ESSAYS IN CRIMINAL AND FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY NO.8

KEVIN BREWER

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

This document is produced under two principles:

1. All work is sourced to the original authors. The images are all available in the public domain (most from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page). You are free to use this document, but, please, quote the source (Kevin Brewer 2010) and do not claim it as you own work.

2. Details of the author are included so that the level of expertise of the writer can be assessed. This compares to documents which are not named and it is not possible to tell if the writer has any knowledge about their subject.

Kevin Brewer BSocSc, MSc

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.

(http://kmbpsychology.jottit.com)

Orsett Psychological Services,
PO Box 179,
Grays,
Essex
RM16 3EW
UK

orsettpsychologicalservices@phonecoop.coop

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

CONTENTS

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

1. NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON SUICIDE AND CHANGES IN THE SUICIDE RATE - UP OR DOWN? A RECENT EXAMPLE FROM AUSTRIA

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Reports in the media influence behaviour (appendix 1A). Sometimes this is copycat behaviour (known as the "Werther effect" [1] [2]). So media reports about suicide lead to a small increase in suicides (Phillips 1974) [3].

The alternative is that reporting of suicide increases awareness and educates individuals, thereby reducing suicide rates. This is called the "Papageno effect" (Niederkrotenthaler et al 2010) [4].

1.2. NIEDERKROTENTHALER ET AL (2010)

Niederkrotenthaler et al (2010) compared the Werther and Papageno effects using Austrian data. They collected 497 articles about suicide in the eleven largest Austrian national newspapers for the first half of 2005 (1st January - 30th June) [5].

Each article was coded based on characteristics known, from previous research, to affect suicide rates:

---

[1] Also called "imitation" or "suicide contagion" (Pirkis et al 2006).

[2] The "Werther effect" is based on the idea that individuals were influenced to commit suicide after reading of Werther's suicide in Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther". "Two hundred years ago, Goethe wrote a novel called "The Sorrows of the Young Werther", in which the hero committed suicide. Goethe's novel was read widely in Europe, and it was said that people in many countries imitated Werther's manner of death. According to Goethe, 'My friends... .thought that they must transform poetry into reality, imitate a novel like this in real life and, in any case, shoot themselves; and what occurred at first among a few took place later among the general public'... Widespread imitation of Werther's suicide was never conclusively demonstrated, but authorities were sufficiently apprehensive to ban the book in several areas.." (Phillips 1974 p340).

[3] Phillips (1974) found increases in suicide after highly publicised newspaper reports of suicides based on analysis of newspapers in Britain and the USA between 1947-1968.

[4] In Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute", Papageno, who is suicidal over the loss of his lover, "refrains from suicide behaviour because of three boys who draw his attention to alternative coping strategies" (Niederkrotenthaler et al 2010 p234).

[5] The term "suicide" (in German) was put into a database kept by the Austrian Press Agency. Articles were excluded if suicide was only a metaphor, suicide bombing, mentioned in article about another topic, in media listings (eg: details of a movie), or in advertisements. Thus 1055 articles were reduced to 497.

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

i) Amount of reporting (2 categories) - eg: number of articles on the same day.

ii) Main focus of the article (6 categories) - eg: completed suicide; attempted suicide; prevention programme.

iii) Reported method of suicide (6 categories).

iv) Prominence of article (1 category) - on front page of not.

v) Content of article is true or false (1 category).

vi) Details viewed as harmful (ie: encouraging suicide) (20 categories) - eg: method in headline; quote from suicide note; suicide location reported; photograph; public myths reported.

vii) Details viewed as protective (ie: reducing suicide) (9 categories) - eg: focus on prevention programmes; public myths debunked; contact information for help; suffering of suicidal person from suicidal act.

vii) Sensationalism of reporting (4 categories) - eg: use of emotional words.

After coding the articles, their dates in the newspapers were checked against official suicide statistics in Austria [6]. Changes in suicide rates were calculated as suicides per 100 000 total population in week preceding publication date compared to week after.

Figure 1.1 presents a simple example of what the researchers were trying to find.

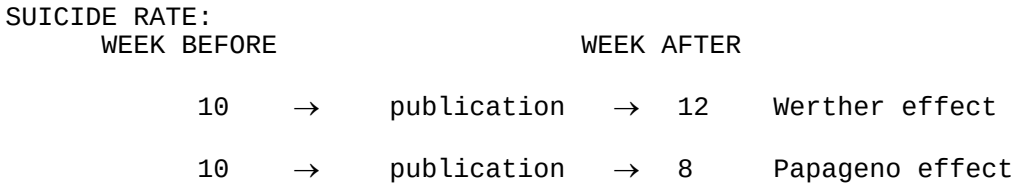


Figure 1.1 - Hypothetical example of two possible effects.

The main findings can be summarised thus:

1. Quantity of reporting - "Repetitive reporting"

[6] http://www.statistik.at.

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

(reports on the same event) was significantly positively correlated with suicide, but "density of reporting" (number of articles on same day about event) was not [7].

2. Main focus of article - Articles on suicidal ideation only were significantly negatively correlated with suicide, while suicide-related research was a significant positive correlation.

3. Method of suicide - Only suicide by jumping had a significant positive correlation. Though this method was reported more often than others (which were left out of the articles).

4. If the article appeared on the front page or not, and whether it was fiction or true had no effect (ie: no significant correlation).

5. Details viewed as harmful - The following categories were significantly related to increases in suicide: "societal problems reported to have increased"; "several independent suicidal acts reported"; "reference to a suicide 'epidemic'"; and "public myths reported".

6. Sensationalism - Only "dichotomous thinking" (high degree of certainty in words used; eg: "proven") was a significant positive correlation with suicide.

7. Details viewed as protective - No categories were linked to a reduction in suicide. In fact, two categories were significantly correlated with an increase in suicide: "expert opinion reported" and details of support services given. Niederkrotenthaler et al (2010) noted that "expert opinions seem to be used as a means of giving an air of seriousness to reporting, but at the same time tend to be embedded in an unfavourable, sensationalist context" (p241).

8. Combined categories - The use of multivariate regression coefficients showed that "repetitive reporting", articles about suicide by jumping, and including public myths about suicide together predicted an increase in suicide in the week post-publication.

9. The articles were grouped into four classes by latent class analysis [8]:

---

[7] A positive correlation means that suicide rates increased after publication and a negative correlation that they went down. The point-biserial and Pearson correlation coefficients were used.

[8] Latent class analysis finds the associations between a set of variables that are the result of underlying commonalities. It has some similarities to factor analysis.

i) "Suicide case class" - Majority of articles (72.2%) which were short, and reported completed suicides. These articles were not related to any change in suicide rates.

ii) "Mastery of crisis class" - Mainly articles about suicide ideation/thoughts (and individuals adopting coping strategies), and they were significantly correlated with a decrease in suicide.

iii) "Epidemiological facts class" - These articles reported mainly statistics and research, and had a significant positive correlation with suicide.

iv) "Expert opinion class" - These articles included details of support services, expert opinion, and debunked public myths about suicide, but it was significantly positively correlated with suicide.

Overall, a number of features of the newspaper articles linked to the Werther effect (increase in suicide), and only articles about suicidal ideation which did not lead to suicide (ie: positive coping) were evidence of the Papageno effect.

