

<b>Institution:</b> University of Huddersfield		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA4		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Self-Selection Policing and identifying serious criminals. Research changing police thinking, policy and practice		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Jason Roach	Professor of Psychology and Policing and Director of the Applied Criminology and Policing Centre, University of Huddersfield.	08/2005 to present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2007-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Serious criminals pose significant harm to communities yet can go 'unidentified' by traditional investigative methods. Self-Selection Policing (SSP) is a novel additional approach by which police can identify serious criminals from the minor crimes they commit. SSP research at the University of Huddersfield (UoH) challenges police to view serious criminals as 'crime versatile' (not 'crime specialists'), thereby paving the way for a change in practice by which the routine policing of minor offences can identify serious criminals. Evidence of impact is demonstrated by the adoption of SSP thinking, in different UK and international police forces, police operations and UK policing policy, to target serious criminals.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>It is not always possible to identify serious criminals by traditional police investigative means. 'Unidentified', they continue to present a risk of harm to society until they are stopped (3.2). With approximately 8% of UK homicides unsolved within the year they occurred (ONS, 2019), the continued danger of harm posed to UK society by unidentified serious criminals continues to be very real.</p> <p>Traditionally, police will seek to identify serious offenders from information reported by the public, forensic techniques or by targeting those known for specific crime types (3.1). The 'usual suspects' method of criminal investigation involves the construction of a case against 'known offenders', principally those who have built up a set of (usually similar) previous convictions and are well known to the local police; for example, it is common for those on the 'sex offenders register' to feature initially in the generation of current case suspects (3.1, 3.2). Although this approach can lead to some known suspects being appropriately identified for specific crimes some of the time, it must be used cautiously if miscarriages of justice are to be avoided by targeting (unjustly) those who have desisted from crime (3.1, 3.2). It can also neglect recent recruits to active criminality, as it requires accurate knowledge of active offenders/offending patterns (3.4) that results in wasted police time or, worse, leads to justified complaints of harassment (3.2, 3.5).</p> <p>SSP research at UoH has identified that police tend to over-estimate the offence homogeneity (specialism) of serious offenders (3.4) despite criminological research indicating that offending versatility is more likely (3.2, 3.5). This has serious implications for the success of investigations and the identification of serious offenders. For example, the perception that 'burglars only burgle' and 'murderers only murder', can serve to hinder the identification of those serious criminals who commit a variety of different types of crime within their criminal career (i.e. the versatile</p>		

offender). By challenging the common police misperception and thinking on the crime patterns of serious offenders to one from specialist to versatile, the research at UoH **overcomes a major obstacle** to the development and adoption of additional investigative approaches for uncovering active, serious criminals (3.1, 3.4, 3.5). Self-Selection Policing (SSP) is one such approach and one which **presents an effective addition** to the police investigative armoury (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5). For the past 15 years, 'Self-Selection Policing' (SSP) research at UoH has served to provide an additional approach by which **active, serious offenders can be identified** through specific minor crimes that they commit (3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). Resting on the simple premise that 'those who do big bad things also do little bad things' (3.2, 3.5), SSP research encourages police to **shift their thinking** to seeing some minor offences ('little bad things') as potential indicators for more active, serious and concurrent criminality. To date, SSP research has identified and tested different minor 'trigger offences' as reliable indicators (or flags), should police scrutinise those committing them, for far more serious criminality. These include: targeting disqualified drivers, drivers not wearing seatbelts and/or using mobile phones, and drivers parking illegally in disabled bays (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5) - and, more recently, those caught by police not complying with social distancing rules and mobility restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

SSP research at UoH has demonstrably impacted on both police policy and police practice. For example, it has been shown that by scrutinizing those who drive while disqualified, it is possible to increase the identification of those who commit serious crimes. And through a shift in policy it has been possible to reinforce the fact that serious offenders are not homogenous in their crimes, thereby improving investigative decision-making. The research has therefore contributed an important policing tool, through which those who pose most harm to society can be better identified and stopped from doing so.

### 3. References to the research

All references are published in either peer-reviewed books or high-quality international academic journals.

