Research Connections highlights the published academic work of faculty and graduate students, along with research projects of significant impact. The newsletter is distributed quarterly by Simon Fraser University’s School of Criminology.
CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATES OF 2020
Welcome to the Summer 2020 edition of the School of Criminology’s Research Connections newsletter. It is my pleasure to introduce you to a selection of recent publications from our faculty and graduate students.

As is typical for the School of Criminology, the articles highlighted in this edition showcase a wide variety of research representing the diversity of our faculty research specialties. Examples in this newsletter include the impact of police facial expressions on audience perceptions, medically assisted dying and related legislation in British Columbia, the relationship between psychopathic traits and social networks in university students, overdose experiences of youth who use drugs, and factors involved in estimating time since death in bodies disposed of in the trunks of cars.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Please send your comments, questions and story ideas to crimcomm@sfu.ca, and feel free to contact the authors directly with questions about any of the studies summarized herein.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wong
Associate Professor
Associate Director (Research)
School of Criminology

Research Connections highlights the published academic work of faculty and graduate students, along with research projects of significant impact. The newsletter is distributed quarterly by Simon Fraser University’s School of Criminology.

We respectfully acknowledge that SFU is on unceded Coast Salish territory – the traditional territories of the Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw), Tsleil-Waututh (səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ), Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Kwikwetlem, Semiahmoo, and Katzie First Nations.
BACKGROUND

Police officers exist at the center of much perceptual scrutiny. A budding body of research has explored the effects of different interventions on perceptions of officers. For example, scholars have investigated the effects of procedurally just dialogue on citizens’ perceptions of police legitimacy, door-to-door community policing visits on residents’ willingness to cooperate with officers, and body-worn cameras on perceptions of officer accountability. Most of these interventions, however, have relied upon formal contact between citizens and police. Much less research has explored how simply observing officers in different capacities can influence perceptions of them. The present research, therefore, contributes to the police perception literature by experimentally evaluating the effects of facial expressions on perceptions of officers: a no-cost, easily trainable, and quickly implementable intervention for police agencies of all sizes in all places.

METHODS

The present research draws from two samples of diverse participants recruited via a large public university (Study I; N = 92) and Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Study II; N = 98) in order to investigate the relationships between officer expression and perceptions of police. As part of the experimental paradigm, participants observed images of police officers exhibiting either a neutral facial expression or a Duchenne smile, and then rated them on several important outcomes (e.g., aggressiveness, approachability, friendliness, respectfulness, accountability, and competency). Proportion tests were used to assess the effects of such expressions on perceptions while holding all other elements of officer appearance constant.

RESULTS

The analyses revealed that smiling unilaterally enhanced perceptions of police officers: when exhibiting a smile, officers were perceived as less aggressive and more approachable, friendly, respectful, accountable, and competent. The analyses also revealed that these effects were robust across both samples of participants and consistent across both officer gender and officer pose.

CONCLUSION

Simply observing police officers exhibiting different facial expressions is enough to change perceptions of them. Given the ease by which facial expressions can be manipulated by officers and their relevance to all kinds of different policing contexts, these findings exhibit important implications for police. Citizens observe police at much greater frequencies than they do formally engage with them. During these observations, citizens are also always exposed to the facial expression of the observed officer. Formalizing expression manipulation may thus be a fruitful intervention for police agencies to consider when attempting to enhance perceptions of their officers and relations with their communities.
Are psychopathic traits associated with core social networks? An exploratory study in university students


ARE NETWORKS ASSOCIATED WITH PSYCHOPATHIC TRAITS?

One of the hallmarks of psychopathy observed in both forensic and general populations is problems with interpersonal relationships. Yet, despite the longstanding relationship between psychopathy and interpersonal dysfunctions, there has been very little research that has examined how self-reported psychopathic traits are associated with structural differences in a person’s (i.e., ego’s) social network. Given the importance of interpersonal dysfunction to the construct of psychopathy it seems likely that psychopathic traits will impact individual perceptions of how one structures and maintains their interpersonal relations. For this paper we explored psychopathy in the context of the general population, with the objective to answer the question: do people with higher psychopathic traits structure their core social networks differently?

A total of 480 students answered a survey which included both an assessment of psychopathic traits (the CAPP: Comprehensive Assessment of Psychopathic Personality (CAPP) and the PPI:SF - the Psychopathic Personality Inventory: Short Form), and self-ratings of the structure of their core social networks (e.g. close friends, family members, etc). We use effective size to capture network structure, which considers the number of alters that an ego has, as well average number of ties that each alter has to other alters in their network. Effective size asks: how much is the individual connecting to people who otherwise don’t know each other? For instance, if all five of your close contacts know each other, your “effective” network size is one (i.e., everyone is connected); reaching to one person means that you reached to one cohesive social circle. Individuals with a high effective network size (e.g., 4-5), for their part, have more disconnected networks, meaning that each tie may be reaching to different social circles. Considering that core social networks are where people generally invest more time and use more social capabilities, we hypothesized that differences in core network structure will be related to psychopathic personality traits. The nature of this relationship, however, was exploratory as certain PPI domains (e.g., Fearless Dominance) can be associated with traits such as social visibility and popularity. These findings suggest that higher scores in psychopathic traits have a negative effect on network connection (i.e., more disconnected ties between alters). The dominance and manipulation domain and subscale findings can be interpreted as preliminary evidence of a deliberate strategy to provide a more influential position within one’s social network. A marker of psychopathic personality disorder is someone who is getting more than they give in social and economic relationships through deceit, conning, manipulation and exhibiting chronic and lifelong patterns of irresponsibility in relationships and parasitic lifestyles. These individuals may be attempting to maximize advantage by acting as “power brokers”; that is, by controlling connections and the flow of information among other individuals in the network in a way that allows them to obtain greater perceived benefits. Additional research into individuals’ motivations for creating and maintaining specific relationships would help to clarify whether these network patterns are truly the result of deliberate social strategies. Taken together, our findings support the use of SNA when examining social relationships and psychopathic traits, as it can help to reveal structural differences that may otherwise go unnoticed.

