Crime, Science and Policing

Gloria Laycock
Professor of Crime Science
University College London
Agenda

1. Explain why I think there are problems with the way we control crime at present
2. Provide a suggested alternative – crime science
3. Describe it
4. Briefly mention a new UK initiative which will develop the approach further
The prison population in the USA

Incarceration rate of inmates incarcerated under state and federal jurisdiction per 100,000 population 1925-2008

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics
Crime in England and Wales: 1918-1994

Crime rate per 1,000 population

The limits of conventional policing

- Offences committed: 100
- Offences reported: 50
- Offences recorded: 30
- Offences cleared up: 7
- Offences con/caution: 3
- Offences conviction: 2

We can not control crime using the CJS
Most offenders do not get caught
If you want crime down you do something else
what do we need to do to reduce crime?

• Need to behave in a more objective and scientific manner
  – We need to prevent as many offences as possible in the first place
  – We need to catch offenders more effectively and more reliably, and deal with them efficiently once caught
  – We need to avoid overestimating the importance of individuals character traits and not underestimate the importance of situation and context

• OK, so how do we do it?

• ANSWER: WE USE SCIENCE
The Role of Science

data
logic
evidence
rationality
testing hypotheses
establishing knowledge
The Role of Science in Crime

• Improving our understanding of crime and its causes
• Making crimes more difficult to commit
• Catching offenders more quickly and bringing them to justice
• Thinking scientifically
Thinking scientifically

- Using scientific methods
  - Scanning
  - Analysis
  - Response
  - Assessment

- Testing hypotheses

- Establishing knowledge
Medical Science and Crime Science

Medical Science
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Physics
- Epidemiology
- Biochemistry
- Etc...

Crime Science
- Engineering Design
- Genetics Biochemistry
- Physics Materials Science
- Criminology Psychology Sociology etc
- Communications Artificial Intelligence
- Geography, Ecology etc...
Does this work?
Two kinds of offender

- ‘Opportunistic’ offenders: easily deterred but many of them

- ‘Proper’ or ‘professional’ offenders: not easily deterred but much fewer of them
Theft of and from vehicles UK 1981 - 2009/10
2009/10-1981

number of cars in thousands

Theft from vehicles
Theft of vehicles
Central Government Action Against Crime in the UK

• 65% reduction in vehicle crime

• 53% reduction in credit card fraud losses

• 29% reduction in personal robbery

• 60% reduction in house burglary
Effect of Steering column locks

Rate of Theft of Motor Vehicles in Germany Per 10,000 Vehicle Registrations

Anti-theft legislation takes effect

Webb, 1994
Effect of Motorcycle Helmets

Thefts per 100,000 Registered Vehicles (Germany)

Motorcycle helmet legislation takes effect

Motor Cycle Thefts
Car/4 wheeled vehicle thefts

Summary: The case for change

- We have a crime problem
- We need the CJS but it is not sufficient to control crime
- Science can help – we need to behave like scientists
- Formulate and test hypotheses aimed to reduce crime
- We do this using scientific method – SARA
## Twenty-five techniques of situational crime prevention

### Increase the effort
1. Harden targets
2. Control access to facilities
3. Screen exits
4. Deflect offenders
5. Control tools/weapons

### Increase the risks
6. Extend guardianship
7. Assist natural surveillance
8. Reduce anonymity
9. Utilise place managers
10. Strengthen formal surveillance

### Reduce the rewards
11. Conceal targets
12. Remove targets
13. Identify property
14. Disrupt markets
15. Deny benefits

### Reduce Provocations
16. Reduce frustrations and stress
17. Avoid disputes
18. Reduce emotional arousal
19. Neutralise peer pressure
20. Discourage imitation

### Remove excuses
21. Set rules
22. Post instructions
23. Alert conscience
24. Assist compliance
25. Control drugs and alcohol
Set clear rules
Valparaiso, Chile

What’s this?
Make sure you get the legislation drafted properly!
Car Parks in Basingstoke: how do you interpret this table?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Car park A</th>
<th>Car park B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft of cars</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from cars</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other offences</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can we reduce ASB?

![Bar chart showing percentage responses for reducing ASB across countries]
Who’s responsible for controlling ASB?

Question 5

![Bar chart showing percentage of countries for each responsibility.]

Country: France, GB, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain.
Responsibilities: Parents, Police/courts, Schools/teachers, The community, Central/Local government, Peer groups, Faith groups, Voluntary organisations.
If you saw a small group of 14 year old boys vandalising a bus shelter, would you intervene?
How should we interpret this?

• If I intervene:
  – I may get attacked by the kids
  – Their parents may attack me
  – I may not be supported by the community/ other nearby adults
  – The police may arrest me
  – People will think I am an interfering spoil sport
  – It’s just not my problem ....
Лефортовский тоннель смерти
What works in Crime Reduction?

- Science can assist in determining what works
- UK College of Policing and a major UK Research Council are funding a programme work (£3.2m)
- It will take three years and will provide
  - An extensive review of what we already know works
  - 12 new reviews to fill gaps in the knowledge base
  - A pilot training programme for the police and others
  - A research project in a totally new area
  - An independent evaluation of the programme
www.ucl.ac.uk/jdi