

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 22 – Social Work and Social Policy
Title of case study: Situational crime prevention policy and practice
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research produced by UCL's Department of Security & Crime Science (SCS) and Jill Dando Institute of Security & Crime Science has been used in the UK and internationally to shape policies and guide practices using situational methods to prevent crime. Working closely with police forces, crime prevention practitioners and policy makers, SCS staff have provided evidence, expertise and advice to support particular crime prevention initiatives and approaches to crime prevention more broadly. The impact of the research is demonstrated by acknowledged contributions to policy, policing and crime prevention practices, and to fighting the specific crimes of bike theft and internal child sex trafficking.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>UCL Security & Crime Science (SCS) is a world-leading centre for situational crime prevention (SCP) theory and practice. Research in this field involves: (i) analysing specific crime problems in order to identify the situational factors that enable or encourage them; (ii) devising strategies to modify immediate environments in order to reduce opportunities and incentives for crime; and (iii) implementing, evaluating and, if necessary, modifying these countermeasures. Because SCP targets the proximal causes of crime it is of great utility to police and policy makers, who are interested in practical solutions to immediate crime problems. The impacts described here are directed at two levels of application and are underpinned by research conducted by Professors Shane Johnson (UCL 2004–present), Gloria Laycock (UCL 2001–present), and Nick Tilley (UCL 2008–present), and Dr Aiden Sidebottom (lecturer, UCL 2012–present).</p> <p>(1) SCP as a general model of prevention. This line of research aims to have SCP principles adopted as routine policy and practice in policing and crime prevention more generally. Here, the problem-solving method underpinning SCP is central. Tilley is a leading authority on the delivery of SCP through Problem Oriented Policing (POP), with which it has close affinities, and since joining UCL in 2008 he has worked with other SCS researchers to refine the implementation of POP approaches. One study undertook the successful implementation of a supermarket bag-theft prevention project (involving the design of a new shopping trolley) carried out in collaboration with Warwickshire Police and Warwickshire Council. This project is used to argue more generally for a partnership model in which universities can work more closely with police and other agencies [a]. Another study surveyed 203 practitioners in order to identify the use, and perceived strengths and weaknesses, of various problem-solving models [b]. Drawing on these findings the authors examined the implications for an improved problem oriented model of crime prevention.</p> <p>(2) Preventing specific forms of crime. SCP focuses on specific forms of crime in specific contexts. We have selected two crimes – bicycle theft and internal child sex trafficking – to illustrate our breadth, multidisciplinary, engagement, and impact.</p> <p><u>Bicycle theft:</u> A collaboration between Johnson and designers from Central St Martin's (CSM) College of Art and Design led to the development of strategies to help reduce bike theft (2005–2010). Johnson directed the empirical work, analysing environmental factors contributing to bike theft, and evaluating the efficacy of proposed solutions. In a scoping study in 2005-06, poor locking practices were identified as a key problem for bicycles parked in the street; existing n-shaped stands not encouraging the locking of all components of the bicycle (wheels and frame), with 70% of bicycles inadequately secured [c]. Based on this research, the CaMden (M-shaped) bike stand was developed to encourage cyclists to secure all components of their bike. Research in 2007 involving 2,268 observations found that the CaMden stands facilitated significantly better locking practice than other prototypes and n-shaped stands. Additional research showed that locking practices improved significantly when correct locking instructions were posted on bike stands [d].</p> <p><u>Internal child sex trafficking:</u> Research at SCS shows that those who sexually offend against children are strongly influenced by situational factors. Laycock, with two research students (Ella Cockbain and Helen Brayley), worked with the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), now</p>

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the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2010 to apply SCP to trafficking by groups of offenders within the UK of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation. One study [e] examined the social networks of offenders and victims to map connections that support the abuse and which might be disrupted. For example, in one case they identified an offender network built around a central ringleader and argued that targeting this individual might dissolve the network. Another study [f] developed a 'crime script' – a detailed breakdown of the steps involved in the crime commission process, designed to identify 'pinch-points' for prevention – for internal child sex trafficking. For example, the identification of strategies employed by offenders to locate and groom girls for abuse provided important insights allowing the development of advice for potential victims on self-protection strategies.

3. References to the research

Researchers at UCL Security & Crime Science (at the time of the research and publication) are listed in **bold**. All journal publications have been rigorously peer reviewed.

[a] Guillaume, P., **Sidebottom, A.** and **Tilley, N.** (2012). On police and university collaborations: a problem-oriented policing case study. *Police Practice and Research*, 13(4): pp. 389–401. DOI: [10.1080/15614263.2012.671621](https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2012.671621)

[b] Sidebottom, A., & **Tilley, N.** (2011). Improving problem-oriented policing: The need for a new model. *Crime Prevention & Community Safety*, 13(2), 79–101. DOI: [10.1057/cpcs.2010.21](https://doi.org/10.1057/cpcs.2010.21)

[c] Thorpe, A., **Johnson, S. D.** and Sidebottom, A. (2012). The impact of seven prototype bicycle parking stands on opportunities for bicycle theft. In P. Ekblom (ed.) *Designing out crime from products: Towards research-based practice. Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 26*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press. Available on request.

