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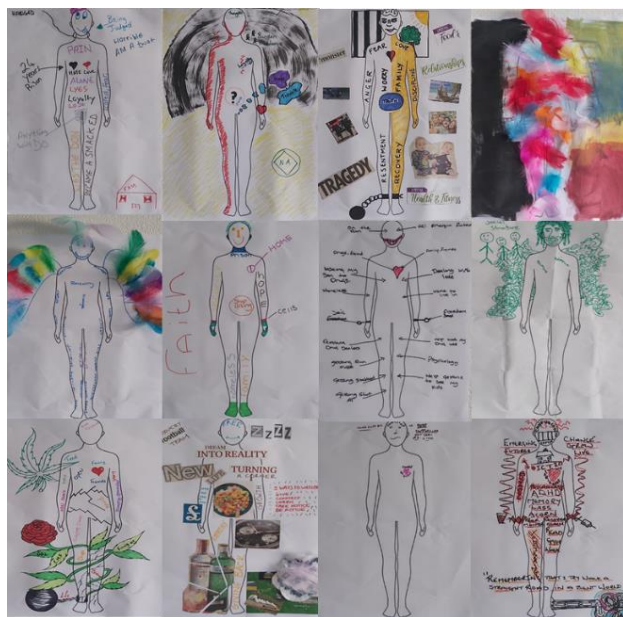


Photo: Collage of body maps created by men leaving prison and entering drug-free accommodation
© Tara Young

Inside

Drug Market Developments

Contributions from: Caroline Chatwin, Jack Cunliffe, Tara Young, Hayley Y. Fox, David Lydon, Peter Emanuel, Georgina Barkham, Diana Peel, and Simon Gellar.

Plus, various other items from the BSC

Editor

This issue was edited by Caroline Chatwin, with support from Marian Duggan.

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Editorial

Welcome to the Winter 2022 edition of the BSC Newsletter, which I am delighted to have had a hand in editing.

This edition is dedicated to the topic of what is 'new' in the field of illicit drugs. Drug markets are a particularly dynamic and fertile landscape for researchers. Even, for example, amongst our small team at the University of Kent: see Dr Jack Cunliffe's work on cryptomarkets; Professor Alex Stevens' work on the opioid crisis and recent dramatic increases in drug-related deaths; and my own on the emergence of significant markets in New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs (IPED).

In particular, however, the theme for this issue was inspired by the wealth of Ph.D. students I have met recently - at Kent, as external examiner, and as manager of the ESRC funded 'new drug landscapes' network. Collectively, they are pushing the boundaries of the field by questioning assumed drug market knowledge, introducing us to new substances, exploring grey areas such as prescription only markets, and, in the style of Carol Baachi, adopting a critical approach to the arbitrary construction of some psychoactive substances as problematic.

Unsurprisingly, the contributions to this edition of the Newsletter are diverse in scope, perspective, and style. It begins with a contribution from Dr Jack Cunliffe providing an overview of the continued impact of new technology on drug markets and flagging the need for new methods of engagement on the part of researchers. The next two contributions provide a glimpse of the depth of understanding that can be achieved by employing alternative methods: the first (Dr Tara Young and Professor Caroline Chatwin) showcases the value of using body maps to investigate the longstanding challenges faced by people leaving prison with serious drug addictions; the second (Hayley Fox) uses risk terrain analysis to generate information on cuckooing (appropriation of homes) by County Lines organisations (criminal networks involved in drug markets) that could be used to inform policing practice.

The next two contributions offer preliminary findings on cutting edge research. The first (David Lydon and Peter Emanuel) also deals with County Lines organised drug networks, using interviews and observations of practice to draw out police experiences of the intersectionality of victimhood and offending within the context of the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*; the second (Georgina Barkham) reports on an ethnography on cultures of steroid use within a prison gym. The final two contributions turn to consideration of policy, providing commentary on how we might use new approaches to respond to changing trends in drug markets. Diana Peel provides an important Global South perspective, inviting us to consider how best to deal with Uganda's increasing prominence in the global drugs market. In a fitting finale to the edition, Simon Gellar introduces us to peptides—the drugs of tomorrow—and encourages us to reflect on the need for nuanced regulation of these substances.

Professor Caroline Chatwin, Professor of Criminology, University of Kent

Themed articles

The mainstreaming of new technology into drug dealing and drug market research

Dr Jack Cunliffe, *University of Kent*

This research note charts the mainstreaming of digital technology into drug markets from the early beginnings when the internet was in its infancy. It explores the creation of darkweb illicit markets which have attracted much academic and policy focus, but also considers newer developments encompassing social media and the clearweb. At the same time, it briefly outlines the new digital avenues of investigation open to researchers interested in understanding drug markets.

It has, perhaps apocryphally, been claimed that the first ever financial transaction via networked computers was for a relatively small amount of cannabis, traded between two students across the continental United States using the internet's precursor, the ARPANET (Markoff, 2005). And it is certainly true that in the early days of what is now recognised as the internet, there were forums, message boards and websites where people could arrange to purchase illicit drugs. Perhaps the best known of these was initially called Adamflowers and launched around 2005, operating as a middleman connecting buyers and sellers via encrypted email. It eventually moved to become a hidden service on the Onion Router network (commonly known as Tor) and changed its name to The Farmer's Market. In its final guise, it operated as a more recognisable e-commerce hub, with customer services, feedback ratings and the processing of payments for drugs using a variety of obfuscated methods, but fundamentally relying on mainstream payment systems such as Western Union and PayPal. While this operation was profitable for the site administrators it remained rather niche with a best estimate, provided by the eventual Grand Jury indictment against the founders that was unsealed after the conclusion of Operation Adam Bomb, of about 3,000 customers and just over a million dollars' worth of trade over a 2 year period (*United States of America vs Willems et al.*, 2011).

It wasn't until the launch of the Silk Road in February 2011 that using technology to buy illicit substances began its journey to mainstream attention. What was revolutionary about the Silk Road wasn't particularly the technology it drew upon—essentially a hidden service website much like Farmer's Market—but that it 'put all the pieces together', using postal delivery for purchased goods, and made use of a secure 'anonymous' payment system with Bitcoin and an escrow service, solving one of the pinch points of previous remote systems: the exchange of funds. Although the site was closed by law enforcement in October 2013 (leading to the imprisonment of the main administrator, Dread Pirate Roberts aka Ross Ulbricht, for an unfeasibly long amount of time) the Silk Road developed a paradigm that subsequent similar hidden services have since all but exactly mimicked: a marketplace framework with products listed by different vendors, detailed descriptions of those products and the vendor themselves, with customer feedbacks available to help build trust. These subsequent markets have been numerous, and for a period sprung up quicker than law enforcement activity could close them down, even if the main reason for any one market's disappearance tends not be seizure by the authorities, but a rather mysterious vanishing usually accompanied by the unknown

administrator(s) making off with any cryptocurrencies held by the market - an occurrence that has become known as an exit scam.

A Gawker piece published four months after launch of Silk Road (Chen, 2011) brought the site to the attention of the world and was closely followed by a prescient missive penned by Barratt that criminologists 'should definitely watch this space' (Barratt, 2012, p. 107). As detailed in our book (Martin et al., 2019) this message has been heeded by the research community with over 150 papers published by more than 250 authors, using an array of different methodologies, from the qualitative to the quantitative, drawing in computer science, economics, criminology, the medical profession and more. These pieces of research have uncovered a vast array about the nature and function of these markets, the implications for the real world, uncovered trends in drug consumptions, questioned how illicit markets construct trust, investigated and reported on pricing, and made extensive use of the data available from the markets or accompanying forums themselves. Some of the methodologies developed to understand these markets, for example digital trace work, have subsequently been taken up and implemented by major research groups such the Australian National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

So, cryptomarkets—as they have come to be known—are the most researched place where there has been an integration of digital technologies into the drug purchasing landscape but they remain hard to use (Kowalski et al., 2019), requiring knowledge of Tor, PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) encryption, and an ability to get and use cryptocurrencies. This has meant that while they have been adopted widely and in numerous countries, including some interesting innovation around drug delivery in ex-Soviet countries, their usage hasn't become the only way in which technology and drugs are linked. Perhaps it is unsurprising, with the increased integration of the virtual world into our everyday lives, and especially with the huge increase in the amount of social media engagement, that illicit drug exchanges are making increasing usage of these newer communication channels.

