



Department of Psychology Colloquium Series

The Don Andrews Memorial Lecture



Cognitive Dissonance and the Psychology of Criminal Conduct

Thursday, November 30, 2017

2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tory 340



Dr. Jim Bonta

Public Safety Canada (ret.)

Many new perspectives of criminal behaviour arise from cognitive dissonance - the discomfort felt when one's attitudes and beliefs are in conflict with the evidence. This discomfort then serves as the motivation to restore consistency between attitudes/beliefs and what is observed. One such perspective that has been influenced by cognitive dissonance is the General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning (GPCSL) theory (Andrews & Bonta, 1994; Bonta & Andrews, 2017). GPCSL views criminal behaviour as a product of the environment in interaction with bio-social-personal factors. The application of GPCSL, the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model of offender assessment and treatment, posits that certain bio-social-personal factors are more important than others and that cognitive-behavioural intervention techniques are more effective than other therapeutic techniques. Of course, the development of GPCSL and the RNR model was not entirely determined by cognitive dissonance but there were a few times that cognitive dissonance played a role. The presentation will describe a number of points of tension between what was believed and what was empirically demonstrated from both a general research viewpoint and from a personal perspective.