1.3. APPENDIX 1A - MEDIA REPORTING OF SUICIDE

Pirkis and Blood (2001), after a review of the literature, concluded that the Werther effect peaked at three days after the media reports and has usually ended by two weeks after, and is influenced by quantity and prominence of coverage. "It was also moderated by the model/observer relationship, with the effect being greatest when the model was similar to the observer (eg: in terms of age and sex), and/or when the model was revered in some way by the observer (eg: because of his/her celebrity status). In addition, there was evidence that explicit media description of suicide by a particular method was associated with an increase in actual suicidal behaviour employing that method" (Pirkis et al 2006 p83).

Pirkis et al (2006) argued that the body of evidence showed that a causal link between media reports of suicide and subsequent suicide existed based on the following criteria:

i) Consistency - An effect observed by different methods and different population studied.

ii) Strength - A statistically significant relationship showing a dose-response effect (ie: more

reporting leads to a larger increase in suicide).

iii) Temporality - There is cause and effect in chronological order (ie: report before increase in suicides).

iv) Specificity - Many individuals showing the outcome (suicide) had been exposed to the cause (media coverage).

v) Coherence - The findings are in line with the known facts (ie: Werther effect).

In Australia, a media monitoring project was commissioned by the Mental Health and Special Programs Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care to examine how the media reported suicide in the twelve months from 1st March 2000 (Pirkis et al 2002). Reports from newspapers, television and radio were included [9].

The project collected 1162 newspaper items, 698 television items, and 3043 radio ones. The majority of them were about completed suicides rather than attempts or thoughts about suicide.

A sub-group of items (n = 504) were selected for analysis of the quality of reporting using nine criteria from the guidelines to media organisations in Australia about reporting suicide (Mental Health and Special Programs Branch, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care 1999) (table 1.1).

- Avoid sensationalising and glamorising.
- Avoid specific details about the suicide.
- Recognise the importance of role models.
- Take the opportunity to educate the public.
- Give information about help and support.

Table 1.1 - Key guidelines given to the media about reporting suicide (Pirkis et al 2006).

1. Language used - 42% of items used "inappropriate" language, like "suicide rates are out of control" or "a crazed Australian tried to kill himself".

[9] The scoring of the quality of media items was dependent on individual researcher's judgments: "The identifying and descriptive data, and the quality ratings, all relied on coders' interpretation of media items. Efforts were made to ensure consistency between coders, in that coders were trained in a uniform manner and regular meetings were held to discuss issues of interpretation. Despite this, it is possible that different coders may have interpreted certain information differently" (Pirkis et al 2002 p196).

2. Location in newspaper or broadcast - 17% of items were classed as inappropriately located (eg: on front page of newspaper).

3. Headline - 30% of newspaper items used the word "suicide" in the headline.

4. Photographs - 14% included photographs or footage depicting the suicide scene in some way.

5. Method used - Half of the items described the method in detail.

6. Celebrity suicide - In the small number of such cases, the majority of items emphasised the celebrity status of these people.

7. Mental health literacy - Half the items included information about mental health which could be viewed as educating the public (ie: increasing mental health literacy).

8. Seeking appropriate help - Only 7% of items included details on help services available.

9. Interviewing the bereaved - 18% of items included such interviews.

Overall, the reporting of suicide was variable in quality:

> Where suicide items could be rated for quality on a given dimension, they showed considerable variability across dimensions. The majority of suicide items did not have examples of inappropriate language, were not inappropriately located, did not use the word "suicide" in the headline, and did not use explicit photographs/diagrams or footage. However, around half of the suicide items provided a detailed discussion of the method of self-harm and portrayed suicide as merely a social phenomenon. Where items concerned the suicide of a celebrity, reference was commonly made to that person's celebrity status. Most failed to provide information on help services (Pirkis et al 2002 p195).

Fishman and Weimann (1997) distinguished between the "mass mediated reality" (how the media reports an event or events) and the "official reality" (the actual event or events). Good quality media reports will mirror "official reality" whereas poor quality will present a

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

distorted picture. For example, the emphasis on reporting only completed suicides, which is relatively low (eg: 13 per 100 000 population in Australia) compared to attempts and suicidal thoughts (300 and 2900 per 100 000 respectively) (Pirkis et al 2002).

1.4. REFERENCES

Fishman, G & Weimann, G (1997) Motives to commit suicide: Statistical versus mass-mediated reality Archives of Suicide Behaviour 3, 192-212

Mental Health and Special Programs Branch, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (1999) Achieving the Balance: A Resource Kit for Australian Media Professionals for the Reporting and Portrayal of Suicide and Mental Illness Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

Niederkrotenthaler, T et al (2010) Role of media reports in completed and prevented suicide: Werther v. Papageno effects British Journal of Psychiatry 197, 234-243

Phillips, D.P (1974) The influence of suggestion on suicide: Substantive and theoretical implications of the Werther effect American Sociological Review 39, 340-354

Pirkis, J & Blood, R.W (2001) Suicide and the media: (1) Reportage in non-fictional media Crisis 22, 146-154

Pirkis, J et al (2002) Reporting of suicide in the Australian media Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 36, 190-197

Pirkis, J et al (2006) Media guidelines on the reporting of suicide Crisis 27, 2, 82-87

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

2. THE SEARCH FOR TYPES: EXAMPLES FROM STALKING

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In criminal and forensic psychology, like in psychology generally, there is a lot of emphasis on finding patterns in behaviour and among individuals. These patterns are grouped together into types or categories (typology). Types can be useful in distinguishing the differences between offenders (eg: rapists who enjoy using violence and those who do not use violence beyond minimal force; Canter and Heritage 1990). But over-emphasis on types can marginalise individual differences, and force individuals on to "a psychometric bed of Procrustes" (Salmon 2003) [10].

Mohandie et al (2006) observed that a "typology should be parsimonious, stable (inter-rater and temporal reliability), behaviourally based, and useful (concurrent and predictive validity) for a variety of applied settings and professionals.." (p147).

2.2. STALKING BEHAVIOUR

Attempts have been made to categorise different patterns of stalking behaviour based on criteria like the motives of the perpetrator or the nature of the relationship between stalker and stalked. One dimensional criteria can be too simple, and it may require a combination of criteria.

Mohandie et al (2006) used two criteria in their RECON (relationship and context-based) typology (and sub-divided them to give four categories):

- Type I - The perpetrator has had a previous relationship with the victim: (a) intimate, or (b) acquaintance).

- Type II - The perpetrator has had no (or very limited)

[10] Procrustes cut part of the legs off individuals so that everyone fitted the bed.

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

contact with the victim: (a) public figure, or (b) private stranger.

In each category individuals will show unique features and/or differences to the other categories.

A useful typology has to show reliability and validity. In this case, inter-rater reliability. This is where individual assessors will place an offender in the same category. And discriminant validity where offenders clearly fall into one category only. Each category is distinct from the others.

Mohandie et al (2006) applied the RECON typology to 2300 files of stalking, criminal harassment, menacing, terrorist threats, or domestic violence from three prosecutorial agencies in California, one police agency in Canada, a corporate security department for a large entertainment company in California, and the researchers' own files. This produced 1005 cases which were analysed separately by two researchers based on a series of variables. Ultimately, each case was placed into one of four RECON categories.

The inter-rater reliability was 0.95 (ie: 95% agreement by the two researchers over the category for each case). This showed that the researchers agreed about each category, but not necessarily that the categories were valid.

Discriminant validity is established by looking for significant differences between the categories on individual variables, and no significant differences between individuals within the same category.

The categories varied on a variety of demographic, clinical, pursuit, threat and violence characteristics. Here are a few of the key differences:

- Intimate - Most violent (74% of cases) (both a history of it and currently), drug and/or alcohol abuse, but not psychotic.