Within the new media drug markets, drug dealers are adopting a range of approaches, from the novel to the obvious, and ranging from the highest levels of criminal drug trade, as exemplified by the EncroChat debacle where high level criminals paid thousands of pounds for access to a secure communication app that ran in parallel to the main operating system on their phone, only to find it had itself been compromised by law enforcement – perhaps illegally (Goodwin, 2022), all the way down to street level dealers. For instance, for a short while there was an automated bot that ran on the Telegram network that allowed people to place orders automatically via the Telegram app (Barratt et al., 2022). Dealers have also made use of Telegram to directly contact their customers along with other, related, messaging services, such as Signal, Wickr, WhatsApp, and research has even uncovered people advertising their products on Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat (Demant et al., 2019; Moyle et al., 2019). While it is true that people perceive the 'more secure' apps—with higher levels of encryption and anonymity—to be more secure, this has not stopped people using the most publicly accessible platforms as well (Bakken & Demant, 2019). The increased numbers of people using social media in general has meant that these methods of drug exchange remain hidden; not necessarily by using advanced technologies, but because there are so many people communicating within the space meaning each individual remains hidden in the crowd. This echoes how the mass adoption of pagers in the late 1990s/early 2000s also allowed drug deals to go undiscovered.

If one is to believe the adage that 'the internet never forgets' this presents both risks to the participants but also opportunities to the researcher. For the participants, the risks are quite clear: identification, whether at the time of the purchase or retrospectively, is a possibility that must be at the front of the minds of anyone who uses these mediums. For the researcher, in

much the same way that cryptomarkets spawned a whole new area of research with a plethora of new methodologies and approaches, the same can be said of investigations into digitally enabled drug dealing more generally. The possibilities for insight into one of the traditionally hardest trades to get concrete facts about may very well be opened up if we can develop new methods that capture this digital information and ways to extract meaning from that data (as Enghoff & Aldridge, 2019, have argued). This will require criminologists to embrace new research methods, and to actively work with researchers in different realms, particularly computer scientists but also perhaps with industry providers of these services, programmers, and a whole raft of other digital content platforms and creators, all alongside our more traditional approaches. If the research history of criminology is anything to go by, our ability to move with the times and adapt to new forms of illicit activity stands us in good stead to meet these challenges.

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Body maps – Can this methodological tool provide new and enriched understanding of longstanding issues within the illegal drugs field?

Dr Tara Young and Professor Caroline Chawtin, *University of Kent*

In this contribution, we want to showcase an increasingly popular new qualitative research method – body mapping – and demonstrate its value in generating data to improve our understanding of long-standing issues within the drugs field, while simultaneously ensuring the voice of participants is centre stage in the research process. Before highlighting the visual impact and narrative power of body maps as a research tool, we provide a brief introduction to the method referencing its recent use in drug-related research.

Body mapping is a visual technique used to capture qualitative information about an individual's subjective experience using creative arts. The process involves participants sketching an outline of their whole body after which they fill the map with symbols and images that depict their experience of a phenomenon such as substance use. This body map is accompanied by a first-person narrative (or testimonio) that takes the viewer on a symbolic journey of their embodied experience highlighting the most significant aspects. As a constructivist tool to assist research participants in describing and giving meaning to their experiences (Veale, 2005), body mapping is an empowering methodological technique particularly valuable for engaging participants who may not feel confident in an interview environment providing a space for them to reflect upon their personal experiences.

The creation of body maps as a storytelling device is not, of course, a new idea. Pioneered by Jane Solomon (2008) in her research with women living with HIV and used in health and social research in the Global South (Gastaldo et al, 2018) it is now beginning to be used by criminologists to supplement or accompany traditional qualitative methods (see Hulley & Young's (2022) research with lifers convicted of 'joint enterprise' murder, and Dennis (2020) and Macken et al (2021) studies charting the experience of substance users).

Body maps were used in our evaluation of a small-scale intervention aimed at ensuring drug-free living for men leaving prison. The intervention provided people with a place in a shared, drug-free house on release from prison, integrated with support from qualified psychologists, house managers and peer mentors. Many of the men we spoke to had been drug users for many years, been in and out of prison many times, street homeless on previous releases from prison and were facing a complex web of inter-related issues in addition to their prison time and drug use. For some, it was the first time they had tried to abstain from drug use. In this project, we had to adapt the body mapping technique and use small A4 body outlines, rather than allowing participants to draw their own life size bodies.

To demonstrate the power of body mapping, we share a body map created by 'Tom' a 35-year-old, white male participant who has struggled with drug addiction (since age 13), and been in prison multiple times and, at the time of study, was resident in a 'dry house' in central England. In doing so, we want to emphasise two things. Firstly, the impact of the visual images to draw in stakeholder interest and convey the perspective of participants, especially when prominently displayed as has been the case with the body maps created in both Hulley & Young's (2022) and Dennis's (2020) projects which were displayed in the National Justice

Museum (<https://virtualexhibition.v21artspace.com/power-freedom-to-create>) and the Constance Howard Gallery (<https://sites.gold.ac.uk/sociology/i-am-a-work-in-progress/>) respectively. Secondly, the powerful, personal and direct nature of the data generated by collecting spontaneous stories or testimonials explaining the body maps, rather than by conducting interviews driven by the researcher. In what follows, Tom's body map is accompanied by his testimonio.

Tom

A 35-year-old white male participant who has struggled with drug addiction since age 13 and been in prison several times.



The rose - that's [intervention provider], that's what's fixing me now. Helping me with me drugs and me problems. Life weighs me down and that's why I put the ball and chain. And then obviously cos I've bin through a lot in life, I'm quite broken. Drugs are involved in me life obviously but I'm staying clean at the same time. A new start. Got my pride back, my family and friends back. I'm about to get me son back. Literally I've not seen him for nearly 2 years but obviously I've not been well, not been able to. I've got a lot of trauma and I needed that sorting before I can be a dad. It's brought everything back for me. I lost everything see. I had everything and then drugs messed it all up. I'm more open, but I'm more tired. I over think. I feel lost a lot of the time, but I'm just trying to stay grounded innit. That's me.

Cannabis is always on me mind. I think that's the worst drug for me. It's constantly there. Cos I've smoked weed longer even than I've smoked fags. My bad drugs were amphetamines and party drugs

but I've had to stop everything. Alcohol wasn't really a big thing for me but weed was. I used to wake up, blaze. I'd even wake up in the middle of the night, just have a joint. I'm more relaxed and chilled out. I used to think I needed some weed just to chill out. I don't.

We've got the psychologists as well. I've never 'ad all that. Never 'ad the support, never 'ad 'elp. I struggle emotionally. I've got emotional unstable personality disorder, so life is hard. Normal life situations that wouldn't affect the normal person affect me massively, so now I'm having to deal with that without taking drugs, so relearning how to live life. Most of us are the same. A lot of us express ourselves with anger and frustration cos we don't know what to do. We haven't been brought up, we've been dragged up. We've never really had a stable environment. We've never learnt how to deal with our emotions. But now these [psychologists] are teaching us how to deal with it.

If I didn't move in there now, I'd probably be back in jail. 100%. I'd never have had all this support, I'd never know what was actually wrong with me. I'd be taking drugs now. 100%. I was just going round terrorising everybody, robbing things, doing anything I could just so I could get a bit of money, just so I could get off me 'ead, cos I couldn't deal with reality. Imagine it, you're in turmoil in your life, you don't know where you're going.

These [intervention provider], they give you stability, they give you a place where you go and they support you as soon as you come out. You get like food vouchers straight away, they 'elp you with your benefits. Then you've got all the groups and then you start learning and understanding why you are the way you are. It's also seeing as well that it's possible. These [peer mentors] have actually been in our shoes. They know. That's the thing. You're always self-doubting. You're always telling yourself you can't do it, you're not good enough. And then you see these and they're like, I was in that position and now look at me.