DISCONNECTED NETWORKS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC PSYCHOPATHIC PERSONALITY TRAITS

Our findings indicate that students who maintained more disconnected networks (higher effective size) also had higher self-ratings of domains (CAPP) and subscales (PPI: SF) related to interpersonal dominance, manipulation, poor attachment and emotional regulation. Interestingly, effective size was not associated with domains related to social visibility and popularity. These findings suggest that higher scores in psychopathic traits have a negative effect on network connection (i.e., more disconnected ties between alters). The dominance and manipulation domain and subscale findings can be interpreted as preliminary evidence of a deliberate strategy to provide a more influential position within one’s social network.

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Maturation beyond age: Interrelationships among psychosocial, adult role, and identity maturation and their implications for desistance from crime


BACKGROUND

For nearly a century, criminologists have linked the concept of maturation to desistance from offending (e.g., Glueck & Glueck, 1937). Efforts to unpack the black box of maturation are relatively underdeveloped (Morizot & Le Blanc, 2007). Some have suggested that maturation is merely the process of ageing and losing energy (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Rocque (2015) suggested that maturation is a function of psychosocial, adult role, and identity dimensions. Components of psychosocial maturation include perspective (e.g., being future oriented), responsibility, resistance to peer influence, and temperance (e.g., self control and suppression of aggression). Adult role maturation describes having a strong work ethic, positive attitudes towards social institutions, and an ability to consider the well-being of others. Identity maturation describes prosocial attitudes and an openness to adopting norms and values.

STUDY AIMS

Rocque’s theory remains relatively untested with respect to two key questions. First, are there specific components of psychosocial, adult role, and identity maturation that play a larger role in the development of maturation more broadly? Does the ability to resist peer influence (psychosocial dimension) influence the development of a more positive sense of self (identity dimension), or does viewing oneself in a more positive light provide the confidence to resist the influence of peers? Second, are specific components of psychosocial, adult role, and identity maturation especially important to desistance?

METHOD

The current study used data from the Pathways to Desistance Study (PDS). The PDS is a longitudinal study of serious and violent adolescent male (n = 1,170) and female (n = 184) offenders from Phoenix, Arizona and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Participants were first interviewed in adolescence and interviews continued for several years into adulthood. These interviews included measures of psychosocial, adult role, and identity maturation components.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

The relationship between maturation components and desistance was examined using psychopathology network modeling. The variables of interest are treated as “nodes” (e.g., the maturation components and offending) and “edges” (i.e., lines) between two nodes indicate the magnitude of their association. Network centrality measures illustrated which maturation components were most responsible for the development of maturation more broadly. The first network produced was a between-person network comparing overall levels of maturation and offending. The second was a temporal network that assessed the influence of within-individual changes in average levels of a given maturation component at time t-1 on changes in an individual’s average level on any other maturation component, and on offending, at time t.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between-Subjects Network
The between-subjects network (Figure 1) indicated that responsibility (psychosocial domain), work orientation (adult role domain), and self-identity (identity domain) had significantly higher expected influence centrality values compared to all other maturation components. Thus, individuals that scored high on these components tended to score high on all other maturation components. Higher levels of responsibility, work orientation, and self-identity early in the life course may signal that an individual will value and benefit from adult roles and develop a positive sense of self, which is consistent with theories on desistance in adulthood (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 2005).

From the psychosocial maturation domain, higher levels of temperance were associated with lower levels of offending. From the adult role maturation domain, higher levels of consideration of others were associated with lower levels of offending. From the identity maturation domain, lower levels of moral disengagement were associated with lower levels of offending.

Temporal Network
The temporal network (Figure 2) showed that the high centrality values observed in the between-subjects network for responsibility and work orientation were for different reasons. Changes in responsibility tended to

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Figure 1. Between-subjects network structure of maturation dimensions and offending

Notes. The weight of an edge is determined by the magnitude of the effect size. Blue edges represent positive associations; red edges represent negative associations. The additive inverse of moral disengagement values was used.
Maturation beyond age: Interrelationships among psychosocial, adult role, and identity maturation and their implications for desistance from crime


Figure 2. Temporal network structure of maturation dimensions and offending

Notes. Directed arrows represent lagged effects (lag-1). Self-looping arrows indicate autoregressive effects. The color of the arrow indicates a positive (blue) or negative (red) effect. Between-subject variance was removed via person mean-centering. The additive inverse of moral disengagement values was used.

Influence changes in various maturation components whereas work orientation tended to change as a result of changes in various maturation components. Therefore, psychosocial maturation may give way to adult role maturation.

Qualitative studies have also suggested that this type of process exist (Boonstoppel, 2019). Although prior research indicated that employment at a young age was not associated with desistance (e.g., Uggen, 2000), this may not be the case for individuals high in responsibility as they tended to be more mature in general. Within-individual improvements in resistance to peer influence predicted future improvement in self-identity, but not vice-versa. Psychosocial maturation may therefore be important to consider as part of identity theories of desistance (e.g., Giordano et al., 2002).