- Acquaintance - More female perpetrators (21% of group), less likely to re-offend.

- Public - More male victims (30% of cases), older perpetrators, more female perpetrators, psychotic, and little violence (2% of cases).

- Private - More likely to be a mentally ill males who "just want to communicate with the object of pursuit".

2.3. ATTACHMENT TYPOLOGY

Tonin (2004) sought to sub-divide stalkers based on their childhood attachment experiences and subsequent adult attachment styles. John Bowlby (eg: 1980) proposed that the quality of the attachment between the baby and their caregiver (usually mothers) determines future relationships (based around an "internal working model" of others as trustworthy or not). A secure attachment allows the child to grow up and experience positive adult relationships based on trust, while an insecure attachment produces problems in adult relationships (which are based on mistrust).

Bartholomew (1990) described adult attachment styles along the dimensions: approach-avoidance, and autonomy-dependence which produce four types (table 2.1).

	AUTONOMY	DEPENDENCE
	positive self model - low anxiety	negative self model - high anxiety
APPROACH positive model of others	Secure - in relationships, and view of self	Pre-occupied - with self; difficulty in relationships
AVOIDANCE negative model of others	Dismissing - of others, and remain by self	Fearful - of others leaving, yet need them

(After Bartholomew et al 2001)

Table 2.1 - Adult attachment styles of Bartholomew (1990).

Tonin (2004) gave the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) (Parker et al 1979) and the Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ) (Griffin and Bartholomew 1994) to 21 detained individuals [11] with a history of stalking behaviour, 24 detained individuals without such a history (forensic controls), and thirty-three community controls (all matched for age, gender, and intelligence).

The PBI measures the early parent-child relationship, and produces two scales (Care and Protection). There are 25 items (12 for Care and 13 Protection) - eg: "Spoke to me in a warm and friendly

[11] These individuals were detained under the Mental Health Act (1983) in England and Wales in a medium secure unit in North London. They were convicted of a crime, but viewed as mentally disordered offenders.

voice", "Did not help me as much as I needed" and "Let me do those things I liked doing". Each item is scored as "very like", "moderately like", "moderately unlike" or "very unlike". It is scored for mother and father separately. Good parenting has high levels of Care and low levels of Protection (ie: not over-protective).

The RSQ measures adult attachments, and has four scales based on Bartholomew's (1990) categories. Individuals score items, like "I find it difficult to depend on other people" and "I worry about being alone", from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 7 (absolutely agree) scale (Farley and Shaver 1998).

On the PBI, the only significant difference was that stalkers had a higher father Protection score than the community controls. On the RSQ, the stalkers were significantly more Insecure (combination of fearful, dismissing, and pre-occupied) than the other two groups. Thus stalkers were more overprotected by their fathers and had an insecure attachment style.

The stalkers were sub-divided into those who followed one victim ("fixated stalker") or several women ("serial stalker"). The former scored significantly higher on the Pre-occupied scale of the RSQ. This distinction could be used as a typology.

2.3.1. Evaluation of Tonin (2004)

- (-) Only those convicted of stalking and detained included in the study. Obviously, it is easier to find these individuals than those not caught by the authorities.

- (+) Two control groups for comparison - forensic (non-stalking, but mentally disordered offenders) and community (non-stalking, non-mentally disordered offender). The groups were matched on three criteria, and differences between them on marital status and ethnicity were controlled for statistically.

- (-) The PBI relies on self-reported memories of childhood relationship with parents. There is a risk of "retrospective response bias" (Tonin 2004) (ie: memory errors) as well as direct dishonesty.

- (+) The use of psychometric questionnaires with established reliability and validity.

- (-) The PBI only measures two dimensions of the child-parent attachment, and does not include abusive behaviour, for example, which can affect the attachment (Tonin 2004).

- (-) The RSQ is criticised as "it is difficult to assess unconscious or automatic process with measures that tap conscious reports" (Tonin 2004). Bartholomew and Moretti (2002) defended it: "self reports are predictive of attachment-related dynamic processes and we are unable to argue for the greater (or even equal) utility of interviews in reflecting these processes" (quoted in Tonin 2004 p588).

- (-) No details are given of the sub-division of stalkers (eg: numbers in each group).

- (+)/(-) "The results of this study are likely to be generalisable to people with a stalking history detained under the Mental Health Act (1983) under conditions of security, because the experimental participants seemed to be a fairly representative sample of this group of people. However, the results are not generalisable to all stalkers (for example those incarcerated in the penal system, those in the community or female stalkers)" (Tonin 2004 pp588-589).

2.4. REFERENCES

Bartholomew, K (1990) Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 7, 147-178

Bartholomew, K & Moretti, M (2002) The dynamics of measuring attachment Attachment and Human Development 4, 2, 162-165

Bartholomew, K; Kwong, M.J & Hart, S.D (2001) Attachment. In Livesley, W.J (ed) Handbook of Personality Disorders, New York: Guilford Press

Bowlby, J (1980) Attachment and Loss, vol III: Loss, Sadness and Depression New York: Basic Books

Canter, D & Heritage, R (1990) A multivariate model of sexual offence behaviour: Developments in offender profiling Journal of Forensic Psychiatry 1, 185-212

Farley, R.C & Shaver, P.R (1998) Airport separations: A naturalistic study of adult attachment dynamics of separating couples Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 75, 5, 1198-1212

Griffin, D.W & Bartholomew, K (1994) The metaphysics of measurement: The case of adult attachment. In Bartholomew, K & Perlman, D (eds) Advances in Personal Relationships, Attachment Processes in Adulthood vol 5 London: Jessica Kingsley

Mohandie, K et al (2006) The RECON typology of stalking: Reliability and validity based upon a large sample of North American stalkers Journal of Forensic Science 51, 1, 147-155

Parker, G et al (1979) A parental bonding instrument British Journal of Medical Psychology 52, 1-10

Salmon, P (2003) A psychology for teachers. In Fransella, F (ed) International Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology Chichester: Wiley

Tonin, E (2004) The attachment styles of stalkers Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology 15, 4, 584-590

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

3. SOME ASPECTS OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF JURORS AND JURY DECISION-MAKING

3.1. DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making process of any group passes through three stages which can be applied to juries (Hastie et al 1983):

i) "orientation process" - an agenda is set and the evidence is explored;

ii) "open conflict" - this is where differences of opinion become obvious, and there is a focusing on the evidence that is disputed. This tends to be a move from facts to emotions.

iii) "reconciliation" - either the conflict is resolved and a verdict is given, or the majority attempt to persuade the others. The main point is that attempts are made to reduce any previous conflicts.

In the main, the majority opinion tends to predominate. For example, Kalven and Zeisel (1966) found that of 215 juries which had a majority view at the beginning of the deliberations, only six changed to the minority decision by the end of the discussions. But the longer the deliberations, there is evidence of a "leniency bias" to favour the defendant. So if there is disagreement, it is easier to persuade a not-guilty than a guilty verdict during the deliberations.

Generally, juries are required to reach unanimous decisions (ie: all agree on the verdict). This could take longer than a majority verdict (eg: 10:2), and so increase the possibility of "leniency bias". Hastie et al (1983) set up mock juries of a murder trial, but divided them into three conditions. Either they had to make a 12:0, 10:2 or 8:4 decision. All the proceedings were videotaped. It was found that for the two conditions with a majority-only verdict, discussions were shorter, and the majority jurors were more bullying in their

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

persuasive style. Thus unanimous verdicts may have benefits for justice.