I've had a few slip ups. I've smoked a bit of weed and I've had a beer which still I shouldn't have done it. People in our position are going to mess up. You can ask any user. They [intervention provider] put more support in place. They ask you what was your trigger, instead of saying oh now you've fucked it, go home. That's it, get back to the streets. That's not gonna work for no one. Being a drug addict is a lonely, lonely place to be. But when you realise you're not on your own and that there's loads of people that go through what you go through constantly, then you feel less of a freak. It's like you're actually becoming part of society.

I'm just living like a normal human being, and that's all I ever really wanted to do, I just didn't know how. I think it's probably the best thing I've ever done in me life.

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New approaches to understanding County Lines: A risk terrain analysis of cuckooing in Lincoln

Hayley Y. Fox, Crime Intelligence Analyst, *Lincolnshire Police*

This paper details professional doctoral research at Keele University, part funded by the College of Policing bursary scheme and utilising software awarded by the RTMDx Gratis Program of the Rutgers Center on Public Security. It summarises how risk terrain modelling (RTM) analysed the geographical context of homes subjected to cuckooing by county line drug dealers. Importantly, the research sought to determine whether the RTM was a valid and practical analytical tool that could provide meaningful insights and direct intervention.

County lines is a marketing and retail approach for gangs and organised criminal networks to export illegal drugs into other areas using a dedicated form of 'deal line'. The line is promoted to local users and those holding the line use individuals within the market area to retail the drugs (Home Office, 2022). To facilitate the sale and distribution of crack and heroin, those controlling the line will rely on exploitation of children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs via enticements, coercion, intimidation, and violence. The use of weapons is commonplace in the intimidation and violence associated with the running and maintenance of the line.

One of the tactics used by county lines is to gain access to the homes of vulnerable people to use as an activity base. Homes can be taken over by members of a line to the extent where the resident is forced to abandon their home; others may be forced to become actively involved in the lines' activities. In some cases, the addresses will be used to store drugs or money, with the risk of debt bondage—having to work for the line to repay debt—a real possibility through real or alleged loss of commodities, or 'taxing' when other lines or dealers steal it. Known as cuckooing, the approach targets vulnerable members of the community (Coliandris, 2015) exacerbating their situation (Spicer et al., 2020). Those targeted may fail to see themselves as victims and even perceive themselves as gaining a benefit for allowing such activities in their property. Consequently, the safeguarding of these individuals is a complex problem requiring the cooperation of emergency services, social services, local housing providers and charitable organisations.

Lincoln, a small city in the East Midlands, has a growing county lines problem; lines are exporting crack cocaine and heroin from Nottingham, London, and the West Midlands. Cuckooing is one of the consequential issues faced by Lincolnshire Police in its effort to deter, detect, and defy county lines exploiting vulnerable residents and profiting from the city's illicit drug market. In order that law enforcement, on a regional and national scale, can understand and react to the evolving county line drug dealing model, all police forces in England and Wales are obliged to submit ongoing information to the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre. This includes details on persons involved in county lines, whether as a cuckooed victim, local runner, or line holder. This information on a local, and national level aims to develop knowledge and understanding of who county lines are exploiting and how this exploitation is occurring. However, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding around how individuals become targeted and involved with county lines.

The range of vulnerabilities acknowledged in academic literature which can lead to exploitation by cuckooing include mental or physical disability, health issues, isolation and drugs or alcohol dependency (Spicer et al., 2020). Moyle and Coomber (2017) acknowledge that social, cultural, and street 'capital' alongside socio-economic position impacts on those persons who are more at risk to involvement in user-dealing activities, and consequently cuckooing. These risk factors were included in a risk analysis approach to determine whether there is evidence that risk terrain analysis can be a practical and viable method of understanding county lines cuckooing in Lincoln.

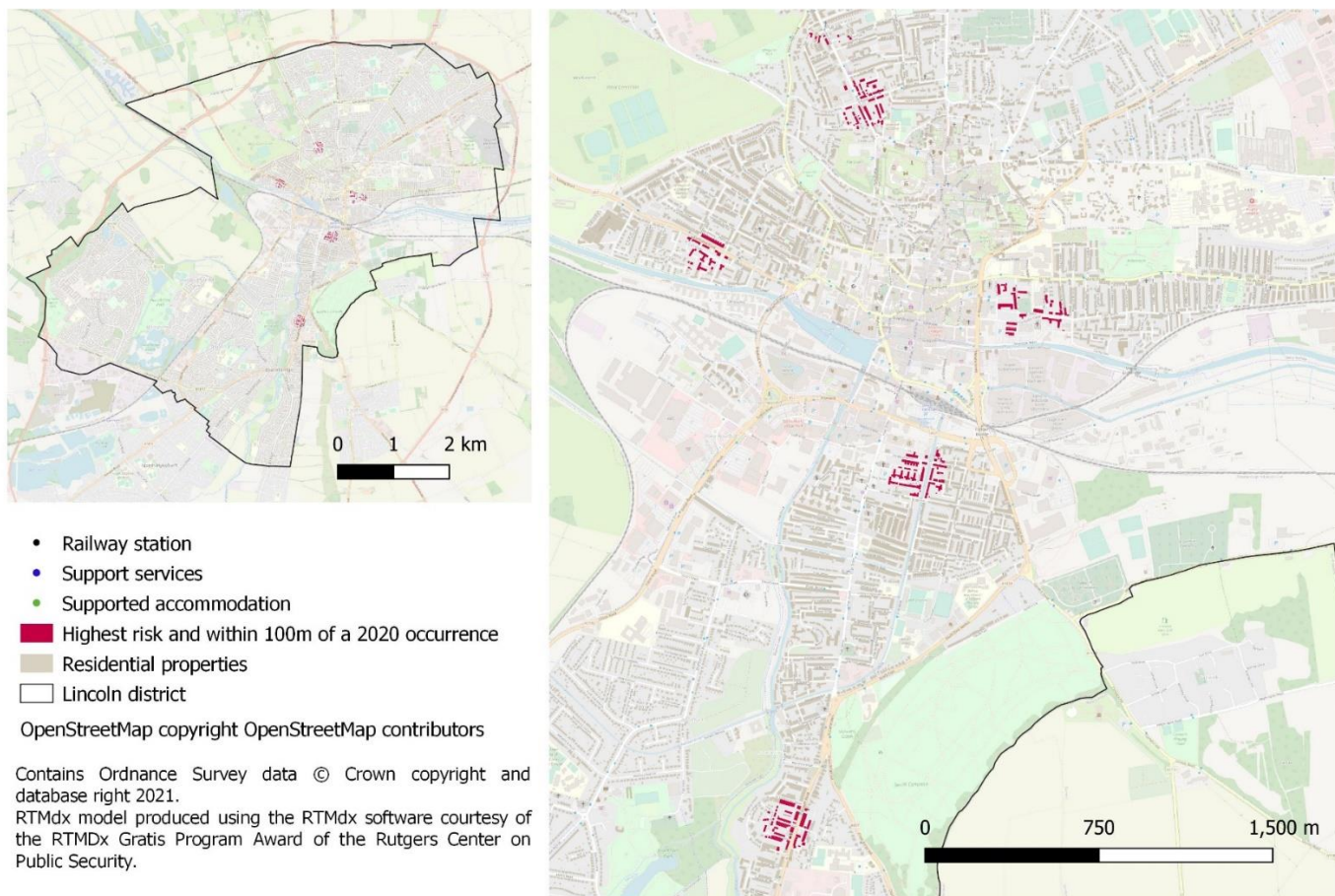
Risk Terrain Modelling (RTM) was developed to assess place-based risk for future criminological activities. Within RTM the spatial influence of risk factors is operationalised as '1. presence or absence of features, 2. density of features, or 3. distance from features' (Caplan, 2011:63). A step-by-step approach diagnoses spatial risk factors within a common geography to articulate spatial vulnerabilities (Kennedy & Dugato, 2018). It uses several criminological concepts in relation to crime location including the theory of risk places (Kennedy & Caplan, 2012), crime concentration (Eck & Weisburd, 1995), routine activity theory and rational choice theory (Clarke & Felson, 1993) and opportunity theory (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995). The modelling process results in a composite map of multiple terrains of identified risk, with a risk value for each place representing the compounded risk of the unique combinations of criminogenic risk (Caplan, 2011).