Within-individual improvements in perspective, consideration of others, and work orientation, and lower than average level of moral disengagement, each predicted within-individual decreases in offending. Consideration of others and moral disengagement stood out as they also influenced many other maturation components (i.e., multiple out-degree arrows). These components were central to both the development of maturation more broadly and desistance and therefore may be ideal intervention targets.
“It’s like super structural” – Overdose experiences of youth who use drugs and police in three non-metropolitan cities across British Columbia


INTRODUCTION

Young people who use drugs are vulnerable to experience or encounter drug-related overdose deaths. The proliferation of fentanyl and its analogues in the unregulated illicit drug market has increased the risk of overdose, drawing greater attention to drug policies and the criminalization of drug use. In response, there have been increases in harm reduction services and policies such as the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act (GSDOA) which exempts people who witness an overdose and call 9-1-1 from being charged for possession of drugs. However, fear of police continues to be a barrier to calling 9-1-1, particularly for structurally vulnerable groups. The aim of this study was to highlight the qualitative findings of overdose experiences of young people who use drugs to determine the ways their experiences with police and understanding of the GSDOA influences their decision to call 9-1-1 in overdose events.

METHODS

From May 2017 and June 2018, we used respondent driven sampling to recruit 449 young people, aged 16–30 years, who used drugs at least weekly in the past six months and who had a police encounter in the past year in one of three non-metropolitan cities in British Columbia (Prince George, Victoria and Chilliwack). A purposive subset of 38 participants took part in a qualitative interview about their experiences with police, overdose events, decisions to call 9-1-1, and their understanding of the GSDOA. Their responses were coded in NVIVO and analyzed using interpretive description.

FINDINGS

Overdoses were a ubiquitous but traumatic part of young people who use drugs’ lives. Fear of fentanyl in the drug supply left participants concerned for themselves and others. Decision to call 9-1-1 was rooted in their level of trust, perceptions of police and previous experiences with them. Negative experiences with police at overdoses occurred when police used their power without benefit to youth, were rough or disrespectful to them, or did not show care for the person overdosing. Participants saw police in a positive light if they were compassionate, stepping aside for paramedics, or when they revived someone experiencing an overdose. Some participants believed that how police responded and treated young people in the event of an overdose was embedded within policies that go beyond individual officers practice. Participants had very mixed knowledge of the GSDOA and were concerned about legal ramifications if they called 9-1-1.

IMPLICATIONS

Collaboration with police and local stakeholders, including young people, is required to increase awareness and penetration of policies such as the GSDOA among both young people and police officers. Changes to policing cultures that prioritize health rather than criminalize people who use drugs may increase trust of police officers and increase calls to 9-1-1, thus enhancing public health and safety.

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DRUG POLICY; CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSES OF SOCIAL ‘PROBLEMS’; POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS; MENTAL HEALTH; COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH; PARTICIPATORY METHODS; QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS; PRECARIOUS WORK AND WORKERS’ RIGHTS; PRISON HEALTH.

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Male victims’ experiences of the criminal justice response to intimate partner abuse in four English-speaking countries

BACKGROUND
The criminal justice system plays a pivotal role in addressing the safety of victims of intimate partner abuse (IPA). Over the past 40 years, most changes in the criminal justice response to IPA have been made with the intention of improving support to abused women and their children. However, a growing body of both qualitative and quantitative research has found a large number of men are victimized by their intimate partners. Research shows that men suffer from various types of IPA, including physical violence and abuse, psychological, financial, sexual, and legal and administrative abuse, parental alienation, and homicide. The discrepancy between two main sources of data on prevalence of male victims, with population survey data showing similar rates of victimization among men and women and official police statistics indicating a much higher prevalence of victimization among women – may point to men’s barriers to reporting violence to the police.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION
This qualitative study explored the help seeking experiences of 38 abused men within the criminal justice system (CJS) in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Five researchers with an interest in male victimization formed a research network to enable and design the international project. Participants were recruited via an advertisement that provided key study information and was distributed via existing professional networks, websites of targeted men’s organizations. Twelve online focus groups (three in each country) were conducted and themes were identified inductively at a semantic level. Thematic analysis identified that most of their experiences were negative and reflected the gender paradigm (i.e., views on IPA as almost exclusively perpetrated by males against females in the defence of the patriarchy) embedded in the criminal justice response.

Among men who avoided seeking help from the police, ideas and beliefs associated with the norms of hegemonic masculinity and rigid expectations to be in control were detected. A few men reported it would be unmanly to show injuries to the police and succumb to the role of a victim from the female partner. Some men were afraid of stigmatization from the system itself, such as incorrect identification of the victims as perpetrators. Indeed, when the police came to the scene and made an arrest, it was mainly the men from our study who were arrested. Other concerns expressed by men that kept them from calling the police in cases of IPA were fears about the well-being of children affected by the arrest, financial issues, partner’s threats to destroy men’s lives, and prior negative experiences with seeking help with the police. The men’s experiences within the courts were even more problematic. The court systems demonstrated the presence of gender-based biases, such as treating men as the primary perpetrators or dismissing the male victim experience. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized for all men who experienced IPA in these four countries, this study suggests that male victims’ treatment within the CJS is a serious international issue not limited to the boundaries of one society. This study offers insights into the relevance of a gender-inclusive criminal justice response in addressing IPA.
The differential portrayal of ‘sympathetic’ homicide victims in the media


BACKGROUND

In contemporary media, crime is often at the forefront of news coverage. In particular, the coverage of homicides in the news is highly disproportionate compared to the reality of how often these crimes actually occur (Robinson, 2014). Additionally, not all homicides receive the same amount of attention and prominence in the news (Gruenwald et al., 2009). The social construction of crime by the media suggests that crime news can be ‘framed’ by prioritizing certain stories over others, thereby creating the perception that a particular issue is (or is not) a problem (Jewkes, 2004). In essence, because the media has the journalistic power and control to decide what, and who, becomes the news, they have the ability to frame news stories in such a way that reinforces stereotypes and facilitates an amplification that suits hegemonic values (Jiwani, 2014b).

