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Some Crime and Forensic Topics

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An independent academic psychologist, based in England, who has written extensively on different areas of psychology with an emphasis on the critical stance towards traditional ideas.

A complete listing of his writings at http://psychologywritings.synthasite.com/. See also material at https://archive.org/details/orsett-psych.

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1. VIOLENCE AND PSYCHOSIS

Up to 70% of patients in forensic secure services in the UK have a primary diagnosis of psychosis. Violent offences are prominent (eg: assault; manslaughter; murder) (Lambe et al 2024).

Generally, the risk of violence by patients with psychosis is assessed by reference to (Lambe et al 2024):

a) Static risk factors – eg: type of previous convictions; having a young age; being male; a history of substance misuse.

b) Dynamic risk factors – eg: hostile behaviour; poor impulse control; non-adherence to treatment; recent drug and/or alcohol misuse.

Other models include predisposing risk factors (eg: family history of criminality), type of psychiatric disorder and symptoms, and precipitating factors (eg: stress) (Lambe et al 2024). Specific explanations include anger, exacerbated by substance misuse, and impulsivity (Adams and Yanos 2020), or delusions that produce feelings of threat that override self control (Link and Stueve 1994), or "command hallucinations" by voices perceived as omnipotent leading to violence (McNiel et al 2000).

Lambe et al (2024) investigated the topic with twenty indepth interviews in 2022 of male forensic service users in England with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorder and a history of interpersonal (not sexual) violence. Thematic analysis of the interviews produced three themes:

i) "Violence as the dominant response mode" – Violence had become established as the dominant response to difficulties through social learning, and the "rules" the individuals used in confrontation. "Jamar's" comment encapsulated this theme: "Because I don't want to get attacked first, I don't want to get hit first, so I always attack first" (p49).

ii) "Violence protects against a trio of sensitivities" – The participants were particularly sensitive to three behaviours of others (real or imagined) – disrespect, threats of physical harm, and unfair treatment. "Dean's" comment showed the lack of distinction between real and imagined: "My index offence

is somebody that was in supported lodging that I believed was reading my mind and yeah I stabbed him with a knife. Yeah, mocking me, laughing at me. Knew exactly what I was thinking" (p50).

iii) "Violence relieves negative internal states" – Violence was a means of dealing with strong emotions (eg: anger) and/or as a way to escape voices, visions, and paranoid thoughts. This theme is seen in "Kyle's" comment: "I used to punch walls a lot, and my hands felt bad because my knuckles were all pushed in because I'd hit walls when I'm angry. I hit people. It was just a release and it hurts afterwards and it feel good like it takes it away" (p51).

Combining the information from the interviews, Lambe et al (2024) proposed a framework for understanding violence by individuals with psychosis based around violence as a learned response to situations, a (hyper)sensitivity to certain aspects of other people's behaviours (real or imagined), and violence as a means of emotion regulation. Add on top, psychotic symptoms, and substance misuse (which was reported by many interviewees).

AN ETHICAL CONCERN

Tesli and Vaskinn (2024) outlined their concerns: "Despite increased openness concerning mental health problems, severe mental illness is still subject to stigmatising attitudes. Thus, attributing a heightened risk of violence to already vulnerable individuals inevitably raises important questions. Although most people with schizophrenia will never act violently, well-replicated epidemiological research shows robust associations between violence and schizophrenia after accounting for known confounding factors such as substance use and social adversity, and qualitative research has identified psychological processes leading to violence in schizophrenia. However, concerns have been voiced regarding the strength of this association owing to putative flaws in interpretations of existing evidence that allegedly contribute to perpetuation of social biases. Could it be that by reporting an association between schizophrenia and violence, researchers inadvertently perpetuate stigma and the perception of all individuals with schizophrenia as dangerous?" (p508).

But reporting something does not mean advocating it.

Sapolsky (2017) noted wryly that this would mean oncologists advocated cancer. "Reporting an association between schizophrenia and violence does not imply subjective support for this link, nor does it mean the researcher is pleased with identifying it" (Tesli and Vaskinn 2024 p508).

But to not report "facts" that are unpleasant is "analogous to denying the harmful human impact on the environment because it should not occur and thus concluding that it does not happen" (Tesli and Vaskinn 2024 p508). Less reliable sources of information exist and they do promote stigma and misunderstanding, whereas comprehensive and nuanced research can help to show which individuals with psychosis are likely to be violent and who will not be, and could aid in prediction and mitigation, and ultimately, reduction of stigma against all individuals with psychosis (Tesli and Vaskinn 2024).

