

Recession, Crime and Mental Health

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Abstract

This article adopts a holistic approach to the complex interconnections between economic circumstances, crime and mental health. It reviews some of the criminological and economic literature on unemployment, property crime, health inequality and worker well-being. It stresses the explanatory importance both of adopting a chronological approach to people's experience of economic circumstances relative to others and of pursuing economic remedies on two levels: individually (investment in mental health treatment and protective strategies) and at a societal level (avoidance of strategies that will increase unemployment etc). Four conclusions are drawn: first, criminologists should strive to enhance links within and across disciplines; second, that injecting resources into protective strategies may be significantly more cost effective than merely punishing individual offenders; third, that the economic and personal consequences of these issues are sufficiently serious to make this task urgent; and finally, that current economic circumstances should make such proposals irresistible.

Key Words: Unemployment, crime, conduct disorder, economic costs, inequality

I do not concern myself with such petty things as fingerprint powder, telltale pieces of pocket fluff and inane footprints. I see the solution to each problem as being detectable in the pattern and web of the whole. The connections between causes and effects are often much more subtle and complex than we with our rough and ready understanding of the physical world might naturally suppose (Adams, 1988: 115).

Douglas Adams' fictional detective Dirk Gently, and his eponymous Holistic Detective Agency, thrives on the fundamental interconnectedness of all things. This admittedly ambitious approach – a holistic approach – is adopted here only in modest form; but its central thrust is the notion that

individuals, and their social and economic environments, are interconnected both contemporaneously and historically, and that this understanding should underpin any analysis of the linkages between economic circumstances, crime and mental health. The article also draws loosely on Merton's (1938) notion of relative deprivation: significant inequalities in the relative positions of the employed and the unemployed are likely to be associated with poorer mental health and greater criminal activity by those experiencing the stresses of material inequality.

In this short article it is not possible to explore all of these potential linkages. Terms such as crime, mental disorder and recession all require careful definition (and may be incapable of being defined to everyone's satisfaction across a number of disciplines); moreover, the quality of the evidence deemed necessary to draw more than inferences of association between them will vary. Just thinking about the relationship between crime and mental health has for me occupied an entire book (Peay, 2010). And, of course, what one finds when one explores the literature in such a leisurely form are a series of contradictions and further unanswered questions. To give one illustration: when thinking about the relationship between the two factors of mental disorder and crime it is clear that some disorders, for example personality disorder and drug dependence, are self-evidently and, to a degree, tautologically linked with crime. Yet dementia, chronic schizophrenia and depression can all have a protective effect, making crime less likely. Sometimes this is because the nature of the symptoms deprives one of the necessary wherewithal and motivation to offend, and sometimes because their occurrence coincides with age or reduced mobility, again considerably reducing the opportunities for offending. Paradoxically some disorders, for example, forms of schizophrenia, can have contrary effects dependent on the stage of the disorder, and seemingly counterintuitive effects according to the precise nature of the symptoms experienced and by whom (see for example, the role of threat/control override delusions, Peay, 2010: 84). But this is not an article about what causes what; rather it is about the kinds of strategies that might reduce the likelihood of certain adverse outcomes arising, whether those outcomes are couched in terms of poor mental health or criminal behaviour.

With these caveats in mind this article merely seeks to provide glimpses of the extensive literature available with a view to raising some questions about the potential for criminologists to broaden their dealings with each other and with those in other disciplines. It also argues that, in times of austerity, criminologists can make compelling arguments in terms of the effectiveness of assorted interventions. Moreover, these arguments can be based not only on grounds of social justice, but also on the notion that social justice and individual treatment can bring significant cost benefits and social harmony (the latter, of course, being a bolder and less empirically well-grounded claim than the former).

