



Exceptions and rules

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A favourite cliché of management consultants is allegedly from Einstein – that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. It's used by consultants to sell the idea that, in under-performing organizations, doing something different is some kind of imperative.

It is, of course, a cliché, and a very unreliable cliché at that. For instance, in a chaotic system, where many elements are interacting, it is entirely sensible to expect a different outcome for each action. There are other cases where cumulative effects might mean that the reaction to the fiftieth blow of the hammer is different to the first. Cumulative effects, too, might be a demonstration of the risks of concentrating on what's on the surface, not what's happening inside the objects of the action. Hit a piece of iron with a hammer hundreds of times and you have wrought iron, but the minute crystalline changes may have begun at the first blow – you just can't see them.

We have a rule as bloggers- we believe the victim. It's a rule that's as much about a generalized belief in people as capable of being good as it is about any kind of analytical precision.

Have you ever heard anyone say, sagely, preferably whilst stroking a small, straggly beard 'Ah, but the exception proves the rule.' We're back in the land of clichés, and in this particular case, of a cliché where a minor cottage industry has sprung up in explaining the cliché. Instead of wandering back into the mists of time, and quoting Cicero, or wittering on about different meanings of the word prove, let's try a practical example.

[Meet Leanne Black](#). If you really, really do want to meet Leanne, you may have to wait a little while, since she's currently doing time for the offence of perverting the course of justice, by making false accusations of rape. If you support the idea of believing the victims, you have to ask, what about Leanne Black?

It's tempting to go down the easy route of saying, in effect, that as exceptions go, Leanne Black is pretty exceptional. Her criminal record and history set her apart from the majority of the population. However, believing the victim is not the same as believing the victims you like. Even the Leanne Black's of this world, unattractive, unpleasant and repugnant as they might be (and anyone with seventy seven criminal convictions is going to have to go a long way to persuade me that they're the kind of person I'd like to spend time with) have the same human rights as anyone else, including the right to be believed.

Leanne Black was believed. The police arrested the man she claimed had raped her. They questioned him, and tested the evidence. Then they sent a report to the CPS.

Lots of MRAs and sundry fuckwits will want to use the Leanne Black case as evidence for the



proposition that we shouldn't always believe the victim. In this case though, they should be resisted, as powerfully as possible, because the rule as stated worked. Leanne Black was believed, and an investigation took place. If Leanne Black had been disbelieved, and no investigation mounted, Leanne Black would still be a free woman, at least until the next time she chose to go shoplifting. The rule, as stated, is believe the victim. The rule isn't 'believe the victim no matter what.' It's simply, believe the victim.

Whether prison or the criminal justice system is the best place for someone like Leanne Black is another, quite different question altogether that deserves to be addressed separately, although we can say for sure that, in Leanne's case, the criminal justice system is not achieving rehabilitation, and it isn't preventing re-offending. You might say, of Leanne Black, that her repeated offending, and her repeated false accusations against others are, in Einstein's words, evidence of insanity since she seems to keep on offending and expecting other than to get caught. That might be the case, or it might be, to use another cliché, that her repeated offending is a cry for help, and that actually, each time she offends and gets caught, she is getting the attention she craves, even if her cry for help is so incoherent that no-one can work out what to do to help her.

In such high profile matters as believing the victims the subject of Julian Assange is unavoidable. Lots of perfectly sane and sensible people, in Assange's case, refuse to believe the victims, and instead choose to believe that extraneous factors (Assange's celebrity, his heroic qualities and a conspiracy of our secret Lizard rulers co-ordinated by the Freemasons and sundry Illuminati) might explain away the accusations that he has chosen to avoid defending himself against. There's no excuse for excusing Assange. Just as an investigation suggested Leanne Black was making false accusations, so the system in Sweden has suggested Assange has a case to answer.

In both Assange's case, and Leanne Black's, an important scientific rule can be demonstrated. The rule is, simply, don't make assumptions. All you need to do is believe the victim sufficiently to form a hypothesis, to gather evidence to test that hypothesis, and to reach a conclusion. Assange's supporters make the assumption that because they believe Assange is somehow heroic, and principled, and a rebel, he is not capable of being a rapist. So if someone says he is a rapist, they must be wrong, or it must be a conspiracy.

That sort of muddled, woolly thinking excused the likes of Jimmy Saville and Stuart Hall for decades.

Gwent Police, a police force too small to efficiently exist, badly led and at war with itself, and now being dominated by an [over-weaning and self regarding police commissioner who bullied Chief Constable Carmel Napier into resignation](#), did well in the case of Leanne Black. In Black's case, they demonstrated that, as the exception to the rule, she proved it was, actually, a workable rule, in as much as the false accusation was identified and dealt with. Or to put it another way, there is no good reason not to believe the victims – less harm results from believing them and acting on their accusations than the alternative, that the police simply make assumptions and turn away those who make awkward or unwelcome claims.



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