Complementing the visual representation of high-risk spatial locations, the risk terrain approach identifies those criminogenic factors which are contributing to the increased risk. They not only offer an insight into understanding why a location might be at risk to future victimisation, but also, place-based factors to target intervention, and a baseline to assess the success of any place-based intervention.

The RTMDx software was used to conduct risk terrain analysis for locations of cuckooed properties identified in 2020 to identify those residential properties within Lincoln that are at risk to future incidents of cuckooing. Spatial data was obtained to represent possible geographic, socio-demographic, and criminogenic influences on properties which could increase their risk of cuckooing and the analysis run against locations identified in 2020. The potential influences on increased risk were selected based on academic research of victim vulnerability; lifestyle factors of potential victims and their routine activities; local officer insights and practitioner knowledge as a county lines intelligence analyst.

The resulting output identified those areas susceptible to future occurrences of cuckooing. The significant risk factors were identified as the proximity to young persons' accommodation, areas of constrained city dwellers and the density of support services. The total area identified as significantly high risk to future cuckooing was only 2.97% of the analysed area. Locations which are identified as high risk in the analysis and in areas of previous exposure will be the most vulnerable to future offences. Map one shows those areas of significant risk that are within one hundred metres of properties targeted in 2020.

Map 1: Showing residential areas at high risk to cuckooing by county lines in Lincoln.



So how can this information be of practical policing use? On a tactical level it points to areas where extra vigilance is needed to ensure vulnerable persons are not exploited. It provides support to understand the factors which are contributing to that risk, and an evidence base with which to approach partners and engage in collaborative work. It focuses attention on areas which might otherwise be dismissed for intervention, prevention, or educational activities. Finally, a risk terrain analysis is generated using spatial criminogenic contexts which do not typically change. Thus, the resulting analysis can function as a baseline for assessing if future intervention has had an impact on the volume of occurrences, any subsequent displacement, and changes in contributing risk factors.

RTM has been used internationally across crime types, but typically in high density, high crime urban areas; this research demonstrates the wider relevance of the approach. In a policing environment which promotes partnership working, academic collaboration and best evidence to direct policing response and resources, this could be a pragmatic method of combining theoretical environmental criminology and risk forecasting to engage partners. In addition, it could provide a method to truly incorporate evaluation into ongoing policing responses to the evolving drug market known as county lines.

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New insights to County Lines drug supply networks: A research note on a study of police experiences of the intersectionality of victimhood and offending

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Introduction

Urban-based suppliers trafficking drugs, particularly crack cocaine, and heroin into provincial areas in the UK to deal directly to local users was named 'County Lines' by the Home Office in 2013 (Glover and Finlay, 2019). The National Crime Agency (NCA) acknowledge it as a criminal business model that is defined as the 'transportation of illegal drugs, by gangs and organised criminal networks, from one area to another within the UK, using dedicated mobile telephone lines or other "deal lines"' (NCA, 2018: 1). The supply chain typically involves male children aged between 15 and 17 years and other vulnerable adults (often with drug addiction or mental health conditions), acting as 'runners' to courier commodities such as cash, drugs, and weapons (NCA, 2019), and is associated with high levels of exploitation, coercion, intimidation, violence, and weapons-related offences (Glover and Finlay, 2019; Moyle, 2019; NCA, 2019).

Two significant developments have occurred in the criminal justice response. First, the introduction of the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC) in 2018 with the remit to co-ordinate policing activity through improved information and intelligence sharing, strategic assessments, and planning and support for police operations (NCLCC, 2021). Second, the use of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for identifying and supporting those suspected of being victims of modern slavery and human trafficking (Home Office, 2014). However, the crime problem remains persistent and shows itself capable of consistently evolving. The adversarial nature of the criminal justice system creates a dilemma in the form of a unique intersectionality of victimhood and offending: the response to which is confounded by an ill-fitting framework derived from the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* and the NRM, since neither were intended nor designed for dealing with 'County Lines'. This research note provides a summary of an empirical study of police investigators' perceptions and experiences of dealing with 'County Lines' within this context. The legal, policy, and practice implications are considered.

Aim and method

The aim of the study was to examine perceptions and experiences of specialist police officers engaged in investigating the 'County Lines' drug supply phenomenon. Specific focus was directed at potential issues with the effectiveness of the criminal justice framework, vis-à-vis that provided by the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*, section 45 statutory defence and the NRM. To this end, the research questions address: what challenges were faced in investigating offences; and how were issues of vulnerability, safeguarding, and referral perceived and acted upon? The study used a constructivist, qualitative approach in two stages. The first involved non-participant observation of 'in-house' police training about modern slavery and human

trafficking, complemented by observations of trainee detectives engaged in scenario-based training exercises. The second stage comprised semi-structured interviews with police officers of various ranks and roles. The sampling method was purposive since the research was conducted in a single, provincial police force in England, with negotiated access to a cohort of eight specialist officers. The cohort comprised two detective constables, two police constables engaged in 'disruption' operations, two detective sergeants, and two detective chief inspectors. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Key findings and discussion points

The analysis identified three themes: the presence and role of violence and weapons; autonomy, coercion, and exploitation, and challenges in police investigation and case management. Each are summarised below.

The presence and role of violence and weapons

Participants associated 'County Lines' with the habitual carrying of knives and episodes of serious violence. It was portrayed as an inherently more violent enterprise than historic drug supply models. There was a perception that violence was more visible and publicised, with incidents often recorded and distributed via social media, with the aim of instilling fear, and to assert control over operatives and rival supply networks. The presence and use of weapons and violence was linked to 'gang' involvement, although it was clearly recognised that the conceptual notion of 'gang' is disputed, and in practice inconsistently understood and applied by the authorities, including the police. Difficulty arose for the police, where children and vulnerable adults carried weapons, often for personal protection or as couriers, making them offenders and potential victims simultaneously.

Autonomy, coercion, and exploitation

Several reasons were reported for the involvement of children and vulnerable adults, ranging from conscious agentic desire, being 'groomed', coerced, exploited or a combination. Participants differentiated those who appeared to have joined willingly and were later subjected to exploitation, and those who were 'groomed' or coerced from the outset. 'Debt bondage' was reported where children were forced to act, as payment for goods such as trainers and clothing, or for 'losing' drugs due to police actions or robbery by rivals. They also identified poor life choices and bounded decision making; many involved are representative of a cohort in which cognitive and emotional development sees a peak typically at 11-15 years of age, and sometimes as late as 19 (Lenroot and Giedd, 2006; Williams, 2012). Notably, training and screening for neurodiversity and neuro-maturation issues appear lacking, such that vulnerability is not recognised at early stages in the criminal justice process.

Challenges for investigation and case management

Participants reported challenges concerning use of the section 45 defence (under the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*), NRM, and the efficiency and effectiveness of safeguarding referrals. They experienced difficulty in investigating lines of enquiry, due to 'no comment' interviews stifling opportunities to probe potential defences early on in the process, and late or scant defences being made.

An official response to the exploitation of 'County Lines' operatives has led to prosecutions of those responsible for offences under the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*. In summary, section 1 of the Act contains the offence of holding a person in slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory

labour. Section 2 contains the offence of trafficking a person for the purpose of exploiting them. Under section 45, a statutory defence is provided for those involved in criminal offences. For an adult accused of committing an offence, they would *not* be guilty if they could show that they were compelled to commit the offence, that the compulsion was as a result of exploitation or slavery, and that a reasonable person with the same characteristics would have had no realistic alternative. For children, compulsion is omitted from the offence wording.