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2. FORENSIC EXPERTS AND BIAS

Cognitive biases are psychological factors and mental processes that impact decision-making in a negative way. Leung et al (2024) explained: "Humans do not process information objectively, but rather this process is characterised by our individual experiences and other contextual factors. Accordingly, cognitive bias is taken here to be a systematic deviation from rationality in judgments due to how we process, store, and retrieve information" (p347).

Forensic science is based upon scientific principles, and the term "error" covers a failure of objective methods as in "systematic errors, random errors, statistical errors, or negligence of practitioners" (Leung et al 2024 p347). Cognitive biases, however, can influence decision-making here. Leung et al (2024) investigated the attitudes towards cognitive bias in forensic anthropology. This is a field of forensic science that applies the principles of anthropology in a legal setting.

One hundred and one forensic anthropology professionals and students were surveyed about their concerns around cognitive bias. Around 90% reported a concern, and that their own judgments may be influenced by cognitive bias. This was positive in terms of showing an awareness of biases, but in response to specific statements, there was evidence of limited understanding. For example, "most participants believed that bias can be reduced by sheer willpower, indicating that addressing the very nature of cognitive bias in future bias training and creating frameworks that enhance transparency in how decisions are reached will be valuable" (Leung et al 2024 p356) (figure 2.1).

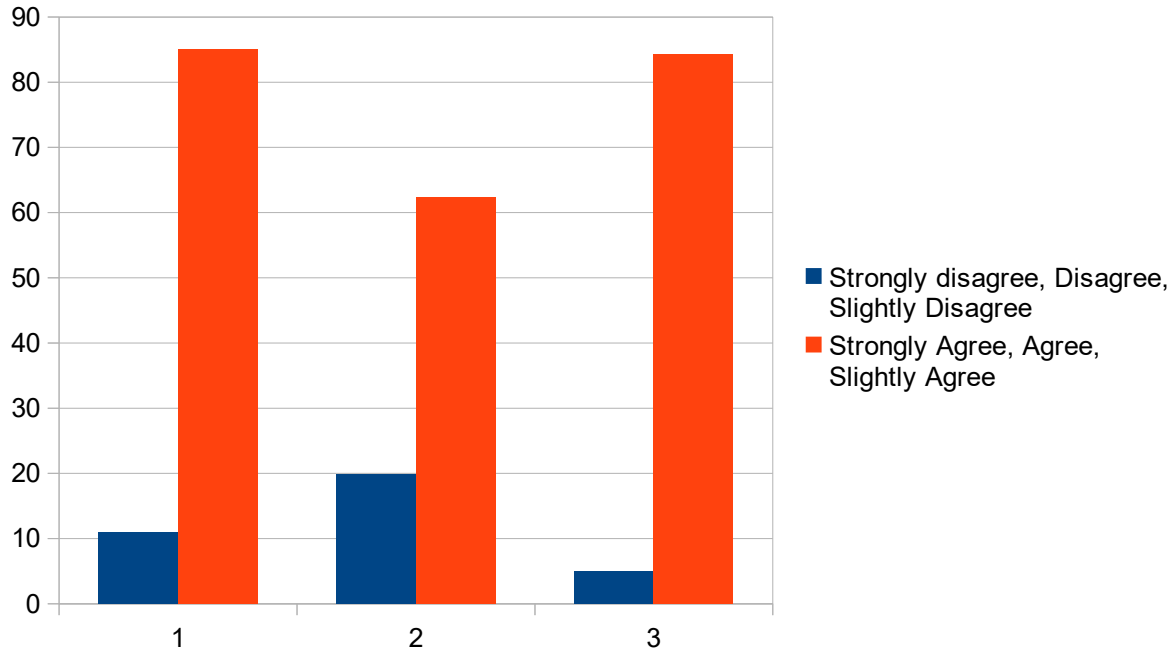
A "bias blind spot" (Pronin et al 2022) has been reported in studies of forensic science generally (eg: Kukucka et al 2017), particularly "where examiners recognised bias in other experts and domains but not in their own field" (Leung et al 2024 p348).

Dror (2020) outlined six fallacies of bias:

i) Ethics – Bias is assumed to be shown by unethical individuals.

ii) "Bad apples" – Bias is shown by a few poor experts (the "bad apples").

iii) Expert immunity – The belief that experts are



(1) "A forensic anthropologist's prior beliefs and expectations can affect how s/he goes about analysing a set of skeletal remains".

(2) "A forensic anthropologist who consciously endeavours to ignore his/her pre-existing beliefs and expectations is less likely to be affected by them".

(3) "Sometimes, forensic anthropologists are aware of what conclusion they are expected to reach".

