

Institution: City, University of London (City)		
Unit of Assessment: C21 (Sociology)		
Title of case study: Reforming how police respond to reports of rape and domestic abuse in Great Britain and beyond.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Katrin Hohl	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 01.09.12 to present date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Hohl's research has had deep reach in police forces in Great Britain, directly informing police understanding of sexual and domestic violence; changing police training, procedures, and resource allocation; and benefiting victim-survivors of sexual or domestic violence. Specifically, Hohl and Co-Investigators used their research findings to: (1) develop new, evidence-based training for police officers who investigate rape and sexual assault, in coproduction with [text removed for publication] and [text removed for publication]; (2) prompt [text removed for publication] to pioneer Hohl's proposal of an innovative anonymous reporting route specifically designed for sexual violence victim-survivors, improving their access to criminal justice; (3) shape changes to the risk assessment police officers in England and Wales complete at domestic incidents, directly benefitting victim-survivors and preventing further harm, including homicide. Most recently, Hohl and Johnson's research on domestic abuse during Covid-19 informed police force decision-making nationally and increased resource allocation to domestic abuse within [text removed for publication]. Internationally, Hohl's research is being used to inform rape law reform processes in Japan and Australia.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
2.1 The 'attrition problem' in relation to rape convictions (2012-2015)		
<p>Hohl's research provides a robust empirical evidence base that has changed how some police forces understand and respond to the rape 'attrition problem', the fact that less than 1% of rapes reported to police result in a conviction (ONS, 2020). The research produced first-of-its-kind robust empirical evidence through statistical analysis of a representative sample of rape complaints made to Europe's largest police force, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). This research was a collaboration with Professor Elizabeth (Betsy) Stanko, OBE, who at the time was Head of the Strategy, Analysis and Research with the MPS.</p> <p>The research involved a statistical analysis of 587 police case files of all rape allegations made to the MPS during April and May 2012, with the results giving unique insights into the factors that influence attrition. The research evidenced the continued influence of rape myths and stereotypes, that officers noting inconsistencies in the victim's account would almost always lead to the case being discontinued, and identified the role of victim vulnerabilities and victim disengagement in case attrition [3.1]. Hohl and colleagues have used these findings to develop new police training in collaboration with two forces. Further, to address victim disengagement, Hohl proposed the introduction of confidential online reporting to give victim-survivors agency and the choice to report online rather than in person, providing their account in their own words (free recall), in their own time from any place that feels safe and comfortable to them. It also gives them choice to opt in or out of participating in the subsequent police investigation, addressing a common reason of victim withdrawal [3.2]. This approach is now being implemented by [text removed for publication].</p>		

2.2 Human memory, attrition, and rape victim interviews (2014-2015)

A separate and further analysis of the MPS rape case files dataset was used to explore how human memory impacts rape case attrition. The results showed how normal features of human memory are at odds with criminal justice demands on victim recall of the alleged crime, and provided evidence in support of the hypothesis that inconsistencies in the victim account increase the odds of attrition. This is important because in complaints of rape the victim's memory is frequently the only and nearly always the central piece of evidence of the alleged rape. The implications are that police interview techniques must be made more compatible with science-based models of human memory [3.3]. These findings have been used to change police training in collaboration with two police forces, and to inform rape law reform proposals in the Australian Capital Territory.

2.3 Developing more effective police training for investigating rape cases (2015-2017)

Building on her research [3.1, 3.3] Hohl secured a HEFCE/Home Office Police Knowledge Fund Grant in 2015 to study current police training and officer understanding of rape victim engagement, the attrition problem, and to develop new training based on these findings in collaboration with the MPS and Sussex Constabulary. Hohl conducted semi-structured interviews with a representative, stratified sample of police officers. Key findings were the conflicting needs of the police investigation and the victim, as well as a lack of preparation and guidance for officers in how to meet both. Hohl also observed police training on sexual offences at the MPS and identified inadequacies in the content, delivery, and context which contributed to the research finding that the training was ineffective in changing officer attitudes and practice. From analysing police training and officer perceptions Hohl used the research to develop a new training package to bring about change in how officers engage with rape victims [3.4].

