

**Why the Most Accurate Account  
Sounds the Least Believable:  
A Summary of the OMXUS Research Series  
for Legal Professionals**

*Seven Studies on Why a Systems Thinker's  
Truthful Account of an Accident Is  
Systematically Misinterpreted as Evidence of Guilt—  
and What Can Be Done About It*

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## Purpose of This Document

This document is a summary of the OMXUS Research Series, designed to be read first. It presents, in plain language, the complete chain of argument developed across seven papers. Each paper is briefly described, its key finding stated, and its relevance to the legal context explained. The full papers are available for detailed review; this summary provides the map.

The series addresses a single question: **why does a truthful, accurate, prevention-oriented account of an accidental event sound like a confession of guilt to an investigator, prosecutor, or jury?**

The answer involves seven layers, each building on the last.

# 1 The Series at a Glance

Table 1: The OMXUS Research Series

#	Paper	Core Finding
1	Geographic Birthplace as a Predictor of Primary Language	Environment determines even the most complex human behaviour (mean $h = 0.93$ , $N = 1.8$ billion)
2	The Cost of Separation: Universal Security Expenditure	Every human already pays for interconnection—locks, insurance, policing are behavioural proof
3	From Hereditary Enmity to Hereditary Prosperity (European Peace)	Prevention outperforms defence at continental scale—80 years of peace among integrated EU states
4	The Interpreter’s Error	A systems thinker’s account is systematically mistranslated: context heard as motive, complexity as evasion, analysis as callousness
5	Why Systems Thinking Feels Wrong	Five cognitive mechanisms (incl. the “far-fetched” heuristic) cause systemic explanations to be resisted—the same mechanisms behind climate change denial
6	The Just World and the Systems Thinker	The just-world fallacy drives all the above biases—observers <i>need</i> someone to blame to preserve the belief that the world is fair
7	The Existential Threat of the Accurate Account	The deepest layer: the systems account threatens the observer’s sense of safety, control, meaning, and order—Yalom’s four ultimate concerns

## 2 The Chain of Argument

### 2.1 Step 1: Environment Shapes Behaviour (Paper 1)

A child born in Tokyo speaks Japanese. A child born in Sydney speaks English. This is not because of genetics—international adoption studies show 100% language replacement regardless of ancestry. Language, one of the most complex behaviours humans exhibit, is overwhelmingly determined by environment.

**Why this matters for the case:** When the accused describes environmental and contextual factors—stress, fatigue, unfamiliarity—as contributing to an adverse event, they are applying the same causal logic that explains language acquisition. This is not excuse-making. It is the empirically supported default framework for understanding how environment shapes behaviour.

## 2.2 Step 2: Everyone Already Knows This (Paper 2)

Every person who buys a lock has made an implicit acknowledgement: a stranger's circumstances (desperation, illness, opportunity) can produce consequences that affect me. Every insurance premium is a priced estimate of how much other people's lives affect yours. Global insurance premiums total USD \$9.09 trillion annually. Government security spending averages 1.74% of GDP.

**Why this matters for the case:** The accused's account—describing how conditions and circumstances contributed to harm—is consistent with the causal model that every human on Earth has already accepted through their purchasing behaviour. The juror who buys a lock has already endorsed the systems account. The question is whether they can apply the same logic in the courtroom.

## 2.3 Step 3: Prevention Works Better Than Defence (Paper 3)

France and Germany fought nine wars in 244 years. Since economic integration began in 1951, they have fought zero. This is the longest period of peace in Western Europe since the Roman Empire. The mechanism was not military deterrence—it was changing the conditions that produced conflict.

**Why this matters for the case:** The systems thinker's instinct—to understand conditions in order to prevent recurrence—is the same instinct that produced the most successful conflict-prevention programme in recorded history. It is a marker of prosocial

orientation, not of evasion.

## 2.4 Step 4: The Account Is Mistranslated (Paper 4)

When a systems thinker describes an accident, four specific translation errors occur:

- a) **Context is heard as motive.** “The relationship breakdown affected my judgment” is heard as “the relationship breakdown was a motive for causing harm.”
- b) **Multiple factors are heard as evasion.** Identifying several contributing causes is heard as “pointing at everything except themselves.”
- c) **Analytical tone is heard as callousness.** Describing events in a factual, analytical register is heard as “not caring about the victim.”
- d) **Prevention language is heard as premeditation.** “I can see how the factors made this likely” is heard as “I knew it was going to happen.”

**Why this matters for the case:** The investigator’s or jury’s interpretation of the accused’s account may be a product of their cognitive framework, not of the account’s content. The same words mean something fundamentally different depending on the listener’s model of causation.

## 2.5 Step 5: There Is a Psychological Headwind (Paper 5)

The same cognitive mechanisms that cause people to resist the scientific consensus on climate change also cause people to resist the systems thinker’s account of an accident:

- **Psychological distance:** Contributing factors feel “too far” from the moment of harm.

- **The “far-fetched” heuristic:** Complex explanations seem inherently less plausible than simple ones.
- **Availability bias:** The vivid moment of harm dominates over diffuse background factors.
- **Conspiracy simplicity:** “They did it on purpose” is more satisfying than multi-factor causation.
- **Need for blame:** Systemic accounts deny the observer a target.

**Why this matters for the case:** The account is not rejected because it is wrong. It is rejected because it triggers the same suite of cognitive resistances that cause entire populations to underestimate pandemic risk, deny climate change, and fail to anticipate financial crises.