(Data from table 4 p354 Leung et al 2024)

Figure 2.1 – Responses to selected statements (%).

immune to bias.

iv) Technological protection – Better technology will eliminate bias.

v) "Bias blind spot" – Individuals are unaware of their own bias.

vi) Illusion of control – That bias can be overcome by willpower.

The reality is that bias occurs where human decisions are made, and it is not related to ethics, expertise, or willpower of the individual. Dror (2020) stated: "Biases, often without our awareness or consciousness, impact how we sample and perceive data,

decide on testing strategies and how we interpret the results. People's beliefs in various fallacies about bias prevent a proper understanding of bias, which in turn precludes taking steps to fight it. Understanding biases and acknowledging them enables discussion about their sources and to develop means to minimise their impact" (p8003).

Dror (2020) presented a framework of eight sources of bias based on three categories: Category A concerns the specific data (1-3 below), Category B the individual doing the analysis (4-7 below), and Category C "arise from human nature, the very cognitive architecture of the human brain that we all share, regardless of the specific case or the specific person doing the analysis" (p7999) (number 8 below).

1. Data – The potential for bias contained within the data being analysed. For example, voice analysis of screaming, or DNA analysis in a gang-rape case could evoke emotions that influence decision-making.

2. Reference materials – What the analysed data is being compared to. Knowing the "target" suspect before or during the analysis could influence that analysis. "Take the case of Kerry Robinson who was wrongly convicted of rape based on mistaken analysis of DNA evidence. The two DNA examiners in the case made an error as they seem to have been working backward from Kerry Robinson's known DNA profile to the latent evidence. Thus, the suspect 'target' was driving the analysis rather than the evidence itself. He was exonerated and released from jail after serving 17 years. Indeed, when the same DNA evidence was later analysed properly, different results were obtained" (Dror 2020 p8000).

3. Contextual information - "Experts are often exposed to irrelevant information. In the forensic domain, for example, such information may be that the suspect confessed to the crime, that they have been identified by eyewitnesses and other lines of evidence, or that the suspect has a criminal record. Even knowing the name of the suspect may be suggestive of a specific race evoking biases and stereotypes. These all cause expectations that can impact not only the interpretation of the results obtained from the analysis, but also the analysis itself because the expectations impact the detection of what goes into the analysis as well as testing strategies" (Dror 2020 p8001).

4. Base rate – This refers to the expert's experience with similar previous cases that they bring to the current analysis. As much as expertise is based on previous experience (in the positive sense), it can influence decision-making. "For example, when the cause of death is cerebral hypoxia caused by hanging, then the manner of death is most often suicide. In contrast, when cerebral hypoxia is caused by strangulation, then the manner of death is most often homicide. This is not necessarily the case since, although rarely, hanging can be a result of a homicide and strangulation can be a suicide. However, the base rate of associations between the cause and manner of death can bias the interpretation and determination of manner of death" (Dror 2020 p8002).

5. Organisational factors – The organisation that employs the analyst. For example, many forensic scientists work in laboratories of law enforcement organisations. The purpose of the organisation, along with factors found in any organisation (eg: time pressure; managerial structure; personal interactions) can influence decision-making.

6. Education and training – Individuals working in forensic science will have received education and training in different contexts. They may come from a "pure" science background and perceive their work as scientific or via a route that emphasises their role as supporting law enforcement. "When approaching a case, training and education may instil the pursuit of a single hypothesis vs examining multiple hypotheses, considering alterative hypotheses (including scenarios proposed by the opposing side), conducting differential diagnosis, considering categorical decisions (such as 'match' and 'non-match', often used in fingerprinting and firearms) vs using statistics and other methods to determine the strength of the evidence..." (Dror 2020 p8002).

7. Personal factors – eg: motivation; personal beliefs; risk-taking.

8. Cognitive architecture - "The workings of our brain create architectural and capacity constraints that do not allow it to process all the incoming information. The brain therefore engages in a variety of processes (mainly known as 'top-down') to make sense of the world and data around us. The human mind is not a camera, the active nature of human cognition means that we do not see the world 'as it is'" (Dror 2020 p8002).

Dror (2020) made this observation: "Bias does not impact only the individual in isolation or just one aspect of the work; often the bias cascades from one person to another, from one aspect of the work to another, influencing different elements of an investigation. As people and various aspects are influenced, they then influence others, turning from influenced to influencers, perpetuating the bias and impacting others. Then, biases are not only cascaded but gather momentum and snowball" (p8003).

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3. CARJACKING

"Carjacking" (or armed motor vehicle theft) is "a hybrid offence because it draws from elements of both regular robbery and motor vehicle theft. In particular, carjacking unites the varied motives of motor vehicle theft... with the confrontational style of robbery" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p156). Topalli and Wright (2004) asserted that few crimes are "more symbolic of contemporary urban violence" (quoted in Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023).

