

COUNTERFEIT CRIMINALITY



**A HYPOTHESIS OF CRIMINALITY IN
PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITIES WHO HAVE OFFENDED**

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Prevalence Rates



- Large range of estimates of number of offenders with ID
 - 2 – 40% (Jones, 2007)
- Difficult to identify actual numbers
- More common than what is actually reported to police
- Higher proportion of those with mild to borderline ID and a higher risk of detection (Holland, 2004, Lindsay et al., 2002)

Theoretical Models of Criminality



- **Genetics**
 - Family Studies (Kandel et al., 1988)
 - Twin Studies (Christiansen, 1977)
- **Sociological**
 - Hirschi's Control Theory (1969)

There are currently no theories to account for criminality specific to persons with intellectual disabilities (ID).

Counterfeit Criminality – Definition



- A theoretical explanation for the origin of some offending behaviour amongst a sub-population of people with ID who commit crimes
- People may be engaging in or being blamed for engaging in criminal behaviour for reasons that are not readily apparent

(Hingsburger, 2012)

Motivations



- Three possible motivations:
 - Need to belong
 - Internalized Disphobia
 - Bullying Reaction

Motivations



1. Need to belong

- Desperate to fit in
- Lack of social skills
- Find “acceptance” amongst criminal subculture where poor social skills tolerated/ valued

Motivations



1. Need to belong (cont'd)

- Naïve trust in their membership as equals
- Marked as the “fall guy”
- Deceived into engaging in criminal activity
- Left to take the blame

Motivations



2. Internalized Disphobia

- Internalized self-hatred
- Won't associate with disabled peers
- Seek acceptance in non-disabled community

Motivations



3. Bullying Response

- Often occurs after repeated attempts to seek support in dealing with bullying behaviour
- Act out of desperation
- Last resort

Case Examples – Need to Belong



- Derek Bentley
 - British teenager
 - Tricked by non-disabled peers into criminal behaviour
 - Left to “take the fall” while they remained unpunished
 - Lacked the social skills to move himself out of gang/criminal culture
 - Ended his life on the gallows in the early 1950’s

Case Examples – Need to Belong



- Richard Reid – “The Shoe Bomber”
 - Born in London, England
 - Self-admitted member of al-Qaeda
 - Pled guilty in 2002 to 8 counts of criminal terrorism as a result of attempting to detonate bombs in his shoes on in-flight aircraft
 - Used by al-Qaeda as “cannon fodder” and viewed as a “dim bulb” with an IQ well below average

Case Examples – Internalized Disphobia



- **Mark**
 - Born in Ontario in 1996
 - Diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability
 - Did not identify himself as having a disability and did not have an observable disability
 - Refused to associate with anyone disabled or receive services from the disability community

Case Examples – Internalized Disphobia



- **Mark**
 - Lured into a gang, selling drugs, sent to beat up other gang members
 - Guns held to head
 - Wanted to keep up with peers: “Back up my boys”
 - Charged with and convicted of assault three times

Case Examples – Bullying Response



- **Chris**
 - Born in Alaska
 - Teased relentlessly at school
 - Sought help
 - School documented over 100 reports of bullying
 - Snapped and brutally attacked another child

Solutions



1. Social Skills Training & Practice Opportunities

- Require both general and situation-specific social skills
- Opportunities to practice social skills in many environments

Solutions



2. Friendship Skills Training

- Likeability skills (Lynn, Beattie & Hingsburger, 2011)
 - 1) Reciprocity
 - 2) Trust
 - 3) Thoughtfulness
 - 4) Approachability
 - 5) Interests and Passions

Solutions



2. Friendship Skills Training

➤ Likeability skills (cont'd)

6) Responsibility

7) Assertion

8) Negotiation

9) Sharing

10) Manners

11) Humour

Solutions



3. Isolation Awareness

- Be aware of person's social network and contacts
- Assist to find social networks and develop the necessary social/relationship skills

Solutions



4. Disability-Specific Training

- Teach to navigate their social world
- Safety skills specific to disabilities
- People with disabilities face unique dangers

Solutions



5. Disability Pride

- Self-esteem based on self-knowledge
- Foundation for learning to be wary and careful

6. Bullying Skills

- Need to be taught the same as social skills

Solutions



7. Self-Advocacy

- Traditional and non-traditional groups of self-advocates, e.g., LGBT

In Conclusion ...



- Families and agencies need to recognize community dangers and prepare people with disabilities with strategies for dealing with real world issues.
- People with disabilities have a right to be taught disability related skills.

In Conclusion ...



- Disability pride and self advocacy are approaches that will help individuals understand and deal with their difference.
- It is neglectful to see dangers and not work to prevent them.

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