The theory of newsworthiness suggests that the selection of a story is not random. In particular, certain types of victims are more likely to receive preferential coverage, and certain types of victims are disproportionately under-reported by the media. The implications of disproportionate reporting of crime by the media and the subsequent skewed public perceptions of crime can be profoundly consequential for public safety, fear of crime, police investigations, and criminal justice policies and practices (Gilchrist, 2010). Newsworthiness is typically determined by two dimensions: (a) the selection and publication of a story in the news, and (b) the prominence of the story in the news. The purpose of this study was to explore the role that characteristics of homicide victims play in the presentation of a news story. In particular, we explore whether – and if so, in what ways – homicide victims are portrayed differently in the Vancouver Sun newspaper.

METHODS

The dataset used in the current study consisted of all homicide-related articles published in the Vancouver Sun over a twelve-year period (between 1 January 2004 and 31 December 2015). The search yielded a total of 3,998 articles that were included in the final database. A comprehensive codebook was created to help ensure the internal consistency of coding across a team of 16 independent coders and all articles. All coders were trained in codebook application and participated in pilot testing. For each article, information was extracted for 107 variables (when information was available). Quality control and verification of coding for all articles was conducted during different stages of the project.

An index variable (the ‘Sympathetic Victim’ Index) was created to capture a range of characteristics of homicide victims which are hypothesized to elicit an emotional/sympathetic response from the reader. The index consists of 11 variables pertaining to the victim (or any of the victims if more than one homicide victim was mentioned in the article). See Table 1. Each variable was coded dichotomously based on the presence (1) or absence (0) of each variable in the article.

Regression analyses were used to examine the predictive value of the Sympathetic Victim Index on the structural characteristics of the article that were used to measure prominence. The dependent variables consisted of three separate measures of prominence: (a) placement of an article on the front page (either A1 or B1), (b) the inclusion of a photograph, and (c) length of the article (i.e. word count (logged)).

RESULTS

Using logistic regression, results show
The differential portrayal of ‘sympathetic’ homicide victims in the media


that the Sympathetic Victim Index is a significant predictor of whether an article appears on the front page ($B = 0.369$, $z = 10.94$, $p < 0.001$). In particular, stories that feature a victim with a high score on the Index were significantly more likely to appear on the front page compared to those with a lower score on the Index. Next, we used logistic regression to examine the association between the Index and whether an article included a photograph. Results demonstrated a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship ($B = 0.501$, $z = 16.24$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that in comparison to news stories that score low on the Index, articles that score high were significantly more likely to include at least one photograph. Last, multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between the Index and the length of an article. Stories that scored high on the Index were significantly related to a higher word count ($B = 0.196$, $t = 24.57$, $p < 0.001$) compared to those that scored low on the Index.

**CONCLUSION**

As the media are responsible for much of what society knows about crime, it is important that the news educate their audience by accurately portraying crime in society – or, at least, not distort the reality of crime. Our findings indicate that when it comes to publishing stories in the news, homicide victims with more traditionally ‘sympathetic’ characteristics are differentially reported on in print media. In particular, victims who score low on the Index (i.e. primarily marginalized social groups) are more likely to be obscured from view in terms of newspaper reporting. The implications of framing the relative importance of marginalized victims to the audience are not insignificant. The under-representation of marginalized victims creates an inherent bias toward perceptions of victimization, which has a direct impact on the dominant discourse in society by creating the impression that the public need not be concerned about certain types of victims (Gilchrist, 2010). Criminologists should continue to contemplate the potential residual effects of media distortion and the consequential and symbiotic implications these have on public perceptions of crime, fear of victimization, and law enforcement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sympathetic Victim Index (Sum; range 0-11)</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child or senior</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than high school education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known to authorities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not associated with gangs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not associated with drugs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not associated with sex trade</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim identified by name</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of statement by the family</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Sympathetic Victim Index*

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A conundrum – What is the best way to get rid of a dead body? Dump it in a car? Set fire to it? What really happens?


BACKGROUND

I commonly deal with homicide victims that have been dumped in the trunk of a car. The car serves two purposes. It might appear to be a good place to hide a body and it can be used to move the body to a remote location. Invariably, both the car and body are simply abandoned. Eventually, the body will be discovered but can we still use insects (forensic entomology) to estimate elapsed time since death in such cases? Sometimes a killer will return weeks later to see ‘what has happened’ and is dismayed to discover that the body has not simply ‘gone away’ but is in fact, still rather messily decomposing. At this point, it is not uncommon for the killer to set fire to the vehicle and body in an effort to destroy the evidence. So, then the question is again, will enough entomological evidence remain to allow an estimate of elapsed time since death?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Three cars were obtained from the JIBC Fire and Safety Division and placed deep in the forest at the BCIT Woodlot in Maple Ridge, BC. Six freshly euthanized pig carcasses, as human proxies, (SFU Animal Care, Protocol Number 8051–06) were obtained, dressed in clothing and placed at the research site. Three were placed in the trunks of the cars and the cars were parked in the forest, separated by several kilometres. The other three carcasses were placed exposed in the forest as controls. The control carcasses were placed in cages (bar spacing ~10 cm) to prevent bear scavenging. Dataloggers were placed with the carcasses and each carcass was examined twice a week, at which time the carcasses were photographed, decomposition stage was assessed, and an extensive insect collection was made. Examination of the confined carcasses was complicated as extensive efforts had to be made to ensure that insects did not enter the vehicle during the collection. Therefore, a large roll of clear plastic was placed over the car to the ground before the trunk was opened (Fig. 1). Once the first experiment was complete, the vehicles were towed to the JIBC Fire Academy and each car was individually set on fire, using a small amount of gasoline on the driver’s seat. Each car was burned until fully involved and fire fighters stated that the fire was complete, at which point the fires were extinguished (Fig. 2). The next day, each vehicle was searched for insect evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The exposed carcasses were immediately colonized by blow flies (Diptera: Calliphoridae) which laid eggs on the bodies. However, colonization of the car carcasses was delayed by three to six days. Once colonized, decomposition progressed much more rapidly in the car carcasses with complete skeletonization occurring within 13 days in 2 of the 3 vehicles, whereas only one exposed carcass reached skeletonization by Day 28. A variety of blow fly species colonized the exposed carcasses, but the confined carcasses were dominated by just two species. Interestingly, one car carcass was demonstrably slower to decompose and was colonized by far fewer insects.