An individual in their car stationary at red traffic lights, say, is attacked and usually forced out of the car which is then driven away. "Shock gives way to panic as the driver realises there is no time to debate the merits of compliance. Many carjackers know this and leverage stealth, shock, and awe to separate the driver from the vehicle quickly. The driver, fearful that the incident may be more than 'just a carjacking', might do something imprudent and inadvertently turn the crime into a murder" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p156).

Though this crime can and does happen anywhere, it is in the USA where it is best known. Media reports of carjacking in large urban areas are multiple, and generally increasing (eg: 1800 events in 2021 in Chicago; 150% increase in New Orleans between 2019 and 2020; Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023).

Leaving aside the sensationalism and stereotypes, a number of key points emerge from the academic literature (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023):

i) It is not a new crime, and "carjacking is as old as the automobile itself" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p157).

ii) It is both similar and different to robbery generally. Similar to robbery in that offenders and victims are unknown to each other, for instance, but different to motor vehicle theft in that the car is occupied and the engine on often. "Victims may be leaving or entering their vehicles when targeted... Victims may be bumped and then 'jacked' after they exit the car to inspect the damage... The offence may also be part of a broader robbery transaction in which other valuables are seized. Taking the car might even be an afterthought or a mechanism to prevent the victim from giving chase" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p158).

iii) The motives are similar to other crimes - from

in order to acquire the property to the thrills of it, but also as a means to escape danger. "Like regular robbery, carjacking is a 'proximate and performable' offence... that has the potential to net rewards quickly, with few complications — although, like motor vehicle theft, extracting monetary proceeds from carjacked vehicles can incur delays in some circumstances (eg: a buyer is not immediately available; parts must be stripped)" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p158).

Motor vehicle theft was described by Hall (1952) as the youth seeking thrills (eg: "joyriding"). "Stealing to joyride, however, is no longer so easy. Today's automobiles have considerably hardened as targets, and auto thefts were in a state of decline prior to the pandemic" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p164). Carjacking is an easier option (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023). Saying that, it is risky, but this may be the attraction for individuals wanting to establish a reputation by "going for bad" (Anderson 1999). Add to that social media posts or even "livestreaming". "All these dynamics are seemingly nested within a vortex of concentrated disadvantage. Disadvantage — and the desperation it breeds — is what often causes predatory violence like carjacking to be a feasible action alternative in the first place. And what might start out as something novel or fun or thrilling can readily mutate into something different when offenders realise what they are stealing: a mobile bank vault that can be sold whole or chopped into parts while boasting accessory items (high-end audio systems, state-of-the-art video technology, and performance rims) that can be monetised separately. Auto thieves have long transitioned from stealing for thrills to stealing for money as they progressed in their criminal careers" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p165).

The FBI in the "National Incident-Based Reporting System" (NIBRS) classifies carjacking as a form of robbery, so there are not specific official figures, and these have to be indirectly ascertained. Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2023) calculated over 41 000 completed carjacking incidents between 2007 and 2016 (of which around 9500 co-occurred with other crimes, like murder or kidnapping).

From these data, it can be seen that the perpetrators are predominantly male (85%), and more likely to be younger (under 30 years old) (approximately 55%), Black, and part of multiple offenders. Victims are more likely to be alone in the vehicle, be male, White, 25-49 years old, and travelling at night (6 pm - 6 am).

OFFENDER DECISION-MAKING

Carjacking is a "transactional crime" with distinct stages - co-presence, contingent threat, goods transfer, and escape (Luckenbill 1981).

"Co-presence requires that offenders get close to victims without spooking them. Offenders then levy contingent threats to make it clear that a crime is underway and that non-compliance will result in severe consequences. Goods transfer and escape are more or less coterminous, as offenders seize the vehicle and take flight as soon as that happens" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p166).

Research on the phases has concentrated on co-presence. "No phase is more consequential than co-presence because mistakes here can end the offence before it begins. 'For carjacking to work', Jacobs (2012...) explains, 'offenders must become proximate to victims without alerting them first and providing them a chance to skirt the encounter'. Copes et al (2012...) similarly observe that offenders must 'establish co-presence with victims in a way that [does] not allow their prey foresight into what [is] coming' and that 'failure to achieve and maintain control of the scene could give victims an opening to escape or mount an effective defence' (Copes et al 2012...)" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p166).

Two strategies can be distinguished here (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023):

a) "Normalcy illusions" - using an ordinary behaviour to get near (eg: asking for the time).

b) "Blitzes" - eg: rushing the victim (ie: using shock).

Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2019) noted three related decision-making protocols:

i) Isolation - confront the victim in a secluded area where an audience (bystanders/witnesses)/surveillance (eg: CCTV) is unlikely.

ii) Speed - enact the crime swiftly before the audience is "wise" to it.

iii) Exploiting audience indifference - enact the crime where bystanders are unlikely to intervene. This

allows "offenders to create a spatio-temporal 'bubble' within which to enact the crime worry-free — a function of bystander apathy that offenders defined situationally" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2019 quoted in Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023).

Decision-making related to the contingent threat phase include pre-offence tactics like targeting individuals perceived to be weak, and the manipulation of fear during the commission of the crime (eg: create the belief in the victim that the event could be more than just a carjacking). "Carjacking deaths, however, do appear to be rare, likely because of the tactics offenders use to establish co-presence and generate compliance" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 p167).

Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2023) quoted the FBI figure that one-fifth of 1% of robberies result in murder, while 1% of carjacking victims were injured (to the point of needing hospitalisation) between 1993 and 2002.

Sensitivity to risk is a key variable for perpetrators. "Offenders appear to gravitate to carjacking in the first place (over non-violent motor vehicle theft) because the outcome is more controllable relative to what they would face in 'hot-wiring' an unattended car parked on the street (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2018). Carjackers reportedly are averse to ambiguity and sensitive to risk and see violent motor vehicle theft as a way to manage both ambiguity and risk in ways that regular motor vehicle theft does not" (Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023 pp168-169). This seems contrary to common sense that carjacking is perceived as less risky than stealing an unoccupied car. This quotation from an offender interviewed by Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2018) summed up the risk assessment: "... if you steal on the streets you have to break it down, worried about somebody coming, worried about the law. I mean there are just too many worries [with] just stealing a car when you can just take it. Why steal it when you can just take [jack] it?" (quoted in Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023). Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2023) commented thus: "Carjacking is a quick risk that is over in a flash... — large risks seem more manageable when their duration is fleeting" (p169).

It is important to hear the views of offenders, and to try and understand their decision-making processes. Topalli et al (2020) explained the rationale for studying offender decision-making: "When active offender research is carried out as a qualitative exercise, the external validity of the study is enhanced because the data

obtained offer a better approximation of how offenders actually think and behave. Generalisability is to criminal behaviour, not a population. Inductive analysis of the resultant
data ensures the development of accurate and worthwhile theories and models of offending" (quoted in Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2023).

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4. UNRECORDED ALCOHOL

"Unrecorded alcohol" (UA) is "consumed as an alcoholic beverage, but is not registered in official statistics as beverage alcohol for sales, production, or trade in the country where it is consumed" (Rehm et al 2022 p2). It was estimated that about one-quarter of the alcohol consumed by an adult in 2017 was unrecorded (Rehm et al 2022).

UA can be divided into five categories (Rehm et al 2022):

i) Legal but unrecorded.

ii) Recorded, but consumed in another jurisdiction.

iii) "Surrogate alcohol" - Products containing alcohol not intended for human consumption as a beverage, including medicinal products (eg: rubbing alcohol), products of daily life containing alcohol (eg: mouthwash), and "de-natured alcohol for industrial purposes" (eg: with added methanol) (Rehm et al 2014).

iv) Illegal homemade or artisanal products - Made from ingredients easily available including sugar, fruits, vegetables, and plants.

v) Illegal production or smuggling on a large scale (eg: "brand fraud" - counterfeiting legal products).

Rehm et al (2022) accepted that categories (iv) and (v) were "somewhat fluid" as homemade products can become large scale enterprises (eg: Eastern Africa).

UA is negative associated with economic wealth, both between countries (eg: nearly half of consumption in low-income countries compared to around 10% in high-income ones; Rehm et al 2014) and within them. An example of the latter is the consumption of mouthwash with ethanol concentrations by homeless individuals in Canada. "Sales of mouthwash are taxed (value-added tax) and thus registered, and the government is aware of its use as an alcohol substitute. However, it is clearly unrecorded alcohol, as mouthwash is not registered as alcoholic beverage and thus no alcohol excise taxation applies to it" (Rehm et al 2022 p2).

Rehm et al (2022) undertook a narrative review of the impact of alcohol taxation on UA consumption. Their

conclusions were summed up thus: "Unrecorded alcohol consumption did not automatically increase with increases in taxation and subsequent price increases of registered commercial alcohol. Instead, the level of unrecorded consumption depended on: a) the availability and type of unrecorded alcohol; b) whether such consumption was non-stigmatised; c) the primary population groups which consumed unrecorded alcohol before the policy change; and d) the policy measures taken" (p1).