Three specific issues were linked to section 45 defences: Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) charge authorisations being denied; discontinuance of cases; and evidence of the defence not being tested in open court. There was concern that the NRM process and section 45 defence may actively contribute to the use of children and vulnerable persons, because of inconsistent outcomes and CPS reluctance to proceed with cases. Participants expressed frustration that individuals were referred and arrested again in similar circumstances. In sum, the evidence suggests that the legal and policy practices fail both the police, as well as children and vulnerable persons.

Concluding remarks

While significant attention has been paid to ‘County Lines’ and its disruption, it remains persistently stable as a model of operation. Uniquely, it consists in an intersectionality of victimhood *and* offending in many cases, wherein the response is confounded by an ill-fitted criminal justice framework, derived from the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* and the NRM. A review of *Hansard* demonstrates that the focus of the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* was never on such a hybridised form of victimhood and offending; consequently, making it ‘fit’ with the problem of ‘County Lines’ has become a matter of policy guidance only (see Home Office, 2019). While an official review concluded that the modern slavery legislation remains fit for purpose (Home Office, 2019), in practice it is clearly not appropriate for the specific circumstances and unable to meet the operational needs of the police, other agencies, and those being exploited.

The research study suggests that with the number of active ‘County Lines’ remaining stable, increasing numbers and inconsistencies in NRM referrals and safeguarding outcomes, incomplete statutory guardianship coverage—along with deficiencies in understanding of, and screening for, neuro-developmental and neurodiverse conditions among those involved—means the response is decontextualised from underlying causes. This in turn dichotomises many involved as either ‘victims’ or ‘villains’ rather than acknowledging that they can be both. Therefore, the research findings add to a growing recognition of the complex, nuanced relationship between victim and offender status, and calls for a criminal justice system reset.

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‘What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger’: New insights on rationale, risk, and reward of the steroid economy in prison

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According to the UK Anti-Doping agency (UKAD, 2020), around one million people use anabolic-androgenic steroids (aka steroids) in the UK. 56% of respondents in a survey conducted by Image and Performing Enhancing Drugs took steroids for image or cosmetic reasons (IPED, 2016). Once the preserve of professional bodybuilders and celebrities like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, the accessibility and acceptability of image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs), or steroids, have changed the landscape for this particular drug market in a technological and image-preoccupied society. There is growing concern that young people are emulating behaviour seen on social media and this is having detrimental and even life-changing consequences (Goodyear, 2020). Uncritical and superficial content about ideal bodies and steroid use trivialises the side effects of IPEDs and glorifies quick-fix solutions to getting ‘beach body ready’. Considered within the context of consumer culture and body image preoccupation, the UK Anti-Doping agency (UKAD) launched an Instagram campaign in 2020 to highlight the side effects of steroids and combat misinformation (UKAD, 2020).

The figures produced by UKAD do not include steroid use within the ‘illicit economy’. Little contemporary research exists on the steroid market in prisons in England and Wales. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons reported steroids to be a growing concern (HMIP, 2011), and there are calls to address claims that steroid use may be ten times higher in prison than the general population (Klotz et al., 2010; Meek and Lewis, 2012). In my ethnographic research of a prison gym, I explore the prevalence, motivations, and outcomes of IPED use.¹ The research site is a remand prison holding sentenced and unsentenced men. Incarceration may be for anything from theft to drug dealing to murder. This research note will outline some preliminary findings that demonstrate the cultural influence of steroids in prison. Drawing on interviews with staff and prisoners using the gym, this article will outline some preliminary findings.

There are three key differences between the drug economy inside and outside prison. First, steroids are class C drugs, which can only be prescribed for personal use (NHS, 2022). Yet, unlike in the community, prisoners cannot access steroids whilst in prison. While staff were aware of the law, there was a distinct grey area around whether staff members’ steroid use constituted misconduct in office. Interviewees believed the stigma around steroids inside the

¹ The data collection period for this research will conclude by the end of 2022 with planned thesis submission in 2023.

prison was reducing in a manner similar to outside. This offers opportunities for staff-prisoner relationships to flourish around training interests, but also presents a concern for senior management as prisoners may be encouraged to use steroids, or to capitalise on relationships with staff to reduce the likelihood of being reported for steroid use. While most steroids were being thrown over the prison walls, some prison managers and prisoners believed that needles were being brought in by corrupt staff.

In terms of steroid abuse, prisoners were generally aware of the risks of taking steroids. For example, prisoners who would not take steroids in prison—but might do so in the community—expressed concern at not being able to access the post-course therapy required to build their natural testosterone back up. A lack of testosterone would lead to ill-health and loss of 'gains'. Conversely, prisoners who were very pro-steroids (in or out of prison) spoke about running steroid cycles back-to-back to prevent this loss. However, the inconsistency in supply was a problem for prisoners, who described the adverse physical and psychological consequences. These included using dirty needles, making syringe devices from elastic bands and empty pen barrels, and 'steroid-loading' – taking more than the recommended amount. The illicit nature of steroids and restricted access to medical intervention, including post-course therapy, poses a greater risk for prisoners than the general population.

Second, it is well known that the illicit economy in prisons inflates the value of goods (Treadwell et al., 2018). However, rather than being lucrative with the purpose of selling to make money, prisoners stated that only prison gym users would be interested in and able to access IPEDs. Both interest and access were influenced by financial and social conditions. Steroids were generally for personal use rather than public distribution and prisoners accessing steroids in prison are paying large sums to have them smuggled inside – sums that are unaffordable even compared to other prison drugs on the market. Despite posing potentially life-threatening physical risks, prisoners and staff were keen to emphasise that steroids do not carry the same level of social stigma as other drugs, such as spice or heroin. The motivation to use steroids, they believed, reflected a different mindset that was focused on long-term performance goals and self-improvement. This mindset was contrasted with the short-term highs gained from heroin or spice, the physical side effects of becoming 'zombified', and the resultant chaos across the Prison Estate (Ministry of Justice, 2021). So, on balance, staff and prisoners believed steroids were not the most pressing concern in prisons. This served to reinforce the prisoner hierarchy by stereotyping 'ideal' and 'undeserving' drug users. But steroids do tell us something about trends in the illicit economy within establishments since they are often inside packages containing other drugs, phones, and contraband. It is likely that prisoners using steroids are some of the wealthiest and most influential prisoners with links to organised crime. Therefore, it would be untrue to suggest that steroids 'aren't a problem' in prisons.

Finally, some prisoners reported a reduced propensity for violence that refutes community-based research findings of increased aggression, violence, and mood swings arising from steroid use (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018). The prison gym is one of the most valued aspects of prison life. It is a space for prisoners to release emotions such as anger and frustration and engage in one of few opportunities for physical exertion and socialisation. Prisoners reported feeling relaxed, sleeping better, and felt time and space away from prison-wing politics gave them clarity that in some cases prevented violence. Considered a 'privilege' in prison contexts, gym access can be revoked for poor behaviour, including aggression and violence. Staff and prisoners stated that the threat of a gym ban served to 'responsibilise'

prisoners and was deemed an effective tool for controlling behaviour through collective responsibility. Hence, little sympathy was afforded to 'uncontrollable' physiological responses to steroids. Staff and prisoners believed the gym could and should be used as a tool to encourage pro-social behaviour, promote positive staff-prisoner relationships, and raise awareness about the risks of steroids.

As a mirror of society (Frois, 2017), this research found three key similarities between IPEDs in the prison and IPEDs in the community. First, prisoners and staff stated that prisoners take steroids for predominantly image-based reasons. The short-term nature of a remand prison exacerbated the desire to 'get big quick' for potentially imminent release, known as getting 'road ready', as well as for a move to a long-term prison establishment. As one staff member stated while referring to prisoners, "everyone wants to be the biggest or strongest...if you're in good shape you're gonna be more well-respected. That's prison rules pretty much". Thus, physical prowess in prison was important, noticeable, and supported a prisoner's social capital, operating in a similar way to body-image influencers on social media.