Once the exposure experiment was completed, the cars were then set on fire, as if by arson. The following day, insect evidence was recoverable from all three vehicles, from the trunks and from the entire interior of the vehicles. All life stages were recovered. However, one vehicle was slow to ignite and did not burn as fully as the others. This was the same vehicle which
A conundrum – What is the best way to get rid of a dead body? Dump it in a car? Set fire to it? What really happens?


Figure 1. Stacey Malainey, MA student, examining carcass, under protective plastic ‘tent’

Figure 2. Fully involved car fire

contained the least colonized carcass. Once the remains of the vehicles were examined, the mystery was explained. This particular vehicle alone had a solid metal fire shield between the trunk and passenger area, in an effort to prevent exactly such an occurrence as we were creating – the spread of a fire. This presumably also presented a barrier to insect colonization, reducing the number of insects that were able to access the carcass, thereby, slowing decomposition.

Understanding the dynamics of car fires and their impact on insect evidence is vital in analyzing such homicide cases. Insects can provide a minimum elapsed time since death but these experiments indicate that colonization may be delayed by as much as six days if a body is confined in a vehicle so this must be considered in the analysis. However, once colonized, decomposition and insect development will be greatly accelerated due to increased heat and reduced predation and parasitism. Colonization will also depend on the construction of the vehicle itself and in particular, whether it has a fire shield.

It may be considered that a burnt out vehicle may contain little physical evidence, but these experiments indicate (as my previous work has shown in a residence) that insect evidence will invariably survive fire and may still be used to estimate elapsed time since death. All stages of the blow fly life cycle survived throughout the car indicating that first of all, the victim did not die in the vehicle fire, but also how long prior to the fire they died.

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THIS RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED BY STACEY MALAINEY AS PART OF HER MA IN CRIMINOLOGY.
Improving risk communication: Developing risk ratios for the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide - Revised (VRAG-R)


BACKGROUND

Although risk assessment tools are a central component of forensic and correctional practice, misinterpretation of risk information is common and can have serious consequences for the individuals being assessed and the wider community. For an actuarial risk assessment scale, there are four primary metrics that can be used to communicate the results of an assessment: absolute recidivism probability estimates, percentiles, risk ratios, and risk levels/labels. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages, and recent research suggests presenting all metrics is ideal.

The Violence Risk Appraisal Guide—Revised is an actuarial risk assessment tool designed for use with correctional and forensic psychiatric populations. It has 12 items based on criminal history, childhood problems, and sociodemographic variables. Its predecessor, the VRAG, is among the most commonly used actuarial scales for violence risk assessment worldwide. Existing research has provided absolute recidivism estimates based on (nine) risk bins, and percentiles for individual scores, but not risk ratios. The purpose of this paper is to use the VRAG-R normative dataset to develop risk ratios to broaden the range of options available for risk communication when using this instrument.

Risk ratios are measures of relative risk obtained from an actuarial risk assessment tool to indicate how much riskier an individual is compared to another (or to a group). For example, one could say that offenders with this score on a risk scale are twice as likely (or half as likely) to reoffend compared to a typical offender. Although risk ratios are helpful to include in applied risk assessment reports, their calculation is not as obvious as it seems. The ratios can be calculated using rates, odds, or hazards (each with their own advantages or disadvantages). Different statistical techniques for modeling risk ratios also make different underlying assumptions about the shape of the relationship between risk scores and recidivism.

Developing risk ratios is also a first step towards applying the recently proposed United States Council of State Governments Justice Center’s five-level risk framework to the VRAG-R. This framework aims to address inconsistencies in the way risk categories are currently used and communicated across different risk assessment methodologies. The framework is a step towards more standardized conceptualizations of risk which can more easily be linked to recommendations for treatment and risk management. Applying this framework to a risk assessment tool, however, requires all three quantitative risk communication metrics (percentiles, risk ratios, and absolute recidivism estimates).

METHOD/RESULTS

This study started with the same sample of 1,261 violent men that was used to develop and validate the VRAG-R. Full details of the sample group were provided by the original scale authors. The men were all released into the community between 1960 and 1995 and follow-up information was collected between 2003 and 2007.
Improving risk communication: Developing risk ratios for the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide - Revised (VRAG-R)


The average follow-up length was 256 months (SD = 102). Recidivism was defined as any new charge for a violent offense. The violent recidivism rate over the full variable follow-up period was 51%.

In conducting our analyses, we followed the same approach that was used in developing risk ratios for Static-99R (another commonly used risk scale). This included explorations of which data modeling technique best fit the observed recidivism rates over a 5-year follow-up. Contrary to previous research developing risk ratios, logistic regression provided a more accurate estimate of observed violent recidivism rates than Cox regression for both total VRAG-R scores and VRAG-R risk bins. Further analyses indicated the relationship between the VRAG-R and violent recidivism was consistent over a 15-year follow-up period. Due to the difficulties with interpreting odds ratios, the final risk ratios were computed using rate ratios derived from a logistic regression model using a 5-year fixed follow-up period.

**DISCUSSION**

It is important that actuarial risk assessment tools are continually refined and improved. Ongoing development may include using larger or more representative normative data, or, as in this case, providing better information for how to communicate results obtained using the instrument. This study developed risk ratios as an added option for risk communication for the VRAG-R, as well as taking a step towards future efforts to apply the Justice Center’s standardised risk framework to the scale.