In real-life, using Crown Court data in England and Wales, Thomas (2010) found that only 0.6% of all verdicts between 2006 and 2008 were hung juries, while 64% of decisions were convictions. Falsification, deception, drugs and theft offences were most likely to produce a guilty jury verdict.

Concerning the size of the jury itself, there seems to be no difference in the size of the jury as to whether it is more effective in the decisions made. Work with mock juries finds that 6 or 12 person juries come to the same verdicts (Brewer 2000).

3.2. JURORS AND CONFORMITY

Experiments with mock juries find that if 2/3 of the group agree, then that decision will eventually win. Any less and the group becomes deadlocked. Generally in psychology, it has been of interest how the majority win through. The research on conformity pressures show that the minority will change for a number of reasons.

Conformity is when an individual gives up their personal views under group pressure. Within a jury situation, two types of conformity may occur. These are normative conformity, and informational conformity. In the latter case, the individual conforms to the group norms because they do not know what to do, and they look to the group for guidance. It may be that the individual does not understand the legal technicalities of the case. While normative conformity is where the individual outwardly conforms to avoid rejection by the group or gain rewards from them, but inwardly disagrees. This is a more superficial form of conformity.

The classic study of normative conformity is by Solomon Asch in the 1950s. He asked individuals to say which two out of four lines were the same length, in front of a group of people. The answer was obvious. But a number of the group members deliberately gave the wrong answer. Would the "real participants" (ie: the others in the group were working for the experimenter), follow their own judgments and give the obvious correct answer or conform to the group with the wrong answer? The participants conformed in about 1/3 of the trials.

Asch (1951) developed this experiment to pin down the factors involved in conformity. He found the best group size was 7:1 to gain conformity. Also the more difficult the task, or the higher the status of group members produced greater conformity.

This idea of conformity to the majority was the dominant view until Moscovici (1976) showed that the minority could influence the whole group. In a series of artificial experiments, Moscovici found that a minority of two (in a group of six) could change the whole group if they were consistent in their arguments (and did not waiver). Further research has shown that the minority influence applies if the individuals appear to be making a sacrifice, are acting to principles not ulterior motives, and combine both flexibility and consistency in their views (Hogg and Vaughan 1995).

Nemeth (1977) in an experiment with mock juries compared whether the majority or minority wins if they are advocating "guilty" or "not guilty" verdicts. When the majority was advocating "not guilty", this view won on 16 out of 18 occasions. But if the majority view was "guilty", this view won on 7 occasions out of 19, with the jury being undecided 5 times.

As to whether the minority or majority view wins, it depends on who is arguing with the general social consensus. For example, when the minority view is the social consensus, then they have a better chance of winning, and the same with the majority (Brewer 2000).

3.3. DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN SMALL GROUPS

3.3.1. Group Polarisation

Another decision-making process observed in groups is known as group polarisation. Stoner (1961) was the first to experimentally study group polarisation, but it was called "risky shift" at that time. Participants were given twelve dilemmas to think about by themselves, then asked as a group to discuss the dilemmas. Stoner found that the group decisions were riskier than the individual decisions.

Later research noted that the group decision would sometimes be more cautious. Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) coined the phrase "group polarisation" to show that group decisions would always be more extreme (either riskier or more cautious) than the individual decisions.

But generally group polarisation does not apply for situations where individuals are arguing for something they believe in. However, the effect is also influenced by identification with the defendant, the victim, or the authorities. This process is through the social identity theory, where individuals "self-stereotype" themselves based on the groups they feel they belong to (Wetherell 1987). For example, a former police officer on the jury may identify with the police officers giving evidence,

and be influenced in their verdict that way.

3.3.2. Groupthink

The decision-making process of a group can also show evidence of "groupthink". Janis (1972) sees "groupthink" as the pressure to reach a consensus which leads to an extreme or bizarre decision. This situation could particularly happen to the jury in a long, highly publicised case.

There are certain conditions that facilitate "groupthink":

- The group is highly cohesive (ie: strong group identity).
- The group is insulated from outside information.
- The group is under pressure to make a decision.
- All the options are not assessed.
- The group feels the responsibility in making a very important decision.
- There may be a dominant, directive leader.

3.4. ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME

Jurors are not passively listening to the evidence, but, as in everyday social interactions, are actively making sense of events. This includes judgments about the intentions of individuals and the appropriateness of their behaviour. Such judgments can be seen in rape cases, particularly in reference to the victim's behaviour.

Finch and Munro (2005) explored the views of potential jurors in focus groups and a trial simulation in England on rape involving intoxicants. Four key themes emerged as important in the decision-making of jurors.

1. Victim's responsibility.

Did the victim ingest the intoxicant voluntarily (eg: self-administration of alcohol or recreational drugs) or not (surreptitious administration by another)? The participants were "adamant that the voluntary ingestion of intoxicants placed a higher burden of responsibility for events that followed on the victim and that this led to a corresponding lessening of the defendant's responsibility. Moreover, some participants took the attribution of responsibility further, suggesting that even when the victim's drink had been surreptitiously strengthened, she should nonetheless

retain responsibility for subsequent events, as she should have taken greater care about what she was drinking" (p31).

2. Defendant's intentions.

Even when the defendant deliberately "spiked" the drink, participants were not clear about blaming the them. "Participants were keen to differentiate between the morality of spiking the victim's drink in order to procure intercourse and doing so in order to ensure that she 'loosened up' and enjoyed the party. This position did not alter even in cases where intercourse occurred, provided that the initial motivation for interfering with the victim's drink was not sexual" (p31).

However, some participants took the extreme position that the contents of the glass were always the victim's responsibility as summarised by one participant: "drinks get spiked, girls know this and should take care" (p31).

3. Parity of intoxication.

If both parties were equally intoxicated, it was viewed as "unfair to hold the defendant criminally liable for intercourse that followed, even when the victim's intoxication had rendered her incapable of a strongly meaningful consent to intercourse" (p32). This is contrary to the legal position where intoxication is not a defence for lack of consent.

Where the defendant was less intoxicated than the victim, participants clearly saw the former as responsible for establishing consent. "Notwithstanding this, the participants were not wholly convinced that 'taking advantage' of an intoxicated victim by a sober defendant would necessarily amount to rape. They were agreed that it was morally reprehensible behaviour but that that, in itself, was not enough to convince them that any intercourse that followed would be rape" (p32).

4. Impact of intoxication.

The substance used to "spike" a drink was key here. If it was Rohypnol, then the participants were clear that any intercourse that followed was rape because "there was only one reason to administer Rohypnol and this was to commit rape" (p33).

But for the administration of alcohol and recreational drugs, the participants were more ambiguous. For example, one participant said: "I wouldn't want to call it.. consensual sex but I wouldn't want to call it

rape either" (p33).

Finch and Munro (2005) concluded from their study that the potential jurors were influenced by "stereotypical views of sexual behaviour" - eg: wanting to know sexual history of victim to see if she was that "sort of woman" (ie: indiscriminately having sexual intercourse with strangers). Disturbingly, there was a surprising level of condemnation for victims of rape who were intoxicated, even in situations in which their drinks had been interfered with without their knowledge" (p36).

When Finch and Munro (2007) expanded the study [12], they found that the attribution of responsibility to the victim was influenced by the "stereotyped views of acceptable female socio-sexual behaviour", and the "just world" theory (Lerner 1980). The latter is the belief that individuals get what they deserve.