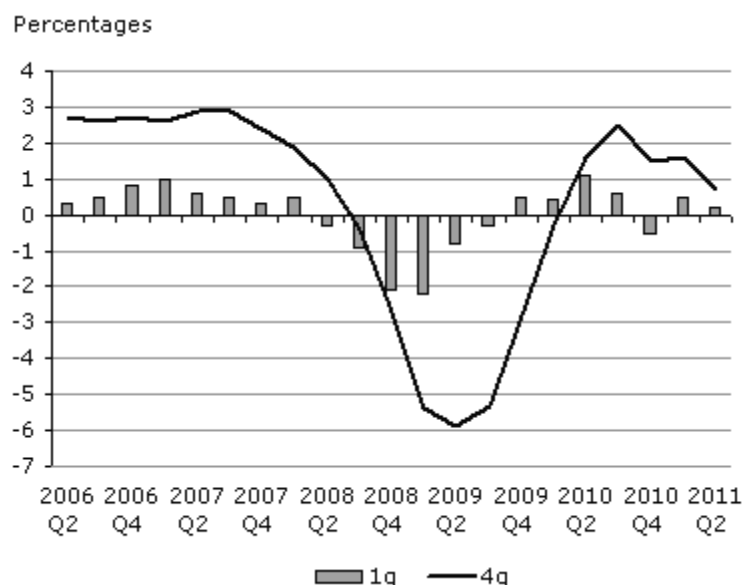
What is a recession?

President Harry Truman is reputed to have said “It’s a recession when your neighbour loses his job; it’s a depression when you lose your own”, and whilst not wholly accurate, his observation reflects some of the psychological literature and the important differences between objective and subjective approaches. Paradoxically, the economic literature is more concerned with subjective measures than many criminologists might otherwise assume.

There is a further paradox in that little of the literature on the recession makes reference to either crime or mental health (and for a light-hearted article on a leading financial website, see thisismoney.co.uk, 2008). The failure to mention mental health in this financial piece is perhaps understandable, since such potentially stigmatic issues would be unlikely to play well given the article’s frivolous take on the recession; but the absence of any mention of crime is more telling and might reflect a tendency by criminologists to overvalue the importance of crime to others. Perhaps we have been as blinkered by the fascination of some parts of the media with crime and thereby misled ourselves. Could it be that in the same way we frequently point out where the public have failed to understand issues familiar to criminologists (for example, the role of sentencing in crime and in the levels of sentences awarded, Hough and Roberts, 2005), and in so doing attribute partial causal responsibility to the role of the media, that we have failed to acknowledge the influence of those very media outlets on our own thinking? Or perhaps the issue is too complex – with the recession having a variable impact on different types of crime – for any irreducible message to emerge for inclusion in the economic literature. After all, even my initial belief that property crime was alleged to go down in economic good times (why would you buy dodgy electrical goods when you could obtain them legitimately with a warranty?) and violent crime to increase when economic circumstances permitted more public drinking and socialising, was revealed not to be wholly supported by the literature.

As a lawyer/criminologist I recognise that lawyers can broadly settle on what constitutes a crime, even if criminologists would regard defining the term ‘crime’ as a career consuming activity. In this context I would be loath to suggest that economists are *ad idem* as to what constitutes a recession. However, my understanding is that many would agree with the notion that a recession occurs where a country’s economy, as measured by its Gross Domestic Product, shrinks for two consecutive quarters. On the basis of this definition Britain went into a recession in 2008, a recession which the Prime Minister David Cameron described as “the longest and deepest since the war”. And although we had not, at the time of writing, experienced the greatly feared double dip recession (see Figure 1 below) Bank of England forecasts for 2012 predicted only a 1 percent rise in growth for the year and many economists were predicting zero growth (Allen, 2011).

Figure 1. Real Gross Domestic Product Quarterly Growth up to the 26th July 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011a)



Britain had experienced periods of recession in 1948, 1978, 1981 and 1992; this leads to two questions. First, what is the effect on an individual, perhaps aged 50 now, who had experienced a recession in 1981 when he or she was in their early twenties? And second, what do these figures of a country's marginal or 'flat-lining' economic performance disguise for individuals? Are some people doing immeasurably better than others and are some, for all intents and purposes, experiencing their own personal recessions?

The economic evidence (Gregg and Tominey, 2005) strongly suggests a scarring effect on men's subsequent economic well-being following a period of unemployment in their youth; and even where that period of unemployment is a one-off, a modest residual wage scar can be observed much later. Bell and Blanchflower (2010) document not only how unemployment while young, and especially if it is of long duration, causes permanent scars, but also how the effects of lost work-experience on wages can be seen over 20 years later. Moreover, unemployed young people, by comparison with other young people, were "significantly more likely to feel ashamed, rejected, lost, anxious, insecure, down and depressed, isolated and unloved" (Ibid at R14).