2.4 Domestic abuse risk assessment (2015-2017)

The aim of this research was to provide the first robust statistical analysis of which risk factors were most helpful in identifying high risk domestic abuse cases. Hohl used innovative latent trait modelling to analyse the risk assessment tool, which officers in England and Wales must complete at every domestic incident they attend. The risk assessment is crucial in triggering safeguarding to preventing further harm, including homicide. The results showed that indicators of coercive control better identify 'high risk' cases than factors associated with physical violence alone. Based on the results, Hohl and her then PhD student Myhill recommended shortening and sharpening of the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment) tool, with a smaller, more powerful set of indicators focussed on coercive control [3.5]. The findings were incorporated into a revised DASH form by the College of Policing, the national guidance and training body for the police service.

2.5 Domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020)

From June 2020, Hohl together with Johnson, Durham University, have investigated the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on domestic abuse reported to police. The research analysed all domestic abuse-flagged incidents and crimes reported to seven police forces across England since the onset of the pandemic. Data was compared to those of the two previous years, to account for seasonal and long-term trends, and then mapped onto the introduction and lifting of national and local Covid-19 restrictions. In addition, police officers were regularly interviewed about responding to domestic abuse in the changing context of the pandemic and the findings triangulated with those of the statistical analyses. Preliminary findings showed how in most police forces in the study the increase in domestic abuse volume during 2020 was due to long term trends rather than lockdown; that lockdown impacted differently on different types of relationships; and, that full lockdowns kept victims in abusive relationships for longer, with separations delayed until restrictions were eased [3.6]. The results have changed police understanding nationally and in [text removed for publication] have been used to justify an increased allocation of resources to domestic abuse.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Hohl, K. and Stanko, E.A. (2015) 'Complaints of rape and the criminal justice system: Fresh evidence on the attrition problem in England and Wales', *European Journal of Criminology*, 12[3]: 324-341. doi:10.1177/1477370815571949.

- 3.2 Hohl, K. (2020) *Anonymous online reporting of sexual offences: Giving survivors choices and agency*. Unpublished report to [text removed for publication].
- 3.3 Hohl, K. and Conway, M.A. (2017) 'Memory as evidence: How normal features of victim memory lead to the attrition of rape reports', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 17[3]: 248-265. doi:10.1177/1748895816668937.
- 3.4 Stanko, B. and Hohl, K. (2018) 'Why training is not improving the police response to sexual violence against women: A glimpse into the 'black box' of police training' in Milne, E., Brennan, K., South, N., Turton, J. [Eds.] *Women and the Criminal Justice System Failing Victims and Offenders?* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. pp.167-186. <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/21377/>.
- 3.5 Myhill, A. and Hohl, K. (2016/2019) 'The 'golden thread': Coercive control and risk assessment in domestic violence, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, online first in 2016, print 2019: 34[21-22]: 4477-4497. doi:10.1177/0886260516675464.
- 3.6 Hohl, K. and Johnson, K. (2020) A crisis exposed – How Covid-19 is impacting on domestic abuse reported to the police, *Campaign for Social Science*, Academy of Social Science. <https://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/news/a-crisis-exposed-how-covid-19-is-impacting-domestic-abuse-reported-to-the-police/>

Related Grants

PI K. Hohl, Co-I M. Conway, Sept 2015-March 2017, 'Evidence Informed Training – Sexual Offences', *Police Knowledge Fund (hefce/Home Office)*, £250,615.

PI K. Hohl, Co-I K. Johnson, Jun 2020-Jun 2021, 'Responding to the Covid-19 domestic abuse crisis: Developing a rapid police evidence base', ES/V007033/1, *ESRC*, £177,173.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

4.1 Improving police response to sexual violence: Overview of the research impact

Hohl's research [3.1-3.6] has had deep reach within police forces nationally, including [text removed for publication]. The resulting changes in knowledge and understanding, training, victim reporting routes, procedures and resource allocation within those police forces have had wider reverberations, resulting in numerous citations of the research in government reports, such as the Home Affairs Select Committee. Hohl's expertise has led to roles on advisory and strategic management boards, as well as national and international engagement with policy and decision makers. The police are the gatekeepers to criminal justice and, for the 99% of victim-survivors of sexual violence and 92% of victim-survivors of domestic violence who do not see their case go to court (ONS, 2020), the police investigation remains the defining experience of the criminal justice system. Rape is an iconic offence in the measure of women's equality in society. How complaints of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence are treated by police is not only important for the victims who seek justice but sends a powerful signal to society at large. The following sections 4.2 to 4.6 outline the specific ways in which Hohl's research has resulted in significant changes of police training, procedures and understanding with regard to engagement with victim-survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence.

