
cbennell@connectmail.carleton.ca

---

---

### **Members on the Move**

Congratulations to Dr. Angela Carter who recently graduated from Queen's University Clinical Psychology program. Angela completed her Ph.D. requirements in August 2002 following an internship program. Angela has accepted a position at Oak Ridge, Mental Health Centre Penetanguishene, as of November 2002. You can reach Angela by e-mail at [acarter@mhcp.on.ca](mailto:acarter@mhcp.on.ca).

## **The Network for Research on Crime & Justice of Queen's University & Solicitor General Canada**

**Proudly Present**

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on Specialized Services for Sexually Abusive Youth**

May 7 – 9, 2003  
University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario

For more information contact Guy Bourgon at [guybourgon@host.ott.igs.net](mailto:guybourgon@host.ott.igs.net)

Looking forward to seeing you in Toronto!

### **Upcoming Conference**