- 3.1 Roach, J. (2018). Those who do big bad things still do little bad things: Restating the case for Self-Selection Policing. In R. Wortley, G. Laycock and A. Sidebottom (Eds.) *Handbook of Crime Science*. London: Routledge. P320-333. ISBN -9781135981808, 1135981809. [can be supplied on request]
- 3.2 Roach, J. and Pease, K. (2016). *Self-Selection Policing: Theory, Research and Practice*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-137-46852-9. [can be supplied on request]
- 3.3 Roach, J. (2019). Self-Selection Policing and the Disqualified Driver. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. Volume 13, 3, p300–311. ISSN 1752-4520. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paw056>.
- 3.4 Roach, J. and Pease, K. (2014). Police overestimation of criminal career homogeneity. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, Volume 11, Issue 2, 164–178. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jip.1405>
- 3.5 Roach, J. (2007). Those who do big bad things also usually do little bad things: identifying active serious offenders using offender self-selection. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 9 (1), pp. 66-79. <https://doi.org/10.1350/ijps.2007.9.1.66>

### 4. Details of the impact

The fact that serious criminals are not always readily identifiable by traditional investigative means reinforces the need for an additional method by which police might identify them, and in doing so reduce the harm that serious criminals do to society (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5). By challenging and influencing traditional police perceptions of serious offenders from offence specialist to offence versatile (3.4), SSP provides that additional investigative means by which police can also identify active, serious criminals from the minor crimes that they commit (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5).

There are 3 main areas of impact:

1. Shifting thinking about serious criminal identification processes
2. Embedding Self-Selection Policing into police practice
3. Enshrining Self-Selection Policing thinking and practice in policy.

### **1. Shifting thinking about serious criminal identification processes.**

Having recognised police thinking/beliefs about criminality as an important barrier, a key step in impacting on these was to understand and use SSP research to challenge them (3.4). A barrier identified was that police commonly continued to over-estimate the offence homogeneity of serious criminals, despite research to the contrary (e.g. Soothill et al., 2008; and 3.4). As a consequence of initial idea presentations by Roach at a number of events, eight UK and two overseas police forces recognised the value of SSP and indicated that they would like to contribute to advancing the programme of research. Durham and West Midlands Police were initially chosen as partners, due to their reputation for embracing new ideas, coupled with the fact that one represented a small, largely rural police service, but with significant pockets of organized crime, and the other represented the second largest police force in the UK, with a high rate of serious crime/criminals. At the same time, Norwegian Police became interested in SSP research and considered it a promising approach to increase the identification of active serious criminals based in Oslo. Soon after, Greater Manchester Police and The Metropolitan Police Service approached the SSP research lead (Roach) directly to take-part in the research, following publication of the first Durham study. These two forces represent the largest and third largest UK police forces, with two of the highest rates of serious crime.

At an early stage of SSP research, a series of workshops was developed for Durham, West Yorkshire (5.3) and Norwegian Police (5.2) to challenge existing police perceptions of the offending patterns of serious criminals from one of offence homogeneity to offence versatility. In order to gauge the impact of SSP on the perceptions and practice of a wide range of police, all of the SSP workshops (5.2, 5.3) comprised different police ranks, roles and levels of experience. All workshop attendees were asked to rate/assess:

1. (pre-training) their prior knowledge of the offending patterns of serious criminals and of SSP
2. (post-training) whether they thought that they had changed their perceptions of serious criminals and their offending as a consequence of the SSP workshop
3. (post-training) to rate/assess whether they thought that they would use the SSP thinking and approach in their police practice

As shown in 5.3, all 25 attendees who attended one SSP workshop stated that their perceptions of the offending patterns of serious offenders had changed to one of offence versatility - an important shift in their thinking – and that, as consequence of this, their future policing practice would also change i.e. they would use SSP (5.3). Without such an identified shift in their perceptions of the offending patterns of serious offenders, the move to adopt SSP in practice would not have been possible.

To gauge the impact of an SSP workshop presented to Norwegian Police in 2019 (5.2), in a follow-up study conducted by Roach, previous police attendees were asked whether, how, and to what degree their attendance had challenged their previous thinking/perceptions of the offending patterns of serious criminals, as well as their thoughts on the potential incorporation of the SSP approach into police practice (5.2). All reported that exposure to SSP thinking had influenced their perceptions of offending patterns, particularly in relation to using minor driving offences to identify active, serious criminals.