4.2 Changing police training in the MPS

Hohl and colleagues, in collaboration with the MPS and Sussex Constabulary used the findings of their attrition and police training research [3.1, 3.3, 3.4] to develop a new training package for police officers involved in investigating rape and sexual offences [5.1]. This training package is now embedded into the routine, mandatory training at [text removed for publication]. [text removed for publication] have indicated to Hohl that, since 2017, every new sexual offence investigation officer in the [text removed for publication] must successfully complete the training module (e.g. over 140 officers in 2017, over 70 officers in 2018). [text removed for publication], said that as a result of this new training police officer interviewing of sexual offence victims is: "of a higher standard than previously seen, and the level of confidence and positive attitudes [...] has also increased" [5.2]. This is vitally important for victim-survivors as the victim interview is typically the key evidence in the case, and directly linked to chances of the case resulting in a criminal charge. From 2018 the training module has been available to all forces nationally through the College of Policing [5.1].

4.3 [text removed for publication] **change training and pioneer new approach for reporting sexual offences**

In January 2020, Hohl started working with [text removed for publication] to help them develop bespoke sexual offences training [text removed for publication]. Hohl's research-based training [5.1; based on 3.1, 3.3, 3.4] now forms the basis for training of all [text removed for publication] Sexual Offences Investigation Trained (SOIT) officers. This means [text removed for publication] are providing a more 'victim engagement based' training for their dedicated SOIT officers across the country. In a joint testimonial, [text removed for publication] Head of Crime and Public Protection and the Sexual Offences Lead, commenting on the new training, said: *"The feedback we have already started to receive from our victims is very positive and we are exploring a long-term training strategy to improve our response to sexual offences in the future, which goes beyond the training of our SOIT officers as [Hohl] recommended and will be provided to several front-line detectives. We have identified a further 72 officers across the country, whose initial response to investigations is vital in supporting our victims and guiding them through the investigative process"* [5.3].

As a result of Hohl's research [3.2] [text removed for publication] is setting up a new, confidential reporting route for rape and sexual assault to reduce barriers to reporting. It will benefit rape and sexual assault victim-survivors by giving them choice and control over the reporting process by making their report in their own words (free recall), at a time and place that feels safe for them using the online form, and have their crime recorded and investigated on equal footing to a standard in-person report. The new online system can act to replace the standard reporting process and victim witness interview that many victim-survivors experience as traumatic. [text removed for publication] said: *"This is a phenomenal idea and without your research and recommendations we would not be in a position to take this forward. [...] Your recommendation of a 'Confidential Reporting System' [...] has now progressed into to an innovative and somewhat culturally challenging project for any police force to take forward. Without your research findings and recommendations within your proposal [...] I would not have been able to justify this project to our Chief Officer Group and obtain their support to produce a new system which will inevitably contradict any police forces' objective to reduce crime statistics [...] Your input will be vital to the layout of this system, to encourage detailed reporting but also to support the survivors as more victims come forward."* [text removed for publication] further confirms that the project team has broad stakeholder membership, including [text removed for publication] and a number of victims' charities. Hohl continues to support the [text removed for publication] project and was appointed a standing member of the [text removed for publication] Sexual Offences Strategic Management Group in January 2020 [5.3].

4.4 Domestic abuse: Changing police risk assessment processes

The DASH risk assessment is crucial in police decision-making in domestic abuse cases. It determines which actions, if any, police will take. 'High risk' cases are referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where victim safeguarding options are agreed by police together with other agencies. As such, police are the gatekeepers to safeguarding measures and incorrect risk assessment can have fatal consequences. Hohl's findings on building victim rapport during the risk assessment interview and foregrounding indicators of coercive control [3.5, 5.4] changed [text removed for publication] practice and improved responses as measured by the police regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The Assistant Chief Constable, [text removed for publication], said: *"... the work done by Dr Hohl supported our wider work around the forces understanding of Domestic Abuse and has seen the force move from 'requires improvement' to a 'good' as put at the last inspection regime carried out by HMICFRS"* [5.5].