[d] Sidebottom, A., **Johnson, S. D.** and Thorpe, A. (2009). Using targeted publicity to reduce opportunities for bicycle theft: a demonstration and replication. *European Journal of Criminology*, 6(3): 267–286. DOI: [10.1177/1477370809102168](https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370809102168)

[e] Cockbain, E., Brayley, H., & **Laycock, G.** (2011). Exploring internal child sex trafficking networks using social network analysis. *Policing*, 5(2), 144–157. DOI: [10.1093/police/par025](https://doi.org/10.1093/police/par025)

[f] Brayley, H., Cockbain, E., & **Laycock, G.** (2011). The value of crime scripting: deconstructing internal child sex trafficking. *Policing*, 5(2), 132–143. DOI: [10.1093/police/par024](https://doi.org/10.1093/police/par024)

Peer Reviewed Grants

Bike Off 2 – Catalysing anti theft bike, bike parking and information design for the 21st century. Arts and Humanities Research Council and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council Grant. Collaboration with Central Saint Martin's. PI at UCL: Professor Shane Johnson. Amount £393,389. Nov 2006 – Oct 2008. Outputs emerging from this grant [c] and [d].

4. Details of the impact

Policing and broader criminal justice responses to crime have traditionally focussed on catching offenders post offence, and administering punishments to deter future offending. Against the grain of this bias towards reactive approaches, the mission of SCS has been to develop models of evidence-based crime prevention policies and practices. Through direct engagement of end users, SCS has had significant impacts in helping to redress this bias. These have been felt both on broader crime prevention policies and routine policing practices, and on specific crime problems.

Informing and influencing policy and practice in the UK and overseas

Crime prevention policies in the UK have been strongly influenced by SCP and POP, and SCS research has played an important role in this. The research findings showing the effectiveness of these approaches have been conveyed to policymakers through knowledge exchange activities, testimony to select committees, and membership of key advisory bodies. In 2010, for example, Laycock drew on SCS research when she appeared before the House of Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs to argue for the greater use of situational crime prevention. In its subsequent report to Parliament later that year the Committee responded directly to Laycock's testimony welcoming "the renewed emphasis given to designing-out crime in the Cutting Crime

strategy and the establishment of the Home Secretary's Design and Technology Alliance" [1, p. 55].

Since 2011, Wortley has contributed to the Minister's Forum for Innovation in Crime Prevention, which helps shape government policy on crime prevention. A letter from the Home Office states: *"The work of the Department and its advocacy for, and expertise in, situational crime prevention strategies are well known by officials responsible for Crime policy within the Home Office and to the experts within my own area, Home Office Science, whose task it is to ensure that we provide the best evidence on which to base policy developments".* As an example it is noted that *"at a recent Forum 'away-day' he [Wortley] led a session on preventing theft from the person, which is one of the only crime types to have increased recently, and in particular focussed on the need to convert good ideas for prevention into concrete policies and practices" [2].*

SCS staff also have worked directly with police forces and crime prevention agencies internationally, through continuing professional development courses, workshops, seminars, consultancy, and the provision of advice to provide concrete examples of how SCP and POP may be implemented in practice. For example, in 2003 the New Zealand Police approached researchers at the SCS for assistance with their implementation of evidence-based crime prevention policies. Since 2008, SCS staff have visited New Zealand on three occasions: in 2010 Laycock contributed to a research symposium at the NZ Police College; in 2012 Chainey spent 3 weeks delivering training courses to NZ police across the country; and in 2013, Laycock spent a month delivering specialist workshops to police analysts and leaders (totalling over 20 seminars and 400 participants). The New Zealand Police explicitly credits SCS with a significant role in shaping their crime strategies and helping to reduce crime: *"The Jill Dando institute (JDI) has made a significant contribution to the development of crime science and intelligence led policing in New Zealand. We are grateful to JDI staff and associates who have increased our knowledge base, contributed to the development of our key products and fundamentally helped evolve the mindset within the New Zealand Police over the last 10 years...Over the past 4 years we have achieved sizeable reductions in crime against a backdrop of very high (and improving) levels of public trust and confidence in Police" [4].* The adoption of crime science strategies has received extensive coverage in New Zealand's media, wherein the role of the SCS is explicitly acknowledged, arguably contributing to the reported increased levels of public confidence in police [4].