Although it is often helpful to follow similar approaches used by other scales or researchers, this study demonstrated that it is necessary to assess whether these approaches are actually applicable. Whereas Static-99R, Static-2002R, and Risk Matrix 2000 risk ratios were based on hazard ratios from Cox regression analyses, this approach proved untenable for the VRAG-R, given poor fit to the data. Following the same methodology for developing risk ratios as these previous scales would have led to considerable overestimation of risk, particularly for higher VRAG-R scores.

Consequently, an alternative approach was used to develop risk ratios for the VRAG-R, where predicted recidivism rates from a logistic regression model were used to calculate rate ratios, and these appeared generally stable across time.

These risk ratios, and templates for how the ratios might be used in an assessment report, are presented in the appendices.
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Examining student participation in pedagogical correctional tours: “Educational and a lesson for the soul and humanity”?

Murdoch, D. J. (Forthcoming). Examining student participation in pedagogical correctional tours: “Educational and a lesson for the soul and humanity”? Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society.

BACKGROUND

Many academics consider tours of correctional institutions to be an appropriate pedagogical strategy to provide students with an opportunity to apply theory to practice and to challenge students’ preconceived media-informed images of prisoners and imprisonment, among other objectives. However, others critique these tours on the basis that such activities dehumanize prisoners and offer students limited insight about the realities of incarceration.

Traditionally, researchers examining the use of correctional tours as a pedagogical practice have not critically engaged in discussion about how their use of these tours can harm prisoners and/or they have critiqued the use of such tours. The current study makes a unique contribution to the literature as the research is situated within a critical discussion of the harms to prisoners that can result from student participation in correctional tours and offers recommendations to inform instructors’ teaching practice to coordinate more educational and ethical tours.

METHODS

A student questionnaire (n=102) was administered and interviews (n=13) and a content analysis of written assignments (n=15) were conducted with a convenience sample of undergraduate criminology students (N=145) at Simon Fraser University to examine student motivation for attending optional pedagogical correctional tours, obstacles to student participation, and the educational value of these tours.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data demonstrate that pedagogical correctional tours can be both acts of penal voyeurism and opportunities for real learning. Twenty-three students shared their motivations for signing up for a tour in their responses to the questionnaire. Nine students perceived the tours as “unique, interesting, and cool experiences,” which might suggest they signed up for their own entertainment rather than for their education.

The findings from the interviews (n=13) and content analysis of written assignments (n=15) support extant literature that promotes the use of correctional tours as a means of increasing student comprehension of course content and decreasing the social distance between students and prisoners. The reduction of social distance between these groups is a key benefit of student participation in correctional tours within the context of the students’ future careers. Tour participants may go on to become policy leaders who contribute to the formulation of policies that impact prisoners directly. Humanizing prisoners for students may result in their challenging both the normalization of imprisonment as the best response to criminal behaviour and the intensification of punishment in favour of supporting evidence-based practices.

Instructors who continue to offer pedagogical correctional tours have an ethical obligation to minimize the potential harms to prisoners that can result from these activities. Recommendations to enhance the educational value of student participation in these tours while minimizing the harms to incarcerated persons include limiting the size of the tour group and requesting meaningful prisoner participation in organizing the tours.
The impact of juvenile sex offending on the adult criminal career


BACKGROUND

Although prior studies examined the adult offending patterns of juveniles with sexual offenses (JSOs) and juveniles with nonsexual offenses (JNSOs), this research tended to group together an individual’s juvenile and adult criminal career. This approach fails to distinguish how perpetration of a sexual offense affects later criminal behavior as such studies did not directly assess whether JSOs have different adult offending outcomes compared to juvenile non-sex offenders. Therefore, the main study aim was to examine whether a juvenile sex offense was associated with criminal career outcomes in adulthood.

METHODOLOGY

Using data on a subsample of males (n = 909) from the Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study, JSOs (n = 78), juvenile violent offenders (JVOs; n = 550) and juvenile non-violent offenders (JNVOs; n = 281) were compared against a variety of adult offending outcomes. Two approaches were taken to examine the adult criminal career. First, SPGM was used to model adult offense trajectories based on the number of convictions incurred at each year of age between ages 18 and 25. This allowed for an evaluation of whether there were unique adult offense pathways for JSOs compared with JNSOs. As such, a second approach attempted to gain a more nuanced understanding of potential differences in adult offending outcomes (e.g., frequency of offending, severity, specialization, and versatility) between JSOs and JNSOs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings indicated that JSOs were not associated with a specific trajectory of general offending in adulthood, nor were they associated with a range of adult criminal career parameters (e.g., frequency, severity, specialization, versatility). For juvenile males that experience incarceration, many elements of their offending history mattered for adult offending outcomes, but not sexual offending. Considering that criminal histories play an important role for juvenile risk assessment, treatment planning, and intervention strategies, our findings add to the growing body of literature demonstrating that continuity from juvenile offending into adulthood has less to do about the type of offense committed as a juvenile (i.e., sexual, violent, or nonviolent) and more about the frequency and versatility of offending. As such, the current findings underscore the importance of identifying early markers to improve the likelihood of following a trajectory most similar to the adolescent limited pathway (i.e., associated with intermittency or deceleration starting early on in the adult criminal career). In line with the criminal career and developmental criminology emphasis on crime sequences rather than crime types, future research should examine whether juvenile sex offending onset has implications for adult criminal career parameters, including continued sexual offending in adulthood.

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Police discretion to charge young people who use drugs prior to cannabis legalization in British Columbia


INTRODUCTION

After a long period of criminalization, possession of cannabis was legalized in Canada on 17 October 2018. The advent of national cannabis legalization was heralded by social and structural accommodation for cannabis use – an observation consistent with the theory of normalization of drug use. Normalization theory posits that, through a process of socialization, drug use becomes ‘unremarkable’ or normalized within society or a subculture of users (i.e. youth). The time prior to cannabis legalization in Canada serves as a natural study period wherein police discretion to charge for possession of cannabis compared to other drugs may reflect the normalization of cannabis in society at that time. The purpose of the current study was to examine police discretion to charge young people who use drugs during this time period.