And here the economic literature is fascinating, since although inflation during the recession has been held largely in check, for some individuals their experience of inflation is much more pronounced. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (see Levell and Oldfield, 2011) has observed the impact of very differing levels of inflation on households during the recession, indicating that some people are likely to be much more badly affected than others. Levell and Oldfield (2011) found that between 2008-2010 the poorest fifth of the population experienced a rate of inflation of

4.3 percent whilst the richest fifth experienced the lower rate of 2.7 percent; and over the last decade that difference magnifies to an average annual inflation rate which is nearly 60 percent more for the poorest sections of society than the richest sections. The reason is simple: poorer people spend a greater proportion of their budgets on energy and food which have increased in price disproportionately, whilst richer households benefitted from low interest rates on mortgages, and on mortgages which represented a disproportionate element of their household expenditure. Relative inequalities are thus critical: the recession doesn't just hit the poor, it hits them harder. Even low to middle income families have been affected (see Plunkett, 2011, noting that individuals who are in work, but on low or moderate wages, are made limited in both time and money); and differences across the age ranges are marked, with younger people being particularly badly affected with respect to their employment opportunities and long-term aspirations (Collinson, 2011; Toynbee, 2011). Notions of relative affluence and relative deprivation may lie at the heart of any linkages there are between economic circumstances and crime; and these measures need to be understood in their individualized context, even though they may be produced in a macro form.

For criminologists therefore, interested in the causes of crime and its potential relationship with mental disorder, the interesting questions are not about the recession per se, but about unemployment, about the fear of unemployment and about the Mertonian questions of relativities: how do you compare with others, who may or may not be your neighbours, and with your own aspirations and expectations?

Unemployment and crime

In a context where economists are cautious about what constitutes unemployment and criminologists are equally cautious about what constitutes crime, thinking about the relationship between them is going to be hazardous. However, historically there does appear to be good evidence that there is some association between the two: for property crime it is generally held that a 1 percent increase in unemployment will be associated with a 1-2 percent increase in property crime. Lin's (2008) study of a large data set from 1974-2000 in the US is bolder in its claim: using more sophisticated measures of unemployment and controlling for endogeneity Lin asserts a 1 percent increase can lead to a 4-6 percent increase in property crime. Indeed, he makes the claim that 33 percent of the drop in property crime in the US during the 1990s can be attributed to changes in unemployment. Notably Lin is an economist and accordingly has adopted a nuanced analysis of the unemployment statistics; yet his crime figures are derived from the FBI's Uniform Crime Report data, data which are, of course, subject to all the same criticisms that any official records in any jurisdiction rightly endure. Notably, anxieties about the robustness of the data on violent crime have precluded any conclusions, other than negative ones, being drawn about their relationship with unemployment. However, his analysis, in finding a positive association between

unemployment and property crime over a period of a quarter of a century, is consistent with the existing literature.

Hooghe et al.'s (2011) Belgium study, published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, notably makes no claims to causality but similarly observes significant associations in unemployment and crime. They used a measure of deprivation, made up of income level, income inequality and unemployment, and noted its association with both levels of property and violent crime. The element of unemployment, supporting Lin's finding, had a significant impact, being positively associated with both property and violent crime. In contrast, income inequality had a significant positive impact on property crime but a negative impact on violent crime. Since in Belgium minimum income levels are entrenched, the authors speculated that the existence of this equivalent of a state safety net may help to obviate the worst aspects of inequality for violent crime. It is notable that since there is no upper limit on income, income inequality was found to be most pronounced in the richest municipalities, raising interesting (and unanswered) questions for those interested in the influence of relative deprivation. Crucially though, for both property and violent crime, the effect of unemployment was larger than that for income level.