"This, of course, also serves a strongly defensive function: if jurors are forced to accept that an undeserved injustice happened to the victim, they are faced with the prospect that they might similarly be visited with undeserved ill-fortune. If, however, the complainant can in some way be viewed as being the 'author of her own misfortune', jurors no longer perceive any injustice and the scenario can be rewritten into one in which a bad thing has happened to a bad person. In consequence, jurors are thus reassured about their own safety and ability to protect themselves against similarly harmful or distressing experiences" (Finch and Munro 2007 p606).

This seemed to be the case with participants similar to the victim in the mock trial (ie: young females). Finch and Munro (2007) admitted, with surprise: "While it may seem reasonable to expect that those who relate most closely to the complainant would be most strongly sympathetic to her situation, this does not appear to be the case" (p606).

"Indeed, it was only when an alien substance was

[12] "Across the simulations, the only factors that varied concerned the way in which the complainant came to be intoxicated and the nature of the intoxicating substance. All other factors, including the level of the parties' intoxication, remained constant, with the complainant being heavily intoxicated andthe defendant having consumed 'a few beers'. Four of the simulations involved alcohol, with the key variable relating to the means of administration to the complainant: (1) unambiguous self-administration; (2) self-administration under pressure from the defendant; (3) surreptitious strengthening of an alcoholic drink by the defendant; and (4) surreptitious administration into a non-alcoholic drink by the defendant. In the remaining simulations, the means of ingestion remained constant (surreptitious administration) but the substance varied: (5) Rohypnol was added by the defendant; (6) Rohypnol was added by a third party; and (7) the defendant added Estazolam, whichis a benzodiazepine with similar pharmacological properties and effects to Rohypnol but lacking its popular association with 'drug-assisted' sexual assault" (Finch and Munro 2007 p597).

introduced into the complainant's drink that the focus of attention shifted unequivocally to the behaviour of the defendant. This, in turn, indicates the social acceptability of the (mis)use of alcohol by men as a device to render intercourse more likely and its potential significance in rape deliberation" (Finch and Munro 2007 p607).

Real juries cannot be studied in England and Wales under section 8 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981, so other methods of study are necessary. Focus groups and trial simulations are far from ideal, but they give researchers an idea of how individuals in a jury or individual jurors may behave. In this case, the work by Finch and Munroe shows how jurors make sense of the attribution of blame and responsibility in highly contested cases like rape involving intoxication [13].

3.5. BIAS IN DECISIONS

In a comprehensive review of juries in England and Wales, Thomas (2010) looked at their fairness in different ways. One area of interest was racial discrimination. Do all-White juries discriminate against Black and minority ethnic (BME) defendants?

Using a case simulation with 41 real all-White juries, the race of the defendant and the victim were varied. Jury verdicts at the two courts used (Nottingham and Winchester) did not convict a BME male defendant of causing actual bodily harm (ABH) more than a White one.

Actual verdicts in Crown Court cases between October 2006 and March 2008 (n = 551 669) were also analysed. Jury conviction rates were slightly different based on the ethnicity of the defendant - 67% for Blacks, and 63% for Whites and Asians.

3.6. REFERENCES

Asch, S.E (1951) Effects of group pressure on modification and distortion of judgments. In Guetzkow, H (ed) Groups, Leadership and Men Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press

Brewer, K (2000) Psychology and Crime Oxford: Heinemann

Finch, E & Munro, V.E (2005) Juror stereotypes and blame attribution in rape cases involving intoxicants British Journal of Criminology 45, 25-38

Finch, E & Munro, V.E (2007) The demon drink and the demonised woman: Socio-sexual stereotypes and responsibility attribution in rape trials

[13] Thomas (2010) reported that juries convict more (55% of cases) than acquit in rape cases generally in England and Wales 2006-8, contrary to popular belief.

involving intoxicants Social and Legal Studies 16, 4, 591-614

Hastie, R; Penrod, S.D & Pennington, N (1983) Inside the Jury Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Hogg, M.A & Vaughan, G (1995) Social Psychology: An Introduction Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall

Janis, I.L (1972) Victims of Groupthink Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Kalven, J and Zeisel, H (1966) American Jury Boston: Little,Brown

Lerner, M.J (1980) The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion New York: Plenum Press

Moscovici, S (1976) Social Influence and Social Change London: Academic Press

Moscovici, S & Zavalloni, M (1969) The group as a polariser of attitudes Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 12, 125-135

Nemeth, C (1977) Interactions between jurors as function of majority versus unanimity decision rules Journal of Applied Social Psychology 7, 38-56

Stoner, J.A.F (1961) A comparison of individual and group decisions involving risk. In Brown, R (1965) (ed) Social Psychology New York: Free Press

Thomas, C (2010) Are Juries Fair? London: Ministry of Justice

Wetherell, M (1987) Social identity and group polarisation. In Turner, J.C; Hogg, M; Oakes, P; Reicher, S & Wetherell, M (eds) Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory Oxford: Blackwell

4. UNDERSTANDING CRIMINAL THINKING: EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT METHODS OF STUDY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

There are many different explanations for why crime is committed, whether they are formal, academic theories or common sense ideas in everyday life. In academic terms, there needs to be evidence to support a theory, and this is collected in various ways with different research methods. Here are some examples of different ways of studying aspects of crime, and, in particular, criminal thinking.

4.2. LISTENING TO OFFENDERS' JUSTIFICATIONS: SEMI-STRUCTURED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Willott and Griffin (1999) explored male economic crime offenders' justifications for their behaviour using semi-structured group discussions (tables 4.1 and 4.2), which were transcribed and studied with discourse analysis [14]. Taking a critical discursive approach [15], it was possible to identify how the men "discursively constructed crime" and how it related to "cultural practices in terms of historical, political and structural context" (p447).

Nine semi-structured group discussions were carried out in the West Midlands, England between July 1995 and September 1996. Sixty-six working-class men serving probation orders in the community for economic crimes (eg: burglary) were involved. The discussion was started by asking the men about the relationship between crime

[14] Discourse analysis "emphasises the role of language as the medium through which individuals construct their self-knowledge" (Willott and Griffin 1999 p448-449).

[15] This approach focuses upon language and how it is used in everyday life to construct social reality and identity (eg: Potter and Wetherell 1987).

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

and needing or wanting money. Other than that standard opening, the discussions were allowed to develop without limits by the researchers. This is why they were classed as semi-structured.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Able to collect rich data that goes beyond numbers. 2. Idiographic - because participant-led it allows researcher to collect individualised data. 3. Flexible and can go into any direction as participant leads. 4. More naturalistic, like everyday interactions, than structured interviews asking same questions to all participants with a limited number of response choices.	1. Difficult to compare interviews because not standardised. 2. As participant-led goes in direction they want to take it and could miss certain information. 3. Not replicable. 4. Difficult to analyse with quantitative methods.

Table 4.1 - Main strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews compared to structured interviews.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Able to interview more people quicker than individual interviews. 2. Less threatening for participant than alone with interviewer. 3. Not practical in some situations to do individual interviews (eg: young female researcher with older male offenders). 4. Individuals can prompt each other to give information.	1. Not all members of the group participate equally. 2. Individuals may be pressured to conform and influenced by others rather than give their opinions. 3. Individuals may be less willing to give personal information compared to an individual interview. 4. Harder to arrange and control than individual interviews.

Table 4.2 - Main strengths and weaknesses of group discussions compared to individual interviews.