Second, there was an increase in the number of oral (rather than injectable) steroids discovered by prison security staff. The growing online market for steroid tablets in the community was therefore mirrored in the supply and demand chain in prison. There are several reasons for this: tablets are less invasive, have faster results, and mitigate the risk of disease from needles in an environment that does not support needle-sharing. The lean towards oral rather than injectable steroids also reflects the short-termism of being in a remand prison since they exit the body more quickly, presenting a challenge for mandatory drug testing in prison (Inside Bodybuilding, 2021). Furthermore, tablets are more discreet than vials, making it easier for prisoners to evade detection. Staff and prisoners believed that prisoners with no prior IPED experience would be more likely to start taking tablets than using needles. That is not to say that injectable steroids did not exist in the prison; prisoners who injected in the community were deemed more likely to continue this method in custody.

Finally, in line with findings from the UK Anti-Doping agency, many interviewees stated that more education (beyond merely posters) is needed to begin a conversation about steroids. The challenge here is around resourcing. With the Prison Service currently in a financial and staffing crisis, it is unclear how such education could be delivered. Targeted interventions for gym-users may reduce the pressure on resourcing, but the distinctions made by prisoners and staff between steroid-users and drug-users may act as a barrier for meaningful discussion. Whilst the harms of IPEDs are less obvious, preliminary research findings show that steroids may form part of a bigger picture of organised crime in prisons – which in turn impacts on prison safety, security, and the wellbeing of staff and prisoners.

This research note complements community findings exposes the prevalence, motivations, and outcomes of steroids in society by presenting the hidden steroid economy in prison. Calling attention to this issue and prompting further research will help develop understanding and provide recommendations to support prisoners, prison staff, and the Prison Estate more broadly.

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Drug market developments in Uganda: The need for a new approach

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When two Ugandans were executed in China for drug trafficking in 2014, the harsh reality of Uganda's role in the global drug market was brought into public awareness. A further 200 Ugandans are currently serving sentences for drug trafficking in China (Akumu, 27th July, 2014; Bagala, 20th May 2022). The growing problem of trafficking both in Uganda and involving Ugandans abroad has received little scholarly attention, but these developments are important to understand the key role Ugandans are playing in the international drug trade.

Since the executions, the number of Ugandans arrested in China has fallen dramatically; instead, Ugandans packed with drugs are now being arrested in large numbers in India (Bagala, 20th May 2022). This shift in trafficking routes has been cited as evidence of the deterrent effect of China's unforgivingly harsh capital punishment laws (e.g., see Girlli, 2021), whereas India's comparatively light sentencing means drug traffickers face a ten-year prison sentence.² Uganda, too, has passed increasingly stringent laws in the hope of deterring its citizens through tougher sentences for those caught within the country (Bagala, 20th May 2022). In fact, China's capital statutes have softened since the 2014 executions: at the time, another twenty-one Ugandans awaited a similar fate, but a shift in Chinese policy to introduce a two-year suspended death sentence³ meant that all twenty-one benefited from reprieves, seeing their death sentences commuted to fixed terms (Akumu, 27th July, 2014).

This continued focus on deterrence ignores the fact that the traffickers responsible for carrying drugs over borders operate within a larger network. As the most visible part of that network, they are also the most expendable as they are most likely to get caught. Transporting the drugs makes the trafficker inherently vulnerable to detection and arrest, but if they are caught, it is the loss of the commodity—not the trafficker—that impacts the network. The replaceability of traffickers means the sentence imposed on them is largely immaterial to the network's continuation (Malm and Bilcher, 2011).

China's sophisticated detection techniques and high success rates of intercepting large quantities of drugs prompted the change in route to focus on India. New trafficking routes have thus evolved as a result of the exogenous attempts to disrupt them (Everton, 2012). Criminal networks are generally shaped for flexibility, making them resilient to law enforcement targeting and intervention. The decentralised and fragmented structure of drug networks

² The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985

³ Article 43 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China

makes their disruption (and a full appraisal of the entire organisation) difficult; such concealment measures also allow for greater adaptivity when threatened (Morselli, 2010).

The shifts in the markets are often only revealed through arrests. Between January and May 2022, sixteen Ugandans were arrested at three Indian airports. Ugandans made up the largest percent of drug arrests at India's Indira Gandhi International Airport in the preceding eight months (Bagala, 20th May 2022).

It isn't just Ugandans caught up in the international drug trade—visa limitations often make that difficult—but the country Uganda too. As a landlocked country with only one international airport and limited flight schedules, Uganda does not seem synonymous with desirable transit locations. But porous land borders, a lack of investment in detection, and corruption mean that Uganda is becoming an epicentre for trafficking (Bagala, 20th May 2022).

Drug smugglers arrested at Entebbe International Airport are in double figures; relatively few are caught, and the absence of body scanners at the airport mean drugs can leave, often without detection. When traffickers are caught, it is predominately through visual identification from law enforcement officers. Body packing—where the drugs are transported internally—has become an increasingly favoured method of transportation, because, despite the significantly greater risk to the carrier, it is generally more effective at concealing the presence of narcotics. Traffickers arrested at both Entebbe and airports in India have mainly been carrying drugs internally. The behaviour of the traffickers, and the physical toll of not being able to eat or drink for the duration of flights, mean they are still coming to the attention of law enforcement. Uganda is not particularly well served with flight routes, and most traffickers will have to take connections through Qatar or the UAE (both of which retain the death penalty for drug trafficking) before taking further flights on to the destination country. This means long periods without ingesting anything, or using the bathroom, for fear of dispelling the packages prematurely. For this reason, traffickers are more likely to be arrested at their destination, rather than departure, although it has been noted that most arrests at Entebbe airport are at the point of departure (Bagala, 20th May 2022).

The diversity of nationalities arrested suggest a network that extends far beyond Uganda. In the past five years, nationals from thirty-eight different countries spanning four continents have been apprehended at Entebbe airport (Uganda Police, 2021). The porous land borders mean that drugs can flow in and out of the country over ground, having arrived at the East African coast from Pakistan and Iran via dhow. Once in Kenya or Tanzania, they are trafficked inland to be re-packaged and re-shipped (Eligh, 2019). The lack of funding for law enforcement efforts, combined with corruption, means there is little in the way of an organised response to prevent or control the overland drug trade (Bagala, 20th May 2022).

The drugs are predominately destined for Europe, and what little information exists suggests the presence of West African trafficking networks in Uganda (Eligh, 2019). However, the heavy foreign presence in arrest at Entebbe airport suggest that there is a much larger network, as foreigners are unlikely to have been recruited in Uganda. Less than half (49) of the arrests between 2017 and 2020 were of Ugandans, compared to 67 foreigners (Uganda Police, 2021).

As supply chains developed, so have new markets; as Uganda developed as a transit point, domestic drug use and abuse has risen (Eligh, 2019). Uganda's response to the influx of drugs has been to pass punitive legislation that proscribes fines of three times the market value of

the drugs, as well as life imprisonment for drug traffickers. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act of 2015 also criminalised drug use and possession, with terms ranging from ten to twenty-five years, which is problematic in treating drug dependency. The Act was passed in response to the belief that Uganda had become a transit route as a result of its weak sentences for trafficking – the previous legislation had set the punishment for drug possession and trafficking at a fine of between one or two million shillings (£240-£480) or a prison term of six months. In 2014, almost 160kg of drugs were destroyed, but none of the defendants in the 52 cases where these drugs had been seized were in prison. Having paid a combined total of 35 million shillings in fines (about £8,400), they were all free (Bagala, 9th April 2017). The next year, the new Act was passed, and has seen traffickers sentenced to long terms of incarceration in a country where there are 70,119 inmates in prisons that have a capacity for 19,986, meaning prison overcrowding is currently at 350.8% (World Prison Brief, 2022).