Unemployment and well-being

Clark's (2011) study of the mental well-being of workers, based on panel data from the British Household Survey from 1992-2007 and drawing on responses from 10,000-15,000 of those in work, results in a complex picture of pro-cyclical relationships. Using the General Health Questionnaire 12, an instrument which measures strain, depression, anxiety, insomnia and ability to concentrate, as a proxy for 'well-being', Clark observes that the well-being of workers is significantly higher in times of boom than recession. Unemployment reduces the well-being of both those who lose their jobs and those who keep them (see also the interim findings of the Marmot Review (2010) that poor working conditions can have a detrimental impact on health); although those who keep their jobs do become more satisfied with what they do in work in times of recession. None of this is surprising; however, Clark's data reveal that those who are unemployed are psychologically less 'well', as measured by the GHQ12, than both those in work, and those not in the labour force. Regression analyses indicate that these are not mere selection effects – that is, they are not attributable to the least satisfied or most vulnerable workers losing their jobs - but rather that it is comparative psychological perceptions and expectations that are critical. As Clark noted in 2003: "Heuristically, unemployment always hurts, but it hurts less when there are more unemployed people around" (Clark 2003:346); unemployment may thus hurt less when your neighbours are also unemployed because, as he has suggested, it is less stigmatic.¹ Or in Mertonian terms, the comparators for judgements about relativities are less stark (neighbours), less

¹ Personal communication 27 February 2011

proximate (the wider employed) and less pertinent (aspiration is depressed).

Some of these key issues of social inequality were examined extensively in Daniel Dorling's book *Injustice: why social inequality persists*. With respect to mental well-being he asserts (2010:269) that inequality has a dose response effect, by which he means that increases in inequality are associated with poorer mental health. Others have documented a similar effect with respect to health generally (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2007:1973) and assert that the relationship is sufficiently strong to support a causal inference. Wilkinson and Pickett explain this effect as a response to the burden of relative deprivation, with increasing inequality increasing the burden (ibid at 1974; see also Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009); they conclude by noting:

If inequality has psychosocial effects, perhaps involving chronic stress and the aversive effects of low social status, then it is possible that some of the health and social problems marked by social gradients share roots in chronic stress. Rather than providing ever more prisons, doctors, health promoters, social workers, educational psychologists and drug rehabilitation units, in expensive and at best only partially effective attempts to offset the problems of relative deprivation, it may be cheaper and more rewarding to tackle the underlying inequalities themselves. (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2007: 1976).

The observations of the House of Commons Health Committee's Report on Health Inequalities (2009: para 45) are also apposite. Whilst they noted that the health of the nation had generally been improving over the previous ten years, inequalities between social classes had widened 4 percent for men and 11 percent for women (a finding which has even more force in the light of the unemployment figures: by June 2011, 1.05 million women were out of work, the highest figure since 1988, Office for National Statistics, 2011b; and by September 2011 youth unemployment had also passed the one million mark, Office for National Statistics, 2011c). It is simply not true to say, as George Osborne did to the Conservative Party Conference in 2009, that "we're all in this together".

Unemployment not only reduces well-being but has also been shown to have a strong independent association with suicide (Lewis and Sloggett, 1998; Stuckler et al., 2009; 2011). In their 2009 analysis of data from 26 European countries over three decades, Stuckler et al. observed, in those under 65, that an increase in unemployment of more than 3 percent increased suicides by 4.45 percent (95 percent CI 0.65–8.24). And consistent with the Belgium data above, the authors made a number of predictions about the protective effects of strong social support networks and active labour market policies – some but not all of which look to be substantiated by their later work in 2011. A recent study from the US by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Luo et al., 2011) has also

observed rises and falls in the suicide rate alongside recessions and expansions in the economy, based on data for 1928-2007; notably, the associations are strongest amongst the working age population. Again, there are all sorts of caveats about the definition of terms, with Lewis and Sloggett's (1998) data for England and Wales including both suicides and undetermined deaths between 1983 and 1992, since suicide is so difficult to establish before a Coroner; but the association with unemployment is evident. And it should be noted that other research on suicide would stress that it would be both inappropriate and unjustified dismissively to link all suicides to psychiatric disorder (see Scourfield et al., 2011).

Thus, the thrust of these assorted publications is clear; unemployment and its anticipation are not good for one's health and probably not good for one's mental health. The corollary, that 'work is a powerful aid to recovery' from poor mental health, has also been asserted in the context of a major report which has looked at the evidence base for psychological therapies to treat depression (Layard et al., 2006:6).