The College of Policing, responsible for police guidelines and training nationally, used Myhill and Hohl's [3.4] findings and recommendations to remove weak indicators of risk from the DASH, including using fewer indicators of physical violence and keeping more indicators of coercive control in the College's revised risk assessment form [5.6]. The College recommends its use to all police forces and in its evaluation report (2018) says the: *"revised risk tool for frontline officers may improve both victims' disclosure and officers' primary risk assessments"* [5.6, p.i].

4.5 Increased resource allocation to police response to domestic abuse during Covid-19

Since June 2020, Hohl and Johnson have been researching the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse. Preliminary findings [3.6] have been widely shared through briefing documents and webinars with national stakeholders and two well-attended public webinars in November 2020 (ESRC Festival of Social Science, 641 participants; Violence against Women and Girls Research Network, 236 participants). Hohl presented the findings at two National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Domestic Abuse Stakeholder Meetings in late 2020, attended by the domestic abuse leads of most UK police forces and all national stakeholders such as the Home Office, Crown Prosecution Service, Ministry of Justice, Domestic Abuse Commissioners' Office and domestic abuse charities. This real time research has already generated policy interest with Hohl contributing to a Parliament horizon scanning briefing on 'Life Beyond Covid' (September 2020) and being cited by the NPCC at a Home Affairs Select Committee on 'The Home Office preparedness for Covid-19' (October 2020).

The preliminary findings have directly led to increased resource allocation to domestic abuse in [text removed for publication]. A senior officer of [text removed for publication] said: "*[Hohl and Johnson's] project has already informed the constabulary's decision-making. This is mainly around allocation of resources to process demand relating to domestic abuse and other safeguarding referrals [...]. The research provided an evidence base to show how demand around domestic abuse is changing and increasing. This has enabled a stronger case to be made to senior management about increasing the staffing to maintain an effective processing system*" [5.7]. At the national level, the findings have informed police understanding of domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic. [text removed for publication] said the results "*have informed our understanding of how Covid-19 is impacting on police recorded abuse and decision-making on the matter*" [5.8].

4.6 Improving rape justice: Informing law reform internationally and nationally

Beyond the UK, Hohl's research has informed law reform in Japan and Australia. The Embassy of Japan in London invited Hohl to meet a delegation of the Japanese Ministry of Justice in October 2019 to seek her expertise to inform the reform of Japan's rape law and investigation procedures [5.9]. The Australian Capital Territory '*Crime Consent Amendment Bill 2018*' cites the findings on victim memory [3.3] as part of its rationale for the Bill [5.10]. In the UK, Hohl has acted as an ad-hoc academic expert adviser/reviewer to the College of Policing, the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, Scottish Government, Safeguarding Minister, and the Centre for Women's Justice. She is currently a member of the Ministry of Justice Expert Network (since 2018), the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) London Academic Observatory (since 2014), and the advisory board to the MOPAC Lighthouse evaluation project – an integrated multi-agency hub for victims of child sexual abuse (since 2019).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Hohl, Stanko and Lee (2017). EITSO Training Pack, <https://tinyurl.com/y3rgex3z>
- 5.2 Testimonial letter – [text removed for publication], 15.06.17.
- 5.3 Testimonial letter – Head of Crime and Public Protection and Sexual Offences Lead, [text removed for publication], 23.12.20.
- 5.4 Hohl, K. (2017). [text removed for publication], unpublished report to [text removed for publication].
- 5.5 Testimonial letter – Assistant Chief Constable, [text removed for publication], 16.03.20.
- 5.6 College of Policing (2018) Piloting a new approach to domestic abuse frontline risk assessment. Evaluation Report. https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/DA_risk_assessment_pilot.pdf
- 5.7 Testimonial letter – Senior Officer, [text removed for publication], 24.11.2020.
- 5.8 Testimonial letter – [text removed for publication], 21.12.2020.
- 5.9 Testimonial letter – [text removed for publication], Embassy of Japan in the United Kingdom, 07.10.20.
- 5.10 Australian Capital Territory, Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018 – see page 13 https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1244573/02-Caroline-Le-Couteur.pdf