A key health concern with UA is quality control of the ingredients. Commercially available alcohol beverages undergo checks which UA products do not. But "several reviews [eg: Lachenmeier et al 2021] have revealed that in most cases this does not pose a threat to burden of disease over and above the effects of ethanol (that is, pure alcohol)" (Rehm et al 2022 p3). Except for the addition of methanol (Rehm et al 2014) (appendix 4A).

Rehm et al (2014) performed a review and meta-analysis of studies of the epidemiology of UA published up to June 2013 (n = 138 articles). The most prevalent types of UA were artisanal illegal spirits, and surrogate alcohol.

Around 2.75 million deaths globally in 2010, for instance, were attributed to alcohol consumption, both recorded and UA (Rehm et al 2014). Three particular risks were highlighted with UA (Rehm et al 2014):

a) Methanol poisoning - Second in terms of cause of deaths behind ethanol, but only 0.1% of all alcohol-attributed deaths. Data, however, are estimates based on case studies, studies of outbreaks of cases, and analysis of intoxication death records. Rehm et al (2014) proposed "the working hypothesis that methanol deaths seem to be primarily individual or regional tragedies rather than a global public health problem" (p885).

b) "Moonshine" in the USA and associated lead poisoning - But most of the studies are pre-1990 and moonshine production has subsequently declined.

c) Disinfecting agents (eg: polyhexamethylene guanidine; PHMG) in surrogate alcohol - A particular problem in Russia, but the number of fatalities is "not clear" (Rehm et al 2014 p885), and PHMG is now banned.

Leon et al (2007) calculated a higher mortality risk for surrogate alcohol consumption in Russia than for beverage alcohol drinkers. The explanation may be that

surrogate alcohol is "usually less expensive than recorded alcohol, thereby enabling more heavy drinking occasions, especially for people with alcohol dependence who are already marginalised" (Rehm et al 2014 p886).

Rehm et al's (2014) conclusion was that the greatest health threat from UA was the same as from recorded alcohol, namely heavy ethanol consumption.

Any review depends on the methodological quality of the studies therein, and there was great diversity, Rehm et al (2014) accepted. The exact quantification of UA was an issue, along with lack of control of moderating variables, and use of methods that could not establish causality (ie: non-experimental).

"In reviewing chemical studies of the composition of unrecorded alcohol, two major methodological deficits were typically observed: (i) the comparison of unrecorded alcohol with an incomparable form of recorded alcohol to facilitate proof of an apparent difference that is often interpreted as 'toxic' and (ii) the lack of any form of dose–response assessment, such that any trace amount of a naturally occurring compound (such as derived from fermentation) or of a contaminant is interpreted as a 'threat to health', even if the dose is so low that thresholds for health risks cannot be exceeded even in daily heavy drinkers" (Rehm et al 2014 p886).

APPENDIX 4A - METHANOL POISONING

Methanol is "a toxic alcohol used as a solvent or in denatured industrial alcohol" (Nekoukar et al 2021 p1). Methanol poisoning (MP) occurs via ingestion, inhalation, or dermal exposure. Ingestion knowingly or unknowingly in drinking alcohol or an alcohol-substitute, and deliberately or accidentally in homemade alcohol are concerns.

Where there is MP, there may be delays in receiving treatment because "alcohol consumption is unsocially or religiously acceptable, presentations may be delayed due to fear of punishment... [and] the manifestations of early methanol toxicity are non-specific, which leads to delay in diagnosis" (Nekoukar et al 2021 p1).

The estimated least lethal adult dose of methanol is around 10 ml, but there are reports of consumption of 400 ml without health consequences (Nekoukar et al 2021). The main clinical manifestations of MP are gastro-intestinal problems (eg: nausea and vomiting), and central nervous system suppression (eg: confusion; drowsiness) within four hours, followed by symptoms like blurred vision and

blindness later. Coma and respiratory arrest could occur.

Travel-related MP came to prominence with the death of six backpackers after consuming free shots of vodka (containing methanol) in Vang Vieng, Laos, in late 2024 (Jaita and Flaherty 2025) [1]. Prior to that event, Giovanetti (2013) had reported eighteen deaths in 22 cases in Indonesia.

"Young adult travellers, especially backpackers, experience the highest risk of travel-related MP" (Jaita and Flaherty 2025 p1). This group has high alcohol (and other drugs) consumption. "Combined with their adventurous nature and limited budgets, they are inclined to purchase homemade liquor or accept free drinks from local residents in geographic areas where unrecorded alcohol use remains high, such as in Southeast Asia. These illicit alcoholic beverages are sometimes inadequately distilled, resulting in methanol contamination beyond acceptable levels. Additionally, some producers may unscrupulously mix methanol with ethanol to increase the intoxicating effects more cheaply. Unaware of this risk, travellers unwittingly drink these methanol-tainted drinks, leading to many suffering from MP" (Jaita and Flaherty 2025 p1).