The economics of mental health

Knapp et al. (2011) examined the costs of mental health problems in 2007 and made an attempt to estimate the projected costs up until 2026. It should come as no surprise that it is the costs of dementia that will have the greatest economic impact (the figures relate to England): but dementia is largely a disease of the elderly and has little relevance to the incidence of crime. As with many others suffering from mental health problems, those with dementia are almost exclusively the victims rather than perpetrators of crime: indeed, dementia may well preclude the possibility of a finding of criminal responsibility even in the context of what might otherwise be criminal behaviour.

However, it is the analysis of the financial gains to be made from relatively modest interventions in the mental health arena that should be of most interest to criminologists. Knapp et al.'s report deals with some 15 interventions: these include parenting interventions, screening and brief interventions for alcohol abuse, early detection and intervention for psychosis and suicide prevention methods, including the introduction of bridge safety measures. The latter might seem almost humdrum, but it is consistent with the effective policy of removing ligature points in prisons and psychiatric hospitals and is amongst those rated as outstandingly good value for money over time.

Moreover, it is important to note that many of the economic savings to be made derive from not only the predicted reductions in crime but also all the costs associated in processing offenders through the criminal justice system, and subsequently punishing them if convicted. And it is here that the report identifies parenting interventions, and school-based social and emotional learning programmes for the prevention of persistent conduct disorders, as representing the greatest public sector savings.

Conduct disorder and offending

Conduct disorder is the most common psychiatric condition found amongst children and young people; there are also many cases which do not reach the clinical criteria for diagnosis but nonetheless remain important as 'sub-threshold' diagnoses (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009; see also Moffitt, 1993). A third of children with conduct disorder are also comorbid, with additional diagnoses such as anxiety disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The complexity of their problems, and associated behaviour, has multiple precursors but adverse influences in children's early lives and harsh parenting are claimed to be significant contributory factors. Whilst the Sainsbury Centre (2009) are careful not to attribute later criminal behaviour by those with early conduct disorder solely to that disorder, since socio-economic disadvantage and below average cognitive ability clearly have a role to play, they do make some very bold claims about the attributable costs. In part these claims are bold because of the obvious difficulty of reliably assessing the costs of crime when so many crimes go unreported and the scale of others (most notably those associated with the banking crisis) are unquantifiable.² However, and drawing on the Home Office's figures for a total cost of crime at £75 billion per year, the Sainsbury Centre estimate £22.5 billion is attributable to those with conduct disorder in childhood and £37.5 billion to those with sub-threshold problems. This makes up 80 percent of the attributable costs of crime.

The strength of the claim derives from the notion that although offending is widespread, persistent prolific adult offending is not; yet where it is found, it is typically amongst male offenders who started offending at an early age. And amongst this group, conduct disorder is argued to be common. And whilst conduct disorder is not a term used as such by the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (see Farrington, 1995) this major study provides evidence that a high proportion of chronic offenders had amongst the highest scores on the study's prediction scale, based on "troublesome behaviour, economic deprivation, low intelligence, a convicted parent and poor parental child-rearing techniques" at age 8-10 (Ibid:941). Moreover, of those first convicted at ages 10-13, 91 percent of this group did not give up offending after their first offence, and they had on average longer and more prolific criminal careers (Farrington et al., 2006:65). The policy implications of this complex work have been variously addressed, and will continue (Loeber and Farrington, 2012 forthcoming).

It is the combination of these data, namely the high costs associated with conduct disorder and the prevalence of subsequent prolific offending amongst this group, which underpins the claims made by Knapp et al. (2011) that effective early intervention can have real economic (and

² The silence surrounding these economic crimes was tellingly examined in the 21st Eve Saville memorial lecture '*Recession, riots, social change: Can psychotherapy contribute to a policy response?*' given by Susie Orbach on 16 November 2011. Available from: www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/opus1872.html

health) benefits. For, as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2006) has illustrated, the costs of interventions with this group are relative modest, particularly where group-based programmes are utilised, but the savings over a life-time of potential offending (avoided) massively outweigh them: indeed, the Sainsbury Centre (2009:10) estimate these at £225,000 per case for conduct disorder (of which £160,000 are the costs in reduced offending). Treatment and other protective strategies, where they can be effective, rather than punishment of young offenders with either diagnosed conduct disorder or sub-threshold problems, is manifestly the preferable option. As the Sainsbury Centre (2009: 11) conclude:

There can be little doubt that a range of evidence-based programmes aimed at preventing or reducing childhood conduct problems should be more widely available than is presently the case. In the long term nothing would do more to reduce crime.