METHODS

In the Youth Experiences with Police study, young people (aged 16–30 years) who use drugs from three cities in British Columbia were recruited using respondent driven sampling. Participants were administered a questionnaire focusing on their drug use, past encounters with police, and psychosocial and sociodemographic factors. To examine the relationship between independent variables and our dependent variable, being charged for possession of illicit drugs, we used t-tests for continuous data and, accounting for small cell counts, Fisher’s exact test for categorical data. A one-way ANOVA was employed with Tukey’s honest significant difference test (due to heteroskedasticity) to determine significantly differing groups in terms of levels of perceived drug stigma.

RESULTS

Among 449 participants, 3.6% of 56 in possession of cannabis by police were charged, whereas 41.2% of 34 in possession of other illicit drugs were charged (p < .001). Bivariate analyses showed prior criminal convictions (p = .001) as well as lower average monthly income (p < .05) was significantly related to being charged by police. Drug use stigma was significantly higher for weekly illicit drug users compared to weekly cannabis and those who did not use drugs weekly (p < .001).

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that young people found in possession of illicit drugs other than cannabis, those with prior convictions, and/or of lower income are more likely to be charged by police. As well, some young people who use drugs – particularly those who use drugs other than cannabis – continue to be structurally vulnerable to police discretion and criminalization in Canada. Collectively, these findings add to our understanding of how cannabis possession was treated in BC prior to legalization, as well as factors that may influence police officers’ decision to charge young people who use drugs. Greater police discretion toward cannabis suggest it is more socially acceptable or normalized compared to other drugs. Police practices may reflect cultural conditions but could be structurally harmful to marginalized groups.
The Master of Arts in Applied Legal Studies program is primarily for students intending to practice as Notaries Public in the Province of British Columbia. It may also be of interest to existing Notaries who wish to obtain a graduate degree focused upon their area of professional practice.

Completion of the degree is a prerequisite for membership in the Society of Notaries Public. At this time, the program is of limited value to those who do not want, or do not already have, a career as a Notary.
Incacity planning, adult guardianship, medically assisted dying and related legislation in British Columbia

The work in this area is continuing through the recently formed Applied Legal Studies Research Group based in the School of Criminology at the Surrey Campus. The text, for those interested, is available through the Thomson Reuters website: Gordon, R.M. (2020). *The Annotated British Columbia Incapacity Planning, Adult Guardianship, Medically Assisted Dying, and Related Legislation*. Toronto: Thomson Reuters.

Thomson Reuters, the parent corporation for Carswell - the renowned Canadian legal publishing house - have just released the 2020 edition of my perennial text on incapacity planning, adult guardianship, adult protection, health care (and personal care) consent and substitute consent, admission to, and practices within, care facilities, and related legislation in British Columbia.

The first edition of the book was published several years ago and has grown significantly since, partly as a result of inevitable changes in law, policy and practice. These changes have been captured in new editions, published mostly every two years. The latest edition is no exception and includes a new chapter on medical assistance in dying (MAiD) in Canada, with a focus on the impact in British Columbia. The option has proved to be more popular in our province than anywhere else in the country. MAiD is now legal in Canada as a result of the 2016 amendments to the *Criminal Code*. These new provisions permit but strictly regulate assistance although changes are on the horizon that will ease some of the limitations. It is probable that the amendments to the MAiD legislation currently before Parliament in the form of Bill C-6 will come into force by the beginning of 2021 if not earlier. The COVID pandemic has disrupted the federal legislative agenda and the knock-on effect has been significant for legislation in this and other areas of progressive reform.

Also on the horizon, probably for 2021, are changes that give effect to three important and innovative sets of ideas associated with MAiD that have been explored by three independent expert groups: whether advance requests for MAiD should be permitted; whether the option should be extended to what are often referred to as "mature minors" (those under the age of 18 with decision-making capacity); and, whether those with psychiatric conditions should be able to end their lives with medical assistance. It goes without saying that these sets of circumstances are each controversial although it seems likely that advance requests (also known as advance directives) will enjoy an easy ride because such directives are available and used widely in every jurisdiction in Canada in the context of conventional health care. Complexity arises because MAiD interfaces with provincial and territorial legislation and policy affecting both health care consent and incapacity planning but governments are far from proactive in resolving some of the looming challenges.

What we do in Canada in this area is of immense interest internationally because Canada is the first *federal* jurisdiction to introduce such legislation on a nationwide basis. Other individual countries (notably in Europe) have MAiD type legislation, and some individual jurisdictions in the United States have provided for medical assistance in dying, but at this time no one has legislated for an entire nation comprised of individual but interconnected jurisdictions each with legislation governing a range of critical and relevant issues not the least of which is the age of majority. At the moment, MAiD is only available to adults in Canada. British Columbia has set the age of majority at 19 whereas our immediate neighbor to the east, and the federal government, have set the age of majority at 18. Amongst other things, this means that advance requests may be available to some who are adults in the eyes of the federal government but not in the eyes of a provincial government.

The text also tackles issues related to care facilities in British Columbia including the new (2019) procedure for voluntary admissions, admissions with substitute consent, the use of restraints, and the creation and imposition of standards for both community care and assisted living facilities some of which mirror the residents’ bill of rights currently being used in the province. Changes to the regulatory legislation occurred in 2019, ahead of the recent revelations in Ontario and Quebec, primarily as a result of long standing concerns about practices in residential care and their constitutionality, such as the use of special care units: secure (i.e., locked) units within care facilities usually housing people requiring Alzheimer care.