## 2.6 Step 6: The Observer Needs Someone to Blame (Paper 6)

The just-world fallacy (Lerner, 1980) is the belief that people get what they deserve. When serious harm occurs, this belief creates a powerful psychological need to find a blameworthy agent—because if harm can occur without fault, the world is random and the observer is not safe.

Research shows that observers will distort their interpretation of events, derogate victims, and inflate blame attributions specifically to preserve this belief—even when the evidence contradicts it. The more severe the harm, the more blame is attributed, regardless of actual fault.

**Why this matters for the case:** The pressure to convict may be driven not by the evidence but by the jury’s psychological need to believe that the world is orderly and that serious harm must have a blameworthy cause. The systems account—which describes harm without fault—is a direct threat to this belief.

## 2.7 Step 7: The Threat Is Existential (Paper 7)

Drawing on Yalom's (1980) existential psychotherapy, the systems account activates all four of the observer's deepest anxieties simultaneously:

- a) **Death:** "This could happen to me—and I can't control it."
- b) **Freedom/Groundlessness:** "The causal ground is not solid—outcomes aren't fully determined by choices."
- c) **Isolation:** "No moral order is protecting me."
- d) **Meaninglessness:** "This suffering has no purpose."

Terror Management Theory research shows that mortality salience—being reminded of death and vulnerability—makes mock jurors more punitive, more reliant on the fundamental attribution error, and more hostile toward anyone who challenges their worldview.

A courtroom in a serious harm case is saturated with mortality salience. Under these conditions, the systems account faces the strongest possible psychological headwind.

**Why this matters for the case:** The jury's rejection of the accurate account may not be a judgment about evidence. It may be a defence against existential terror—the terror of accepting that the world is complex, uncertain, and not guaranteed to be fair.

## 3 The Argument in One Paragraph

A person involved in an accidental event who describes what happened in terms of contributing factors, environmental conditions, and cascading interactions is providing the more accurate account. This is the same causal framework that explains language acquisition, that every locked door endorses, that produced 80 years of European peace, and

that underpins modern aviation safety and public health. But this account is systematically misinterpreted—context is heard as motive, complexity as evasion, analysis as callousness—because the observer’s cognitive framework expects a simple, linear, blame-based narrative. That expectation is driven by the fundamental attribution error, reinforced by the just-world fallacy, and powered at the deepest level by existential anxiety: the need to believe that the world is orderly, that harm is deserved, and that the observer is safe. The result is a credibility inversion: the most accurate account sounds the least believable. Justice requires the capacity to recognise this inversion and to hear what is actually being said.

## 4 Practical Recommendations for Legal Professionals

1. **Recognise the two frameworks.** When evaluating a client’s or witness’s account, consider whether the account is person-centred (single cause, individual fault) or systems-centred (multiple factors, environmental conditions). A systems-centred account is not inherently evasive.
2. **Watch for the four translation errors.** If an investigating officer or prosecutor has characterised the accused’s account as evasive, callous, or indicative of premeditation, consider whether these characterisations arise from the content of the account or from a mismatch between cognitive frameworks.
3. **Consider expert testimony.** The following types of expert testimony may be relevant:
  - A psychologist or cognitive scientist on the fundamental attribution error and its documented effect on blame attribution in accident contexts.
  - A risk perception researcher on the “far-fetched” heuristic and the attenuation of systemic explanations (Schweizer et al., 2022).
  - A safety science expert on the systems-centred approach to accident investigation and how it differs from the person-centred approach used in criminal

investigation.

- An existential or clinical psychologist on how the just-world fallacy and mortality salience influence juror decision-making.

**4. Frame the systems orientation positively.** The accused’s tendency to identify multiple contributing factors, to speak analytically, and to focus on prevention rather than blame is consistent with the cognitive orientation of professionals in aviation safety, public health, and organisational resilience. It reflects psychological maturity and prosocial motivation, not evasion.

**5. Use the “locked door” test.** Every juror who has ever bought a lock has already accepted the premise that harm can arise from conditions rather than character. The defence can build on this implicit acceptance to help jurors extend the same logic to the case before them.

**6. Anticipate the severity-blame trap.** Research shows that observers attribute more blame when harm is more severe, regardless of actual fault. In serious harm cases, this bias may be the strongest force operating against the accused. Naming it explicitly may help jurors separate their emotional response to the outcome from their assessment of culpability.

## 5 The Full Series: Reference List

**Paper 1.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). Geographic birthplace as a predictor of primary language: A cross-national observational study. *Preprint*.

**Paper 2.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). The cost of separation: Universal security expenditure as evidence of systemic human interconnection. *Preprint*.

**Paper 3.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). From hereditary enmity to hereditary prosperity: European economic integration as a continental-scale test of prevention vs. defence. *Preprint*.

- Paper 4.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). The interpreter’s error: How systems-oriented cognition is systematically misread as evasion, callousness, or guilt in investigative and legal contexts. *Preprint*.
- Paper 5.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). Why systems thinking feels wrong: The psychological resistance to complex causation and its consequences for justice. *Preprint*.
- Paper 6.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). The just world and the systems thinker: How the need to believe in deserved outcomes criminalises accidental harm. *Preprint*.
- Paper 7.** OMXUS Research Initiative. (2026). The existential threat of the accurate account: Why the systems thinker’s explanation triggers the observer’s deepest defences. *Preprint*.

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