Yet seven years after its passage, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act has not had the deterrent effect the legislatures had hoped for. In 2020, there were still more arrests at Entebbe than the year before, despite the fact the airport was closed from late March to October 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Uganda Police, 2021). Harsh sentencing does little to disrupt trafficking networks, largely because they do not target the key players. The people who get apprehended in the network do so because they are the most visible, but that does not mean they are indispensable. The impact of successful law enforcement interventions is also greatly hindered if they are not targeting the key players – who are not the people transporting the drugs (Morselli, 2010). The financial incentives to traffic mean there is always a steady flow of those willing to fill their spot in the network (Bagala, 20th May 2022). The reason that China has had some success in stemming the flow of Ugandan traffickers is not because they execute those that they catch; it's because their sophisticated surveillance and detection system means that the commodity—the narcotics themselves—are seized. The drug market is structured around the commodity, and when that is being intercepted and removed, the market cannot function. Therefore, it is forced to adapt, and the market shifts from China to countries with less sophisticated detection methods. This does not destroy the network nor the market it operates in, but it does disrupt where it operates. If Uganda wishes to reduce the use of Entebbe airport as a transit point, it should focus its efforts on detecting the drugs, investing in surveillance and training so that fewer shipments make it through the airport, rather than harsher sentences for the few who do get caught.

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Peptides: substances of tomorrow – Moving beyond the traditional framework of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)

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Often confused or conflated with anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS), peptides are synthetic substances that have increasingly become of use in regenerative therapy and life extension treatments. They are synthetically made, injectable sequences of amino acids that are anabolic and non-androgenic, and which simulate natural production that occurs in parts of the body such as the stomach and pancreas. Insulin is a well-known peptide commonly prescribed to diabetics. To date, more than 60 different peptides have been approved for medical use, but many others have been developed without approval and made available via online sales as ‘research chemicals’, not for human consumption. As the legitimate use of peptides for medical purposes has increased, somewhat inevitably, the unregulated use of peptides as ‘Performance Enhancing Drugs’ (PEDs) has also increased. Athletes and gym enthusiasts often use steroids to build muscle and may also be interested in peptides for their ability to facilitate the repair of damaged parts of the body, for example when recovering from an injury. The limited existing research on peptides, however, suggest that their regenerative properties may have much wider appeal than the relatively narrow steroid user base (Dr Lam Coaching, 2022).

One key difference between peptides and other more established Performance Enhancing Drugs, is that they are not currently controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA 1971). Steroids or the smart drug Ritalin, for example, are categorised as class C drugs when used without prescription, and criminal penalties can be applied for importation, supply, or possession with intent to supply. Many peptides have not yet even been approved for human clinical use, for example as a prescription medication, due to newly emerging understanding of their benefits and a lack of clinical trials. This places them in a legal grey area, outside of any legitimate quality control standards. Many are sold as research chemicals ‘not for human consumption’, increasing the risk to novice users.

Nevertheless, online forums such as Reddit or Facebook, as well as a proliferation of online sites purporting to sell peptides, indicate a rising user base. In the absence of clinical trial data or research into the potential harms of peptide use (Langen, 2010), user discussion boards currently provide the best place to share information on side-effects, dosages, methods of use, and perceived benefits and harms (Facebook, 2022). Given the lack of research data available on these substances, the rapid emergence of new and increasingly complex peptides, and the rise in user base, it might be tempting for Governments to respond by banning them before they become even more widely used. It is the aim of this brief policy commentary to outline some of the drawbacks to such an approach and, drawing on case

studies, to explain why the issue of regulation needs to be approached in a more nuanced manner.

BPC-157

One peptide for which the effects on humans have been researched relatively thoroughly is the synthetically produced BPC-157, available on prescription. Existing data suggests it can be used for a variety of regenerative purposes such as: the repair of damaged muscles and tendons; and the treatment of gut-related issues, arthritis, and skin burns. It supersedes the effective ability of natural healing by reducing scar tissue and speeds up recovery time beyond the body's normal capabilities (Staresinic et al., 2003). These properties are of clear interest to athletes seeking to stimulate muscle gain/recovery – so much so that as of 2022 the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA) has designated BPC-157 as a Performance Enhancing Drug, placing it on its list of banned substances.

At the same time, recent research has found BPC-157 to be so effective in reducing the damage done by arthritis that it has been noted as reversing some of the effects of this degenerative condition, with the potential to considerably improve the quality of life of those suffering from it (Lee & Padgett, 2021). Any move to bring substances under criminal legislative control, for example via the MDA 1971, makes ongoing research into its medical benefits more difficult to conduct. In seeking to regulate and control the use of BPC-157 it is thus important to balance the potential risks to unauthorised athletic users, against the potential benefits to authorised medical users, such as those suffering from arthritis.

CJC-1295

Another relatively well-known, licenced for prescription peptide, CJC-1295, has also been banned by WADA in 2020 for the competitive advantages deriving from its regenerative properties. Like BPC-157, however, CJC-1295 has become prominent amongst diverse groups as a substance that can 'turn back the clock', reversing some of the symptoms of ageing. Documenting the increasing number of women reporting off-prescription self-administration of this substance, van Hout & Hearne (2016) conducted a netnography examining online forums and exploring the conversations among women using CJC-1295. They found the primary motivation for use was to attain more youthful skin, with getting a better body and combatting ageing in general also important.

Whilst the use of peptides may seem a risky and novel practice to the uninitiated, mainstream consumer brands such as L'Oreal already incorporate peptides into their own treatment products (L'Oreal, 2022), particularly those aiming to improve the smoothness and firmness of the skin to reduce the signs of ageing (Gorouhi & Maibach 2009). Peptides sold as transdermal applications that 'firm up' and regenerate skin are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of marketability, appealing to people from a wider range of ages, backgrounds, and other demographics. The existing commercial use of peptides in skin products and the potential widespread appeal for self-administration makes some form of regulation desirable,

but prohibition via the MDA 1971 seems disproportionate and unlikely to deliver a nuanced policy of benefit to the user base.

Epitalon

A final relevant example here is provided by the as yet unapproved peptide Epitalon. Emerging research suggests frequent subcutaneous injection of this substance may effectively reduce the ageing process by enabling the body to begin systematically healing itself with, for example, the potential to postpone the onset of dementia, treat cancer and heart disease, rejuvenate skin, improve sleep, and ultimately extend the human lifespan (Korkushko et al 2011, Khavinson et al 2014). Simultaneously, Epitalon has found notoriety among online social groups using peptides for varied cell regenerative purposes, such as wound healing, neurological degeneration, and neuroprotection.

Any attempt to enact legislation prohibiting the importation, supply, or possession of Epitalon would result in the same issues as already discussed: difficulties in access for legitimate user base; limitations on continued medical research; potential criminalisation of diverse user base; increase of harms and risks to users. One further aspect to draw out in relation to Epitalon, which perhaps seems to have the most extensive range of regenerative benefits, is that peptides self-administration usually comes to light via WADA placing bans on the use of such substances in competitive sport. This means that Epitalon, and many other peptides, are primarily categorised as illegitimate Performance Enhancing Drugs, rather than the legitimate regenerative medicines of tomorrow.

Concluding Thoughts

An increasing variety of peptides are being developed and made accessible to a wide and varied user base interested in recovering from injury, reversing the ageing process, and treating a range of diseases. The current legal situation means that peptides are easy to purchase over the internet as 'research chemicals' not for human consumption, and thus their sale to non-prescription users is unregulated by either illegal drug legislation or food safety legislation. This lack of regulation leaves users without any means to assure the quality of the substances they are purchasing. At the same time, the relative newness of the substances means that accurate information about side-effects, dosage and recommended methods of use is often difficult to obtain. Within this context, some kind of regulation of off-prescription use of peptides probably would be beneficial, but only if it is nuanced in its approach, seeing to reduce harm to the end user, and keeping avenues for legitimate research and access open.

Academic social research has the potential to play a useful part in understanding the variety of motivations for use, as well as the potential risks to off-prescription users, and could thus be used to inform any policy developed in this area. It must, however, take care to avoid the practice of treating PEDs as though they are an cohesive category of substance and as though it is appropriate to regulate or control them all in the same way (Brennan et al., 2017), be prepared to turn the focus from more well-known PEDs such as steroids to the plethora of

much less well understood substances, and be capable of imagining a diverse user base extending far beyond gym enthusiasts and competitive athletes.

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Remembering Ken Plummer (1946 – 2022)



Ken Plummer, the pioneering sociologist, died on November 4 with his partner and 'bestest friend' Ev Longland by his side.