The discourse analysis produced 33 "recurrent patterns of discourse" which were grouped into five superordinate themes in chronological order:

i) "We're meant to be the criminals, but they're the biggest criminals" - This theme involved the men "discursively positioning themselves as decent folk who

are forced into 'crime' by a knowing and unjust State system" (p451). In other words, the unfair system was to blame ("State-imposed injustice") - eg: "Martin": "If you're claiming unemployment and social and doing a little bit of work on the side, that's classified as a crime, even though the social money isn't enough for you to live on" (p450).

ii) "From the cradle to the grave"? - broken promises - The previous theme was emphasised as the men "talked about promises that had been made and broken by the now corrupt government since.. golden age. These accounts centred around the demise of the Welfare State, including the National Health Service, the State pension scheme and social security benefits" (p452).

iii) Men as family breadwinners - Because the State has failed, the men are forced to fend for themselves in order to fulfil their role as family breadwinners. This allowed the "discussants to construct their involvement in crime as more than understandable: as putting their children first" (p453).

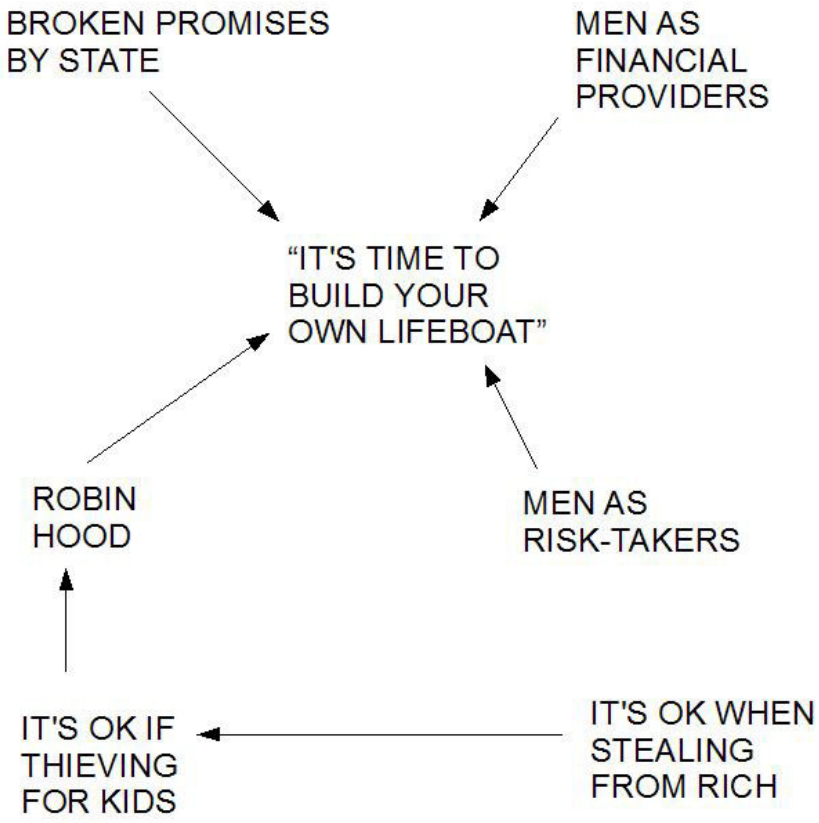
iv) "It's time to build your own lifeboat" - The previous theme is fully developed in the idea that the men had a duty to do whatever they could to get money for the family. "Talk of being let down by the government served to justify decreasing adherence to the laws of the land" (p454-455).

v) "Robin Hood, Robin Hood" - This theme meant that "the men can argue that crime through theft is morally acceptable if you steal from the rich and give to the poor. Drawing on such a popular cultural narrative allowed these men to construct their involvement in crime as heroic. The Robin Hood story depicts the morally courageous outlaws pitted against the evil force of the law" (p455). For example, "Mark" told of a prisoner he met who "done a residential burglary an' all he'd took out of the place was food, to feed his kids, that's all he took, didn't take nothing else, just emptied the food cupboards" (p455).

These themes together (figure 4.1) showed how "these men can position themselves as decent men who, in being forced by a criminal State to build their own economic lifeboat, adhere to a moral code whereby a redistribution of wealth along the lines implied by the Robin Hood narrative is acceptable if women and children are first into the lifeboat" (Willott and Griffin 1999 p456).

The strength of this study was that it showed how criminals make sense and justify their behaviour. It did

not try to examine whether what was said was true or not.



(Based on Figure 1 p450 Willott and Griffin 1999).

Figure 4.1 - How themes were linked together to justify behaviour.

4.3. SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS ABOUT STREET ROBBERY MOTIVATION

Wright et al (2006) used semi-structured individual interviews with twenty-seven imprisoned offenders in Cardiff, Wales and Bristol, England for sentences related to street robbery.

The participants were recruited by volunteering in response to posters around the prison, and the interviews lasted about one hour. The topics covered included the general background of the individual as well as the immediate context of the street robbery. Wright et al admitted that although it is impossible to determine whether prisoners are always telling the truth, such interviews are a common method of data collection that

does show a "reasonable concordance between what offenders say in relation to verifiable facts about themselves and the recorded facts.." (p5).

A number of motivations for the robbery were reported in the interviews:

i) "Fast cash" - The immediate need for money, but not for necessities like food, rather "a commitment to what might be described as a criminal lifestyle, wherein the pursuit of illicit action generated an ongoing need for 'fast cash' that realistically could only be satisfied through crime" (p6).

ii) "Good times/partying" - For example, to finance the use of drugs. "Perpetual partying leads to a need for cash that facilitates crime, while the proceeds of crime facilitate partying in a self-reinforcing cycle of self-indulgence" (p8).

iii) "Keeping up appearances/flash cash" - Some offenders reported the need for money to purchase "non-essential status-enhancing items" like jewellery and designer brand clothes (eg: "Just to show off to the girls like. The more money you had, the more status"; "Jonathan") (p8).

iv) "Buzz/excitement" - The robbery itself was enjoyable to some interviewees - eg: "It wasn't like, for money - I was more addicted to robbing than I was to drugs. Just get a funny feeling when I go out robbing" ("Steve") (p9).

v) "Anger/desire to fight" - In some cases, angry individuals started a fight, and afterwards stole from the victim. "Jason" reported, after splitting up with his girlfriend in a nightclub, finding a man asleep on the street: "Woke him up and heard him speak. I punched him and kicked him in the head ten times. Took his gold and his credit cards" (p10).

vi) "Informal justice/righting wrongs" - Robbery was used to collect debts owing from others, and as revenge - eg: "Rabbit" robbed a man as revenge for sleeping with his "Mrs".

This study give insight into the immediate decision-making of offenders, and shows that complex decisions are made, but not in a rational choice sense of weighing up potential costs and benefits. It shows the importance of "street culture" (eg: status, hedonism) in influencing the decision to rob. Street robberies are almost an inevitable result of "street-oriented lifestyle", for

Wright et al.

Sadly, such interviews can show the limitations of approaches to reform such criminals. "For example, individuals seeking to maintain a hedonistic lifestyle centred on illicit action are unlikely to consider legitimate employment as a realistic solution to their immediate need for cash, especially if they also place special value on a reputation for toughness that, inevitably, would be compromised by the disciplined subordination to authority demanded by most employers. Nor are robbers seeking to sustain a bout of partying likely to contemplate alternative forms of criminality, either because such offences do not net cash directly (eg: burglary, shoplifting) or because they require start-up funds (eg: drug-selling) that, by definition, already have been exhausted in the pursuit of illicit action" (Wright et al 2006 p13).

