

# Fractured lives, splintered knowledges: making criminological sense of the Paris attacks.

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# Acknowledgement

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# Purpose

- To use responses to the terrorist attacks in Paris, January 2015 as a touchstone to consider criminological lacunae on terrorism.

This presentation falls into three parts, using biographical data gleaned from media reports about the three men concerned, we subject these lives to:

1. Conventional criminological analysis
2. Biographical analysis
3. And when 1 and 2 are juxtaposed, explore what is exposed for criminology



# Context

- 9/11 as a moment of 'anthropological shock' (Beck 2015: 77), January 2015 confirms that this event was more than 'transgressive' (Jenks 2003). (Verviers, Copenhagen and more recently Tunisia)
- A 'moral violation'? (Beck 2015)
- Je Suis Charlie: million people and arguably the largest and most consensual demonstration since the Second World War. Blogquote Fassin 7/2/15)
- However as Didier Fassin (2015: 7) observes the reigniting of the 'enemy within' paradoxically was

'less the hatred of a few that led to heinous killings, than the self-congratulation of a nation that could continue to ignore its ills'.



# Criminology and pathways into terrorism

Cottee (2014) accuses criminology of three biases:

- the secular
- The religious
- The liberal

Tendency towards crime prevention role of religion (though see Tivalli et. al. 2013) role of belief/religion in promoting violent extremism is decidedly muted.

What do we think we know?



# Criminology and violent extremism

Four main approaches:

'lone wolf' approach

Strain theory

Subcultural theory

Structural perspective

Recent ASPI report Gen Y jihadist (June 2015) offers a flavour of all of these and their limitations.

Different levels of analysis

Mute the role of belief

Erase biography: situated life experiences



# Three French Men

- Biography as a starting point for a different conversation?

Said Kouachi

Cherif Kouachi

Amedy Coulibaby

Although incomplete, partial and dependent on secondary sources = fractured lives. Illustrative of well established criminological knowledge: alienation, exclusion, family size, poverty, disrupted childhoods, from home to care to custody.

# From 'ghetto Muslims' to 'Soldiers of the Caliphate': strangers within?

- Cherif referred to himself as a 'ghetto Muslim' in an earlier interview with the police: commonly used in France. Coda for describing poor area with large ethnic minority populations.
- Ordinary, everyday, routine checking, of these men's lives by the police (Fassin 2013) living in 'sensitive zones' (Body-Gendrot 2012)
- Life in the 'banlieues'
- Then there is prison; 60-70% of inmate populations thought to be Muslim

# La Republique: but only was 'we' know it.

- Laicite: the Law of Separation (1905)

Religion as a private matter (no stats on the number of Muslims in the French pop. Though estimated at 10%)

All these young men grew up during a 'hardening' of laicite. So, not considered French even by the French resulting in liminal lives.

Andre and Harris-Hogan (2013: 319) the challenge for France is to 'promote a genuinely liberal understanding of its neutrality with respect to religious diversity'.



# Knowing the lives of others?

- Questioning the liberal bias of criminology (Cottee 2014).
- Following Young (2011), the projection of American 'liberal' values through the disciplinary embrace of positivism results in 'a nomothetic impulse' (ibid. 79) than implies a 'denial of specificity' (ibid, 77).

Denial of religion as crime inducing

Denial of belief as violence inducing

Denial of situated life experiences and biographies of those so motivated.

Splintered knowledges?



# Conclusion

- The question here is not which ‘moral violation’ for criminology to focus on (Paris cf Baga) but an appeal to interconnect history, politics, religion and culture, including the reckless violence of states.
- So some old factors and old issues remain including the violence of the state all of which put a slightly different perspective on the ASPI report.
- Criminological silence on these issues speaks profoundly about a discipline constrained by splintered knowledges and its capacity to understand fractured lives.



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