Diagnosis of MP is hampered with this group because the initial symptoms can mirror inebriation (eg: vomiting) and/or travellers' sickness (eg: abdominal problems and diarrhoea) (Jaita and Flaherty 2025).

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5. AFRICANA CRIMINOLOGIES

INTRODUCTION

Agozino (2021a) defined "Africana criminology" as "an interdisciplinary field that privileges critical, creative, and Africa-centred scholar-activism that departs from the dominant paradigms in criminology to chart a liberatory paradigm with emphasis on social justice, penal abolitionism, decolonisation, non-violence, and reparatory justice for the benefit of people of African descent who have been at the receiving end of what Manning Marable [eg: Manning 1995] theorised as Africana criminal injustice around the world" (p1).

Generally, Agozino (2021a) argued that there was "a huge gap in knowledge on criminology of people of African descent, especially on the African continent. The existing texts are few and are inadequate, especially because they lack the points of view of people of African descent and Indigenous people" (p1). One reason, Agozino (2003) suggested may be because "criminology was designed as a technology for the control of others in the service of imperialism" (Agozino 2021a p2). So, Africana criminology(ies) takes a radical position that challenges the traditional views and approaches in criminology(ies). For example, the "prison-industrial complex" around the world is overpopulated with poor males, but this is "not because poor people are more crime prone than the rich who get richer but because the poor lack the means to free themselves even when they are innocent while the rich may get away with bloody murder, according to Jeffrey Reiman [eg: Reiman and Leighton 2020]. Although Indigenous people and people of African descent are over-represented in prisons and in deaths in custody, there is evidence that large numbers of poor Whites are also affected by the imperialist logic that guides the criminal justice system" (Agozino 2021a p3). This fits with Martin Luther King's point that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (Agozino 2021a p3).

Africana criminology is a "liberation criminology", which is "a call for criminologists to explore the lessons in deviance and social control that could emerge from the history of the struggles to decolonise the world and abolish oppressive power relations" (Agozino 2021b p24). It includes support for reparative justice to individuals of African descent and by Indigenous peoples, opposes militarisation, desires an end to the "war on drugs", calls for a world without prisons, and the end of

the criminalisation of difference (eg: same-sex relationships), among other aims (Agozino 2021b).

Liberation criminologies are "scholar-activists", who seek "committed objectivity" in their work. Agozino (2021b) argued for the need to "clean up the dirty baggage that colonisers packaged with conventional research methods. For instance, instead of approaching our people from the privileged position of elite scholars, we should approach the community with the humility that recognises that data are gifts given to us by willing participants. Thus, we should abandon the misleading concept of data collection and adopt the concept of data reception (Agozino 2018)" (p29).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women (VAW) is a wide-ranging concept including verbal abuse, financial deprivation, and control of social movements, as well as intimate partner violence (IPV). Kalunta-Crumpton (2021) argued that "African girls and women are socialised to tolerate VAW (and girls) in intimate relationships" (p101), with some women even seeing IPV as "symbolises an expression of love" (p101).

It is not helped that there is "legislative" support for IPV in some countries (eg: customary practices in some northern Nigerian states permit corporal punishment by the husband of the wife) (Kalunta-Crumpton 2021).

One problem is that physical violence is perceived as the only form of VAW, which means that women can be unaware of the other forms of abuse they experience, and thus do not seek help. For example, a United Nations report in 2015 found that, in 27 of 30 African countries, wife-beating was supported by women more than men in certain situations (Kalunta-Crumpton 2021). "In line with the ideology and practice of patriarchy, women's acceptance of wife-beating, based on certain justifications, was symbolic of their cultural understanding of ascribed gender roles in marital relationships. They believe that the violations of traditional gender roles are deserving of punishment: hence, their support for the beating of wives who contravene their gender responsibilities. As reported in several demographic and health surveys in which wife-beating in African countries was measured, women show significant support for wife-beating in a situation in which, for example, the woman 'goes out without telling' the husband, 'argues with him', 'neglects the children',

or 'refuses to have sexual intercourse with him'" (Kalunta-Crumpton 2021 p103).

The acceptance of violence was reported by young women interviewed in Zimbabwe by Matunhu et al (2019). For example, one woman said: "Our tradition holds that men who do not batter their young wives are not real men... [M]ost of these women marry in the late teens and early twenties and so will be immature. Battering them frequently stamps the man's authority" (quoted in Kalunta-Crumpton 2021). While another interviewee showed the acceptance of marital rape: "[C]ultural practices perpetuate the objectification of young women by men. For example, sex is seen as a man's right, which a married woman should always comply with. It is uncultural for a married woman to negotiate safe sex or decide how to have sex with her husband" (quoted in Kalunta-Crumpton 2021).