Facilitating reductions in specific crimes

The impacts of our work on bike theft [c, d] have been particularly significant given the emphasis placed by health authorities and governments on promoting greater use of bicycles to improve health and reduce congestion. The British Crime Survey (2010/11) indicates that some 500,000 bicycles are stolen every year. The SCS/CSM collaborative research has had significant impacts on helping to reduce that number. Following the demonstration of improved locking practices associated with CaMden bike stands, manufacture of the new stands was undertaken by Broxap Ltd who have reported that 1,202 were rolled out nationally between 2008–13 [6]. In recognition of this project, Johnson and colleagues were invited to write a Problem Oriented Policing guide (POP Guide 52) for the US Department of Justice POP Center on Bicycle Theft [5]. This has proven an important source of information for national and international crime prevention professionals operating in this area, having been downloaded more than 11,000 times per year since its publication in 2008 (according to popcenter.org). Bike theft became a focus for Transport for London (TfL) and the London Metropolitan Police, and with the assistance of SCS they undertook a prevention project. A letter from TfL [7] states: *'The academic work undertaken by the JDI became the starting point for our cycle theft project, particularly the POP Guide 52: Bicycle Theft Using a partnership approach we achieved a 5.4% decrease in cycle theft in London during 2010/11 (1253 fewer offences). The approach has been recognised internationally and was awarded the 2011 Herman Goldstein (award) for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing'.*

Largely due to increased media coverage, internal child sex trafficking has, in recent years, been widely recognised in the UK as a pressing public issue. SCS research has challenged the perception, dominating public debate, that internal sex trafficking is a racially motivated crime [e, f]. Extensive media coverage of the research by, among others, Newsnight, Huffington Post, Guardian, Independent [8], has extended the reach of the research and informed public understanding of the issues. Through these and other contributions to the development of a lively

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national debate, the SCS research has also influenced the formulation of national policies on tackling this issue, including the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) Thematic Assessment, 'Out of Mind, Out of Sight' (2011); Metropolitan Police Authority Report on Child Sexual Exploitation (2011); and the UK National Action Plan on Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (2011) [9]. SCS enjoys a fruitful relationship with SOCA (now NCA), supported both by research student internships with the Agency and by Brayley's status (since 2013) as a fulltime investigator. The practical value of the research is acknowledged by the Agency: "*Of particular value in recent years has been the work done by the Department around the topic of Internal Child Sex Trafficking (ICST)... In 2010, SOCA actively supported two research projects carried out by Professor Gloria Laycock with two masters students, Ella Cockbain and Helen Brayley. One project examined the social networks of offenders and victims and the other deconstructed the offence into a 'crime script'. The research has been influential in helping to shape SOCA's response to ICST*" [6].

Drawing on the body of SCP research carried out within the SCS, and working within the partnership models outlined by Tilley [a, b], staff have shared their expert advice with police forces, crime prevention practitioners, and criminal justice policy makers, both domestically and abroad.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[1] Report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 16 March 2010 (pp. 11, 15, 53–59) endorsing the SCP approach, <http://bit.ly/1bd09nO>.

[2] Letter of support from the Home Office commenting on SCS contribution to the crime policy. Available on request.

[3] Letter of support from New Zealand Police Acting Commissioner concerning the impact of SCS research on New Zealand policing. Available on request.

[4] Examples of media coverage of the implementation of crime science in New Zealand: The New Zealand Herald, 09/04/2013, 'Winning the War on Crime' <http://bit.ly/1cFRMpU>; Sunday Star Times 19/08/2012, 'Intelligent Design', available on request; New Zealand Police Magazine, 'Research Moving Police Forward', August 2010, <http://bit.ly/1hP9HKz>, and May 2013, 'Time Ripe to Think Science', <http://bit.ly/HBxz6C>.

[5] Johnson, S. D., Sidebottom, A., & Thorpe, A. (2008). *Bicycle Theft. Problem-oriented Guides for Police Series No. 52*. US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, hosted at: <http://bit.ly/17a6spz>.

[6] Spreadsheet provided by Broxap (<http://www.broxap.com/camden-m-stand>) via research collaborators at CSM showing bike stand roll out. Available on request.

[7] Letter of support from Transport for London corroborating the role of SCS research in the success of their bicycle theft prevention project and their winning of the Goldstein POP Award (<http://bit.ly/19G13ur> [PDF]). Available on request.

[8] Examples of media coverage involving research on internal child sex trafficking: Newsnight, 10/01/2011, <http://bbc.in/189op7K>, and <http://bbc.in/16IEOTx>; Huffington Post, 09/05/2012, 'The Danger in Referring to Asian Sex Gangs' <http://huff.to/19G1kqV>; The Guardian, 08/05/2012, 'The Truth about Asian Sex Gangs', <http://bit.ly/1b8TwVu>; The Independent, 10/05/2012, 'Child Sex Grooming', <http://ind.pn/1cFSfIP>.

[9] Government reports citing references [e] and [f]: Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) Thematic Assessment Report 2011: Out of Mind, Out of Sight (pp. 28–29), <http://bit.ly/1bd4A0k> [zipped PDF]; Metropolitan Police Authority Report on Child Sexual Exploitation, October 2011, <http://bit.ly/HKXwA6>; UK National Action Plan on Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (p. 46), <http://bit.ly/HKXzMe> [PDF].

[10] Letter of support from the National Crime Agency (NCA) corroborating influence of [e] and [f]. Available on request.