4.4. QUASI-EXPERIMENT COMPARING THE PERCEPTIONS OF OFFENDERS AND NON-OFFENDERS

Topalli (2005) was interested to see if offenders' perceptions of social situations were different to non-offenders. Three groups of individuals were recruited in St.Louis, Missouri, USA - eighteen "active violent offenders" from an urban area [16] [17], eighteen demographically matched controls from the same area (ie: non-violent offenders) [18], and eighteen undergraduates (non-offenders). The study was an independent groups design.

Though this study involves many controls typical of an experiment, Topalli accepted that it was a quasi-experiment [19] because the participants could not be randomly assigned to the different conditions [20] (a characteristics of a "true" experiment) [21] (table 4.3).

---

[16] The use of active criminals can be problematic, but better than imprisoned ones who could be seen as "unsuccessful". One problem was the payment of $25 to the participants, but it was not possible to recruit them for free.

[17] "Active violent offender" was defined as committed one violent crime in previous three months and at least three such offences in the previous year.

[18] Both these groups were recruited by active members of St.Louis' criminal underworld.

[19] Quasi-experiments are "experiments that have treatments, outcome measures, and experimental units, but do not use random assignment to create the comparisons from which treatment-caused change is inferred" (Cook and Campbell 1979).

[20] Sometimes called a "pseudo-experiment" or "only pre-existing groups experiment" (Brewer 2002).

[21] A "true" experiment, rather than a "quasi-experimental" design will have a number of controls (Brewer 2002):The random assignment of the participants to the conditions (known as randomisation).Standardised procedures in all conditions, except for the independent variable. Control over the variables in the experiment. In particular, the independent variable (controlled by the experimenter) can be clearly seen to lead to behaviour change (the dependent variable). Confounding

EXPERIMENT
• States causal hypothesis • Manipulates independent variable • Randomisation of participants to conditions • Systematic procedures • Uses controls for establishing validity
QUASI-EXPERIMENT
• States causal hypothesis • Independent variable not manipulated, but controlled • Cannot use randomisation • Specific procedures used • Uses some controls for establishing validity

Table 4.3 - Comparison of experiment and quasi-experiment.

The study used point-light display (PLD) to test the perception of ambiguous social situations. With PLD actors are videotaped interacting in a darkened room with small light bulbs attached to joints. When the individuals move only the points of light are seen moving. This technique removes social indicators like clothing, and clues to motives, like facial expression.

The interactions in the PLD video lasted 5-7 seconds and involved actor A approaching actor B from the front and tapping him on the shoulder [22]. This action was done slowly, at medium speed, or fast. The participants viewed all three speeds in random order. This part of the study was a repeated measures design.

After watching the three clips, participants were asked: "What is happening on the video?", and then in response to their answers, "What leads you to say that?". The answers to the questions were transcribed and coded independently for ratings of hostility and aggression in the PLD interactions.

There were significant differences in the perception of the PLD interactions by the three groups of participants. The slow speed PLD was perceived as aggressive the most by active violent offenders, the medium speed by the demographic controls, and the fast speed by the undergraduates (figure 4.2, table 4.4).

---

variables should be eliminated if possible or compensated for.

[22] See example of video at http://www.cjgsu.net/topalli_video.asap.

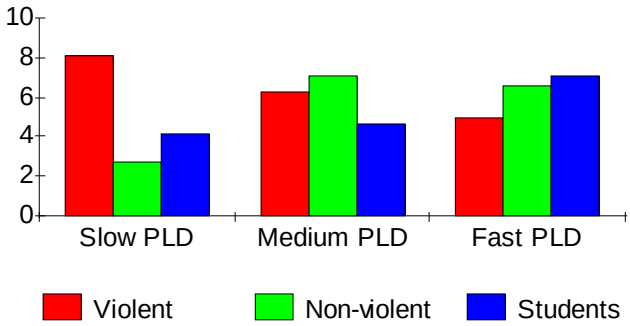


Figure 4.2 - Mean ratings of aggression (out of 9) in PLD interactions by each group.

	VIOLENT OFFENDERS	DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS	STUDENTS
SLOW PLD	25.6	11.8	13.3
MEDIUM PLD	19.3	19.6	13.5
FAST PLD	15.4	20.7	20.7

Table 4.4 - Overall mean ratings of hostility in PLD videos (out of 27).

4.5 STATISTICAL MODELLING OF TARGET SELECTION BY BURGLARS

How do burglars select their targets? A number of variables have been suggested, like the affluence of the neighbourhood, from asking offenders when captured. Such studies depend on the burglar being honest, and having insight into their behaviour. Statistical modelling based on data from actual crimes removes these concerns.

Bernasco and Nieuwbeerta (2005) developed a model based on the discrete spatial choice approach. using different equations, it assumes that a burglar chooses a target based on variables like affluence, expected likelihood of successful completion, physical access to property, and proximity to burglar's home.

The model was tested using the data of all single-offender burglaries committed by burglars living in the city of The Hague (the Netherlands) between 1996-2001 (n = 548 burglaries).

The key variables related to the likelihood of a neighbourhood being targeted were the house being empty for long periods in an area where all properties empty for long periods (eg: during work days), physical access, and number of potential objects to steal in the dwelling.

This type of statistical modelling of decision-making can help in crime prevention strategies in

potentially high risk neighbourhoods. However, it does assume that burglars are rational decision makers (ie: assess costs and benefits), whereas opportunity crimes suggest that this may not be the case.

4.6. REFERENCES

Bernasco, W & Nieuwbeerta, P (2005) How do residential burglars select target areas? British Journal of Criminology 44, 296-315

Brewer, K (2002) Research Methods in Clinical Psychology, Psychiatry and the Mental Health Professions Orsett, Essex: Orsett Psychological Services

Cook, T.D & Campbell, D.T (1979) Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis for Field Settings Rand McNally: Chicago

Potter, J & Wetherell, M (1987) Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour London: Sage

Topalli, V (2005) Criminal expertise and offender decision-making British Journal of Criminology 45, 269-295

Willott, S & Griffin, C (1999) Building your own lifeboat: Working-class male offenders talk about economic crime British Journal of Social Psychology 38, 445-460

Wright, R et al (2006) The foreground dynamics of street robbery in Britain British Journal of Criminology 46, 1-15

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

5. STALKING VICTIMS AND PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS IN AN AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Rates of self-reported stalking vary between studies (based on the definition of stalking used) and samples. Here are some examples (quoted in McIvor and Petch 2006):

- US random telephone survey - 8% of women and 2% of men at some point in their lives [23].
- Counselling centre staff - 5% by their clients.
- US psychiatrists - around one-third.
- US psychologists - 10% during careers.
- Australian psychologists - nearly 20%.
- Italian mental health professionals - 11%.

Recently, Bjorklund et al (2010) reported that among 615 Finnish university students, 22.3% had experienced one episode of stalking (ie: for one period of time) and 26.2% two or more episodes in their lifetime [24].

5.2. PURCELL ET AL (2005)

Purcell et al (2005) sent surveys [25] [26] to 3700 men and women randomly chosen from the electoral roll [27] in the state of Victoria in Australia [28].

---

[23] Other general population samples may be as high as 20% (Bjorklund et al 2010).

[24] Other studies of college students found rates varying from 11% to 89% (Bjorklund et al 2010).

[25] The main advantages of postal questionnaires are that respondents can remain anonymous, and there is no problem of interviewer-interviewee interaction variables (eg: gender) compared to face-to-face interviews. But it is not possible to clarify misunderstandings in the questionnaire, and the response rate is lower than other types of questionnaires, like face-to-face.

[26] There is also an issue of who completes the questionnaire (is it the person sent to?), the freedom of the respondent to complete it honestly, and whether they perceive behaviour in their lives as stalking. Furthermore, stalking victims may not be free to complete such questionnaires honestly (eg: being watched by stalking partner/ex-partner).