### **2.Embedding Self-Selection Policing into police practice**

*Operation Solihull* is an example of the impact of SSP research on police thinking and practice as it constitutes a policing operation comprising a team of officers tasked with stopping vehicles

where the driver was not wearing a seatbelt, driving while on a mobile phone, parking illegally, or driving erratically (5.5) with the aim of uncovering active and concurrent serious criminality. Of the 36 vehicles stopped during the operation

- 2 had Organised Crime Group members in them with firearms (guns) markers
- 8 stop and searches were generated
- 6 vehicles were seized
- 5 persons were arrested resulting from the stops

These outcomes were much more significant in terms of identifying serious criminals doing harm in the local community than prior operations not informed by SSP research. Impact of SSP research on police thinking and practice is amply demonstrated by *Operation Bantha*. Occurring subsequent to exposure to SSP research, Bantha, was the result of the ingenuous and independent application of SSP thinking within policing practice by Durham Police in 2018. Bantha employed the SSP approach to identify the effectiveness of targeting disqualified drivers to identify active criminals (5.6), with the aim of reducing harm and risk to the public by reducing such individual's offending overall. One outcome detailed was that '*Officers had increased stop/check accuracy by using the data to inform their deployments*' (5.6, p.3). Bantha has continued to be conducted on numerous occasions since 2018 and the SSP approach has been used in other operations to identify active, serious criminals from different minor crimes that they commit (5.7).

Greater London has the UK's highest amount of serious crime and serious criminals, amplifying the importance of improved detection. The Commander of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) recognised the contribution SSP could make (while demonstrating the increased reach of its impact): '*We used this SSP approach in the West Midlands to understand the link between minor traffic violations and more serious crime. I have now brought Jason into the Metropolitan Police to explore how the approach can be used in the Capital*' (5.1). A notable example of application of SSP research and thinking in the MPS is a large scale 'traffic stop' operation to identify active serious criminals by focusing on drivers not wearing seatbelts, using mobile phones when driving, driving in bus lanes and parking illegally (5.8).

Although SSP research informed policing in the Capital has been suspended since March 2020 (due to the effects of Covid-19 on policing), it has been applied in numerous different ways (e.g. using various minor crime SSP triggers to identify serious criminals) in different areas of Greater London, further demonstrating a growing influence on police thinking and ever-increasing take-up as powerful policing tool for identifying active, serious criminals operating in the UK (5.8). The Superintendent of the MPS states in his testimonial that in terms of SSP research: '*Having access to academic expertise and the support to apply meaningful research in day-to-day policing is very much helping us to improve service, become more efficient and be better as a police service*' (5.8).

### 3.Enshrining Self-Selection Policing thinking and practice in policy

#### *Impact on crime reduction policy*

In terms of wider crime reduction policy making, evidence of the impact of SSP research and thinking is noticeable in a report linking prolific shop theft and prolific drug-taking (5.4). The report, which cites the UoH SSP research (3.4 and 3.5) directly, concludes that a change in thinking about prolific offenders, as 'crime versatile' and not as 'crime specialised', is needed if the causes of prolific drug-addicted offending are to be tackled effectively. The recommendations of the report have been accepted and will be acted upon by a cross-party Parliamentary Committee in early 2021.

#### *Impact of police practice*

Further, very recent evidence of SSP research impacting on police thinking and practice more widely is demonstrated creatively by an Inspector working within Greater Manchester Police. He is currently focusing on non-adherence to social distancing rules and the non-payment of fixed-

penalty notices issued during the Covid-19 pandemic, as potential SSP trigger offences to uncover active, serious criminals in the Greater Manchester area (5.9).

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

5.1. Testimonial supplied by Commander, Metropolitan Police Service and Chair of the UK Society for Evidence-Based Policing.

5.2. Testimonial supplied by Dr. Chief Superintendent, Norwegian Police/ Norwegian University Police College).

5.3. Feedback from SSP workshops and from West Midlands Police attendees.

5.4. The Centre for Social Justice (2018). *Desperate for a fix: Using shop theft and a Second Chance Programme to get tough on the causes of prolific drug-addicted offending*. Produced for the House of Commons All Party Select Committee for Small Shops.

5.5. Op Solihull was an SSP inspired operation which targeted vehicles where the driver was not wearing a seatbelt, driving while on a mobile phone, parking illegally, or driving erratically. Slideshow evidence supplied by West Midlands Police.

5.6 Operation Bantha. This is police review document of an SSP inspired operation to target disqualified offenders to identify serious, concurrent offending.

5.7. Testimonial 3 - Detective Superintendent, Durham Police.

5.8. Testimonial 4 - Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service.

5.9. Testimonial 5 – Inspector, Greater Manchester Police – Using SSP during Covid-19