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

(1) Individuals of African descent (ie: "anybody who identifies as an African; Obi 2021 p120) face greater risks of incarceration both on the African continent and anywhere in the world. People of African descent make up 20% of the world's population, but 35% of the global prison population (Obi 2021).

The argument proposed is that "it does not matter where a person of African descent is in the world; that individual is an endangered species facing numerous criminogenic risks like lack of educational, sociopolitical, and economic opportunities... The only mode of adaption to those risks of institutionalised deprivation is involvement in criminal acts to keep body and soul together. For people of African descent who languish in prison, their socio-economic pathways are strewn with banana peels of violation. However, this perspective of institutionalised deprivation should not becloud the rationality of the choice by some prisoners of African descent to engage in criminal acts as shortcuts to financial success. Notwithstanding this argument, many people of African descent have ended up with harsher sentences than any other human group in different parts of the world" (Obi 2021 pp121-122).

On top of this, "hip-hop culture" (an "African cultural tradition"; Miles 2021 p142) has been criminalised, argued Miles (2021), as seen in the use of lyrics to prosecute African people, and the branding of "hip-hop artists as potential and/or possible criminal offenders, leading to constant surveillance and over-

policing in an era organised around incarcerating Black bodies” (p142).

(2) The trans-Atlantic slave trade (from Africa to the "New World")is probably better known than the trans-Saharan trade, which began in the 7th century (and the indigenous trade) (Okolie-Osemene 2021). The trans-Saharan slave trade was an economic transaction that existed between the empires in West Africa and Islamic empires in North Africa and the Middle East, despite the hostile terrain that characterises the Sahara desert... Per documentary evidence, the harsh environment did not prevent the slave traders from transporting slaves through the routes that facilitated the transactions. The trade in salt, gold, and slaves offered them the opportunity to interact in a commercial context through the caravan routes that were created" (Okolie-Osemene 2021 p43).

Wherever in the world the movement of slaves took place, it was human trafficking. "Human trafficking refers to the illegal and immoral buying and selling of human beings as commodities by merchants or traders, with the intention of meeting the demands for commercial sexual slavery or forced labour in different parts of the world" (Okolie-Osemene 2021 p46). "Objectification theory" (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997) can be used to explain the commodification of humans. Originally the theory was proposed to explain the sexual objectification of women as "they are treated as objects to be valued for their use by others, especially in a situation in which sexual desire makes them single out and separate a woman’s body or body parts from her as a person and regard her as a physical object for sexual satisfaction" (Okolie-Osemene 2021 p46). Most of the slaves in the 19th century in the trans-Saharan trade were female (Okolie-Osemene 2021). However, "both males and females, were sold because of their economic or sexual value and ability to satisfy the demands of their buyers. By implication, they were commodities purchased for the object-centred identity that manifested in their service delivery roles in the areas of labour and sexual satisfaction, which became exploitative without slaves having any right to complain. In essence, the objectification and commodification of human bodies and strength motivated the trade" (Okolie-Osemene 2021 p46).

(3) The United Nations defines terrorism as

"criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political, ideological, racial, ethnic and religious purposes" (quoted in Okoye and Tsado 2021).

The dominant response to terrorism in the world today is the "military or repressive model" (Okoye and Tsado 2021). This views terrorism as "a threat to the security of the state. It incorporates the 'war on terrorism' approach by physically attacking terrorists in military terms. In this model, states' armed forces develop and execute counter-terrorism strategies using a massive deployment of intelligence in clandestine and overt operations. Such operations include hunting down suspects, destroying terrorist bases, assassinations, drone strikes, and erratic confrontations and range from small quasi-operations to full-scale military engagement" (Okoye and Tsado 2021 p176). This is the approach adopted in many African countries and/or with the USA.

But there is a conflict with human rights, and many African countries do poorly here in terms of violations (eg: South Sudan; Sudan; Democratic Republic of Congo) (Okoye and Tsado 2021).

"The defence of human rights and the upholding of the rule of law while countering terrorism is indeed at the heart of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Member states acknowledged that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights should be balanced in all circumstances, and failure to ensure this would be counterproductive... Adjusting the appropriate balance between security and the requirements of liberty in a democratic free society is a cumbersome responsibility that emphasises democratic vigilance and accountability" (Okoye and Tsado 2021 p183). The benefits are seen in economic development as countries high in respect for human rights and low in terrorism will attract investors (Okoye and Tsado 2021).

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