However, is it sufficient just to focus such preventive efforts on the clinical 'hard-core' cases? The answer to this is also clear, albeit in the negative. There is a paradox associated with preventive strategies familiar to all criminologists: "although those belonging to a high-risk group are at increased risk of an adverse outcome, nonetheless the majority of those experiencing the outcome do not belong to the high risk group" (Fergusson et al., 2005:486). Frequently, this is attributable to the low-base rate of the event to be predicted. Exceptionally for conduct disorder the base rate for subsequent offending is not particularly low; some 40 percent of those with childhood conduct disorder will desist from crime altogether, implying that 60 percent will not. But, for this 60 percent, only a minority of those will go on to become prolific offenders (Sainsbury Centre, 2009: 7). Yet of that group it is important to recall that a significant preponderance experienced behavioural problems in early life (see Farrington, 1995; and Farrington et al., 2006 above). If they cannot be identified in advance, and trying to single out those at risk is rarely a successful or popular policy, the strategic preventive strategy is to employ modest initiatives with both the clinically significant and sub-threshold individuals. And then to build on the known protective factors.

Much, of course, is known about such protective factors, albeit deriving in part from the US where critical appraisals of these interventions are both long-standing and on-going (see, for example, the work of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP, 2009) on prevention). In particular, the Sainsbury Centre (2009: 10) refer to the work of Drake et al. (2009) as evidence that "punitive measures usually have negative returns, with programme costs exceeding benefits". Whilst this is not a point seemingly made explicitly by Drake et al., indeed it is a point that hardly needs making, their meta analysis does conclude by observing that "evidence based – and reasonably priced – programmes that achieve even relatively small reductions in crime can produce attractive returns on

investment” (2009: 194). This reinforces again the notion that protective strategies may have considerable economic merit. Finally, the recent initiative by the Washington State Legislature in instructing WSIPP “to calculate the return on investment to taxpayers from evidence-based prevention and intervention programs and policies” (Aos, 2009: 1) is of note. The research remit was to include, amongst other areas, issues of crime, mental health and employment, so as to demonstrate which policies had improved outcomes on a cost-effective basis; this is consistent with the holistic approach being advocated here, assuming that a non-segmented approach is adopted and the interactions between these areas is a key focus of the final report.

Why this matters

When I was invited by the organisers of the 2011 British Criminology Conference in the spring of 2010 to address the subject of ‘Recession, Crime and Mental Health’ I did not realise how opportune their topic would become. Preparing the plenary lecture took me into economic territory wholly unfamiliar to me; reformatting the material in the weeks following the August 2011 English riots make the resonances still more powerful. Whatever convincing explanations ultimately emerge for the riots (see, for example, ‘Reading the Riots’ joint project by The Guardian and LSE, 2011), the intersection of increasing unemployment amongst those young people who are chronologically at the peak age of offending is likely to be an important factor. Although it would be unwise with the benefit of hindsight to draw more from this than can currently reasonably be extracted, as I indicated in the oral presentation the economic prospects for particular individuals, and for those sections of society who were vulnerable to unemployment or job insecurity, are dire.³

Taylor-Gooby and Stoker (2011: 14) had documented this economic risk when evaluating the coalition government’s austerity programme:

The coalition programme ... involves a restructuring of welfare benefits and public services that takes the country in a new direction, rolling back the state to a level of intervention below that in the US – something which is unprecedented.

Indeed, they drew attention both to the International Monetary Fund’s prediction that our public spending as a proportion of GDP will likely have fallen below that of the United States by 2015 (2011: 6) and to predictions made by the Office for Budgetary Responsibility. The OBR had noted that the cuts programme “will cost 500,000 public sector jobs, but that unemployment overall will fall from 2.6 million (8.1 per cent) in mid 2011, to 1.9 million (5.8 per cent) by 2016” (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011: 13).