[27] The electoral roll includes all adults 18 years and older as registration and voting are compulsory. Even so, some individuals were missing (estimated 4% of population) (Purcell et al 2005).

[28] The study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia. Ethical issues to consider included:

- the respondent's right to non-participation in the study or to refuse to answer any questionnaire;
- assurance of anonymity and privacy of individual responses;
- informed consent to participate based on returning questionnaire.

ISBN: 978-1-904542-63-6

Victoria was divided into eighty-eight districts at the time of the study, and one of those was randomly selected, which was in the suburbs of Melbourne. This contained 36 766 adults. The researchers received 1844 completed surveys, which is a 47.8% response rate for all sent out [29] [30].

The purpose of the study was to measure psychiatric morbidity among stalking victims. Just concentrating on known victims "probably represent the extreme end of the spectrum of stalking" (Purcell et al 2005 p416).

Stalking was defined in terms of behaviour - had any person (male or female) ever done the following [31] [32]:

- followed them;
- kept them under surveillance;
- loitered around their home, workplace or other places they frequent;
- made unwanted approaches;
- made unwanted telephone calls;
- sent unwanted letters, faxes or e-mails;
- sent offensive materials;
- ordered things on their behalf that they did not want;
- interfered with their property.

Answering in the affirmative here, led to further questions on the frequency of the behaviour, and levels of fear about it [33]. Stalking victimisation was scored as two or more intrusions that induced fear.

Mental health was assessed with the 28-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) (Goldberg and Hillier 1979) [34] for general psychological health, and the Impact of Event Scale (IES) (Horowitz et al 1979) for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) caused by stalking. The GHQ-28 asks respondents to rate the intensity of each

---

[29] 697 surveys were not received by the sample (eg: due to person no longer at address, or deceased). If these are removed, the response rate was 61%.

[30] The demographics of the responses were similar to the demographic distribution of the district, based on information in the electoral register, except for fewer 18-25 year-olds and more 56 years old and above responses (Purcell et al 2005).

[31] The list is comprehensive, but it may have missed types of behaviour, so an "any other" category could have been included. In their study of students, Bjorklund et al (2010) included categories like "verbal abuse", "hurting emotionally", "repeatedly asking for a date", "trying to manipulate or force victim into dating", and "finding out information about the victim without asking him or her directly".

[32] The study did not include cyberstalking (Bocij et al 2003).

[33] Other questions related to the nature of the relationship with the stalker, and levels of violence involved.

[34] This is a standardised questionnaire which has been validated for use with the general population (eg: Banks 1983).

symptom over the past month on a four-point scale (from "better than usual" to "much worse than usual") (table 5.1). The IES has fifteen items to be rated for the previous seven days as "never", "rarely", "sometimes", or "often" (table 5.2) [35] [36].

- Been getting a feeling of tightness or pressure in your head?
- Been getting scared or panicky more for no good reason?
- Found everything getting on top of you?
- Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
- Felt that life is entirely hopeless?

(Source: Goldberg and Hillier 1979)

Table 5.1 - Examples of items from GHQ-28.

- I thought about it when I didn't mean to.
- I had waves of strong feelings about it.
- Pictures about it popped into my mind.
- Any reminder brought back feelings about it.
- My feelings about it were kind of numb.

(Source: Horowitz et al 1979)

Table 5.2 - Example of items from IES.

Based on the responses, three groups were constructed and compared [37]:

i) victims of brief stalking or harassment (lasting approximately two days duration) (n = 196).
ii) victims of protracted stalking (duration of six months or more) (n = 236).
iii) a control group with no experiences of stalking (n = 432).

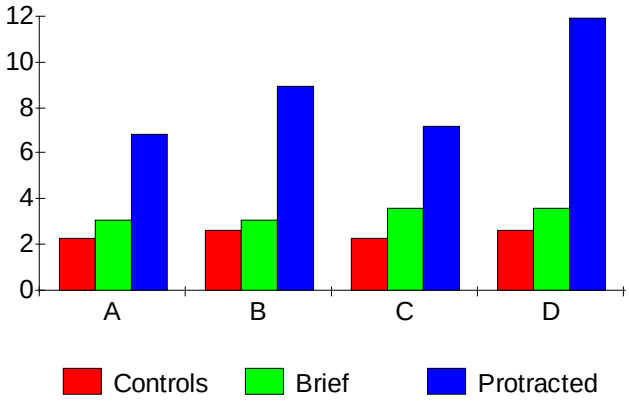
The first two groups could not controlled by the researchers, but the last group was matched for gender, age, highest level of education, and employment status [38].

On the GHQ-28, 36.4% of protracted stalking victims

[35] Both measures are self-reported questionnaires which means that they are dependent on the honesty of respondents. This does not mean so much that the respondents might lie, but that they may have forgotten the information or do not have the insight about themselves and their behaviour.
[36] Both questionnaires are only screening for recent, and short-term problems.
[37] This process is classed as a post-hoc allocation of participants to groups.
[38] "As marital status could not be controlled between groups, the possibility remains that increased rates of psychopathology among victims of stalking may be associated with higher rates of separation and divorce" (Purcell et al 2005 p420).

scored about the cut-off point for psychiatric morbidity compared to 21.9% of brief stalking victims and 19.3% of controls. The mean total scores were 23.2, 18.5 and 16.5 respectively. The first group (protracted stalking) is significantly higher than the other two groups [39] [40].

On the IES, the victims of protracted stalking were significantly more likely to be above the threshold for PTSD than brief victims (16.3% vs 5.1%; mean 12.9 vs 5.2) [41]. Purcell et al (2005) concluded that "in a significant minority of victims, stalking victimisation is associated with psychiatric morbidity that may persist long after it has ceased" (p416).



A = "Felt that life isn't worth living?"
B = "Thought about the possibility that you might do away with yourself?"
C = "Found yourself wishing you were dead and away from it all?"
D = "Found the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind?"

Figure 5.1 - Percentage of respondents endorsing items about suicidal ideation on the GHQ-28.

5.3. REFERENCES

Banks, M.H (1983) Validation of General Health Questionnaire in a young community sample Psychological Medicine 13, 349-353

Bocij, P; Bocij, H & MacFarlane, L (2003) Cyberstalking: A case study of serial harassment in the UK British Journal of Forensic Practice 5, 2, 25-32

Bjorklund, K et al (2010) The prevalence of stalking among Finnish university students Journal of Interpersonal Violence 25, 4, 684-698

[39] The threshold level of significance was set at 0.01 rather than the more common 0.05. The purpose of this was to reduce the risk of a type I error. This is where the results are seen as significantly different when they are not.

[40] The GHQ-28 also includes items about suicidal thoughts, which were endorsed significantly more by protracted victims (figure 5.1).

[41] Purcell et al admitted that "the study did not consider the extent to which variance in psychopathology is accounted for by factors unrelated to stalking" (p420).

Goldberg, D.P & Hillier, V.P (1979) The scaled version of the General Health Questionnaire Psychological Medicine 9, 139-145

Horowitz, M et al (1979) Impact of Event Scale: A measure of subjective distress Psychosomatic Medicine 41, 209-218

McIvor, R.J & Petch, E (2006) Stalking of mental health professionals: An under-recognised problem British Journal of Psychiatry 188, 403-44

Purcell, R et al (2005) Association between stalking victimisation and psychiatric morbidity in a random community sample British Journal of Psychiatry 187, 416-420