The text also includes an examination of the provincial legislation designed to combat abuse and neglect of adults with disabilities who are unable to protect themselves from predatory practices in both the community and in care facilities. This legislation is found in the provincial adult guardianship and adult protection legislation, the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*, and the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*. Clearly, these issues are of great interest in light of the problems accidentally unearthed by the Canadian Military in Ontario and Quebec.

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Health Law, including Mental Health Law; Adult Guardianship and Adult Protection Law, including the law relating to Public Guardians and Trustees; Supported and Substitute Decision Making; Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly; Medical Assistance in Dying; Commercial and International Attacks on Academic Integrity.

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Canada has oppressed Indigenous peoples’ capacity for true sovereignty through colonialism, genocide, and attempted assimilation. This devastation is manifest in the disproportionate social ills facing Indigenous peoples and their overrepresentation at all levels of an imposed criminal justice system. Trauma and internalized colonialism have constrained the capacity of Indigenous Nations to reclaim their place in the world as self-governing peoples.

Canada’s first response to the ‘Indigenous justice problem’ of over-representation, involved an effort to indigenize the justice system by hiring more Indigenous people to work within the corrections and criminal justice systems. However, this approach disregarded the potential for Indigenous justice and ultimately offered no more than Canadian justice administered by Indigenous faces. Next came an emphasis on accommodation, through which programs and practices based on generic notions of indigeneity were placed within Canadian state institutions. These programs often tokenized Indigenous cultures, offering a pan-indigenized template into which all Indigenous people were required to fit. Parallel systems were next in Canada’s approach to Indigenous justice, and although positive in its promotion of community-defined and administered systems, the policy’s initial promise of providing a base for future open-ended growth has yet to be realized. Now pervasive across the country with close to 200 programs serving more than 650 communities, they remain where they were 25 years ago -- constrained to minor offenses with surface level community involvement. Overall, Canada’s evolving approach to Indigenous justice has involved making minimal change that retains jurisdictional monopoly while over-representation grows even more extreme.

These constrained systems further impede the growth of Indigenous justice when they conflate Indigenous justice systems with restorative justice (RJ). While RJ may offer a meaningful alternative within settler communities, the RJ industry has perpetuated confusion and misunderstanding through its appropriation of a homogenized version of the varied cultures and traditions of Indigenous peoples across Canada. We are concerned the conflation of RJ and Indigenous Nation-based justice systems can be compared to the colonial rhetoric of apology and reconciliation. Both mask the assimilative goals of the state by providing minimal movement designed to appease both settler and colonized Indigenous minds by providing for recognition without any need for subsequent action or meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples.

With these caveats to justice in mind, our article argues that Canada should create the jurisdictional space for the development of sovereign Indigenous justice systems. It is time to go beyond thinking of “Indigenous Peoples’ as some homogenous other who can be appeased by federally-defined one-size-fits-all “Indigenous justice” programs to recognize distinct nations as unique peoples and embrace the diversity of traditions these include. Doing so would be consistent with the right to self-determination held by Indigenous peoples and recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for which Canada has expressed support and that British Columbia has begun to integrate into law.
A method to interpolate osteon volume designed for histological age estimation research


BACKGROUND

Estimating the age at death is fundamental to building the biological profile in cases of unidentified human remains found in the forensic context. Current histological (the microanatomical study of tissues and organs) methods have issues that affect their accuracy and reliability, especially when applied to older adults. This study investigated the utility of a volumetric approach to common osteological variables used for histological age estimation. There are several existing histological approaches which quantify various aspects of secondary osteons, the microscopic structural building unit of human bone. These approaches vary based on the region of interest (ROI), the type of bone used, and in the number and type of osteons they analyze, but all utilize a two-dimensional transverse section that is less than 0.1 mm thick. The potential of osteon volume, or a three-dimensional approach, has not been explored. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) science provided a methodological bridge to this biological problem, permitting osteons to be visualized and connected in three-dimensions and enabling volumetric extrapolation.

METHODOLOGY

The project necessitated the development of a new method that is designed to extend current histological aging approaches. Three consecutive transverse thin-sections from a single human femur were cut and examined under a microscope using circularly polarized light. A total sample size of 6847 complete osteons from the three sections was identified and manually outlined in ArcMap; 1229 osteons connected between the three sections. The volume of all connected osteons was interpolated using ArcGIS area calculations and truncated cone geometric functions. Each section was divided into octants, and two random samples of 100 and of 30 connected osteons from each octant were generated. Osteon volume was compared between the octants for each random sample using ANOVA and Tukey’s HSD post hoc test was used to evaluate the specific differences of the mean volume between octants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results showed that the medial aspect had relative uniformity in osteon volume, whereas the lateral aspect showed high variability. The anterolateral octant had significantly smaller osteon volume whereas the posterolateral octant had significantly larger osteon volume. These differences in osteon size and density between octants highlight the importance of sampling location and may explain why many current approaches that analyze a small and specific ROI have difficulty with replicability. Results also indicated that a minimum of 100 osteons is significantly more robust and more representative of normal osteon distribution and volume. Although several current approaches quantify a small number of osteons, the results indicate that the use of 30 osteons is insufficient. The results show that a single transverse section does not account for the three-dimensional variability of osteons necessary to improve accuracy of histological age estimation methods. Lastly, this research demonstrated that osteon volume can be interpolated using spatial geometry and GIS applications and is a tool that may be incorporated into adult age-at-death estimation techniques in the future.

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PRESERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL SIGNATURES; CHARACTERIZATION OF MICROSTRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENT OF POST MORTEM ALTERATION; THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MICROSTRUCTURE, ISOTOPIC SIGNATURES AND MAPPING HUMAN MOVEMENT; AND METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT TO EXTRACT ISOTOPIC AND TRACE ELEMENT INFORMATION STORED WITHIN THE SKELETAL TISSUES.

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