³ See *the Guardian*’s preliminary map of the locations of the principal riots and areas of urban deprivation alongside areas of relative affluence ‘Mapping the riots and poverty’. Available from: www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/aug/10/poverty-riots-mapped

The coalition's strategy relies on the private sector to generate jobs to reduce unemployment overall; and although the figures published in August 2011 of those employed were increasing, so were the figures on those unemployed (Office for National Statistics, 2011b). As noted above, the figures for female unemployment have risen disproportionately, in part a consequence of the shift from 'family-friendly' public sector jobs, as have those for young people. All of this suggests that the rewards and penalties that individuals suffer, and face the prospect of suffering, will continue to differ markedly. And that is not a recipe for social cohesion.

Conclusions

The connections between the recession, crime and mental health are complex, multifaceted and of variable strength. The direction of those associations and their facilitative and protective impacts are also heterogeneous. However, it would be too simplistic to leave it at 'everything affects everything else': the strength of the various associations does differ and our ability to make a difference to these linkages also differs. So what is being proposed?

First, criminologists should be encouraged to build as many channels as possible, not just between their various sub-specialisms, but also across disciplines. The insights to be gained from some of the economic and psychological literature are considerable: and it would not be true to stereotype the former as being based solely on macro analyses and the latter on some individualised or pathological evidence base. The commonalities rather than the differences are striking. Facilitating greater interconnectedness by engaging with this broader literature is advocated.

Second, the economic and personal costs of a failure to address and redress these issues are significant. An individual's personal chronology has evident consequences for him or her; but acting en masse, where their experiences of macro level economic conditions are shared, these chronologies will impact on others not so blighted. The analysis by Reicher, Stott and Drury of crowd behaviour, which predates the 2011 August riots, was presciently showcased in a collaboration between the Academy of Social Sciences, the British Society of Criminology and the British Psychological Society (2011); and their subsequent analyses (Reicher and Stott, 2011a; Reicher and Stott, 2011b) are but one example of a more nuanced understanding of what are undoubtedly complex social interactions. Their research rejects an analysis based on mere mindless irrationality. Those who took part in the riots were individuals, they argued, acting with a shared social identity and on the basis of a "collective understanding, norms and values": in short, these actions were a "response to a shared sense of illegitimacy and a lack of alternatives". And they were individuals certainly with a history and, possibly, with a shared sense of their own frustrated economic expectations. Although none of this is offered to justify the unjustifiable, it may be one important link in achieving a better understanding of what must be a mesh of causal factors.

Thus, whilst a careers based criminology has examined offending on a longitudinal basis (see, for example Farrington et al., 2006; and Odgers et al., 2008), and the economics literature has looked at the long-term effects of periods of unemployment, there may be some scope in bringing the two closer together. Whether it is the very direct effects of rioting, or the more subtle but equally damning effects of a long-term impoverishing of the quality of people's lives brought about by unemployment, or even the undermining of people's expectations, a coalition-criminology (Player, 2011⁴) may have much to offer.

Third, if poor mental health is a primary outcome measure of unemployment then tackling those mental health issues can be addressed both individually and, and perhaps more importantly, at a preventive macro-level. Or as Loïc Wacquant asserted in his plenary lecture to the Conference (Wacquant, 2011) we need to "rebuild the economic and social capacities of the state". In the present climate this looks an unlikely outcome, but the work of Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), documenting the correlation between inequality and mental health at a comparative country level, makes its neglect poignant. That these country level differences exist to be documented should come as no surprise to those familiar with Lacey's (2007) illustrations of how key institutional differences in contemporary democracies underpin the extent of penal moderation (or excess). And it is worth recalling the implications of the work from Belgium that the nature of a country's welfare system can seemingly make a difference to the incidence of violent crime; a state safety-net in the form of entrenched minimum income levels reduces the level of relative social and economic differentiation at the bottom end.

Finally, in an era of austerity (albeit such arguments make sense in an era of prosperity as well) investing in some relatively modest mental health and social initiatives, as recommended by Knapp et al. (2011), can have considerable pay-offs. Although the direct benefits are to the individuals assisted, the indirect economic benefit to society through reduced offending, and all of the costs saved that would otherwise be entailed in policing, processing and punishing offenders, has to have magnetic qualities for those charged with guarding the national wealth.

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⁴ A term coined in discussion by Elaine Player, June 2011

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