Ken was born on April 4 1946, in Palmers Green, London, and taught sociology at Enfield College of Technology before moving in 1975 to make his academic home in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex where he taught for the next 30 years. He was a prolific scholar, intellectually rigorous, always restlessly engaged with the puzzles of social life. His carefully maintained website, [Ken Plummer – Sociology Humanism Narrative Sexualities](#), is—as he intended—a window into his biography and his sociological

imagination.

His first major book was *Sexual Stigma* (1975), the start of a long journey in which he faced the challenge of, as he put it, situating his work in 'a life story of contingent sexualities' (2017: 190). His engagement with the politics of liberation of the period and movements like GLF led him 'to think about the conditions under which people get a voice and how they are silenced' (Plummer, 2017: 191) – a line of thought that runs through his humanism, advocacy, and work on memory and narrative. *Sexual Stigma* can lay claim to being among the first accounts of the social organisation of sexual difference and the symbolic interactionism that runs through the text is a theoretical perspective that Ken would do so much to develop over the coming decades, framing his commitment to humanist methodologies across dozens of books and well over a hundred journal articles.

Although he maintained a long-standing ambivalence toward 'criminology' and 'deviance', he was an early member of the National Deviancy Conference and his friends and mentors included such key figures as Mary McIntosh, Paul Rock, Jock Young and Stan Cohen. Arriving at Essex he was to teach on the sociology of crime and social control with Stan but tellingly re-titled the course as 'Stigma and Social Control' when Stan left to move to Israel.

The final chapter of Ken's book *Sociology: The Basics* opens with the lines of warning he offered as he introduced first-year students to 'the Sociological Imagination' - 'Caution! Danger! Beware!: Sociology will change your life'. Certainly, the discipline provides us with a critical way of seeing and understanding but this is so much more powerful if the teacher evidently lives and breathes their subject. For many of Ken's students in the 1970s (and I, Nigel, was one), there will be indelible memories of his lectures where, before multi-media technology, he enthralled with the use of TWO overhead projectors and slides, snatches of music (what better summary of delinquency theory than 'Gee Officer Krupke!' from *West Side Story*?), readings (performing 'Preedy at the Beach' from Goffman's *Presentation of Self* so well that a round of applause would follow) and, of course, a fantastic ability to explain!

In the Department of Sociology at Essex he held several roles, serving as Head of Department in the early 1990s, and taking the first steps to set up a joint degree in sociology and

criminology. In 1996 he founded the journal *Sexualities* and served as editor until 2012. During this time the books and edited collections he produced include *Symbolic Interactionism* Volumes 1 & 2 (1991), *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience* (1992), *Chicago Sociology: Critical Assessments* (1997: 4 volumes); *Telling Sexual Stories* (1995), *Sexualities* (2002: 4 volumes), *Documents of Life-2: An invitation to a Critical Humanism* (2001) and *Intimate Citizenship* (2003), which give a sense of the remarkable range of his scholarship.

Ken was sole author of *Sociology: The Basics* and co-author (with John Macionis) of *Sociology: A Global Introduction*, so when the criminology team at Essex faced the challenge of writing the first edition of our *Criminology* textbook in the early 2000s, Ken's experience of writing a block-busting introduction to sociology helped us all learn the craft of writing for undergraduate students. Textbooks were (and still are) often regarded as low-status work, but that was not how Ken saw it. Instead, he insisted on the importance of textbooks as an attractive ensemble of ideas, providing disciplines with a sense of their past, their key discoveries, main lines of dispute and their distinctive, evolving paradigms. In other words, they should invite beginners to see a field of enquiry as a coherent whole, rather than endless, contested fragments.

Needing a liver transplant, he took early retirement in 2005 but, of course, continued to write, modestly claiming to do so 'a little from time to time', yet in fact producing a list of books and papers that would proudly fill the CV of most academics. His more recent books include *Imaginations* (2015), an inimitable collection celebrating fifty years of Essex sociology, while together with colleagues (Neli Demireva and Paul Thompson) they produced *Pioneering Social Research: Life Stories of a Generation* (2021). Other major statements include *Cosmopolitan Sexualities* (2015), *Narrative Power* (2019) and *Critical Humanism: A Manifesto for the 21st Century* (2021).

His passion for sociology was immense. For anyone initially in awe of him he had the ability to immediately put them at ease with his sheer zest for life, disarming modesty, and remarkable empathy. Above all he taught generations of us the transformational power of ideas. It is impossible to do justice here to Ken's enormous contributions to his fields of scholarship, his students, his friends but at least we know he struggled with the same dilemma. As he said, 'Writing obituaries is tinged with much grief, but it also leads to many worries: just what kind of life can be told in the few words allowed for in an obituary?' (2017: 195). As always, Ken's humanity and insight mean that his thoughts on documents of life, death and memory will always be a legacy worth revisiting. Ken was *scintillating* – an underused word but it means: brilliantly lively, stimulating, and witty. It also conveys a certain razzamatazz, as did Ken. We are all going to miss him terribly.

Eamonn Carrabine and Nigel South

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Vicky Conway (1980 - 2022)



Dr Vicky Conway, a leading authority on policing and accountability in Ireland, died unexpectedly on 19 July. Vicky was Associate Professor in Law at Dublin City University, host of the [Policed in Ireland podcast](#), a leading member of Lawyers for Choice, and a prominent member of the Policing Authority. The outpouring of grief following the announcement of her passing was testament to the huge impact Vicky had made through her work as a champion of social justice issues.

An impressively accomplished scholar, Vicky began her studies in her home city of Cork, Ireland. She was awarded her Bachelor of Civil Law degree in 2001 and her LLM a year later from University College Cork. From there, she moved to Scotland to complete her MSc in Criminology at the University of Edinburgh, and then to Northern Ireland to study for her PhD at Queen's University Belfast. Prior to joining DCU in 2015, Vicky held positions at the University of Kent, Queen's University Belfast, the University of Limerick, and the University of Leeds.

Vicky's doctoral research acted as a catalyst to her becoming a leading researcher on policing in Ireland. Among her vast array of published works, Vicky authored *The Blue Wall of Silence: The Morris Tribunal and Police Accountability in the Republic of Ireland* (2010, IAP) and *Policing Twentieth Century Ireland: A History of an Garda Síochána* (2013, Routledge). Vicky's socio-legal background informed her critical analyses of policing and insights into police culture. Drawing on a range of research methodologies, she promoted the need for greater policing accountability in order to positively impact on social change. Her hugely popular podcast, *Policed in Ireland* (@policedpodcast), created a much-needed space for those with lived experience of policing to share their valuable insights on a range of criminal justice issues. Each episode featured powerful testimonies aptly demonstrating the importance of speaking truth to power.

Vicky's tireless dedication to social justice and fairness spanned the wider criminal justice area too. As a leading member of Lawyers for Choice, Vicky advocated to repeal the Eighth Amendment during the Republic of Ireland's Abortion Referendum in 2018. Her contribution to the *Northern/Irish Feminist Judgments Project* offered a necessary feminist review of the infamous Kerry Babies Tribunal report. Before leaving Kent to join DCU, she played a vital role in helping shape what would eventually become an institutional-wide response to tackling student sexual misconduct.

In recent years, Vicky had also held several prestigious government appointments, including with the Commission on the Future of Policing, and twice as a member of the Policing Authority. Shortly before her untimely death, Vicky and the Irish Network Against Racism had been commissioned by the Policing Authority to conduct research into minority community members' experiences of policing in Ireland. She had also been working on a conference and an edited collection focused on the treatment of people detained in custody. Dedicating the September conference to her memory, her DCU colleagues also highlighted how it was no

surprise that Vicky had recently been appointed the first ever School of Law and Governance Convenor of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

As well as being a fiercely sharp academic, Vicky was hugely passionate about sports, knitting, music, and photography. She could always be relied upon for excellent recommendations about books, films, up-and-coming singers or bands, and where to find some of the most beautiful walks and scenery. Vicky will be remembered as someone who was incredibly generous with her time, knowledge, and expertise, and will be so very missed.

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