

Crime Prevention and Security Management

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Jason Roach • Ken Pease

Self-Selection Policing

Theory, Research and Practice

palgrave
macmillan

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*For Ken, from all who have sailed with him. Except for me as I've been
carrying him for years. JR.*

Series Editor's Preface

This book is not just about exploring the potential of a new approach to investigating offences, it is also about encouraging a new way of thinking about crime and the consequences of offending. Jason Roach and Ken Pease introduce the concept of 'Self-Selection Policing' (SSP), the process by which some serious offenders self-select themselves for police attention because of the more minor offences they also commit. The premise of SSP is on the face of it a very simple one, as is often the case with new innovations in thinking (just think of repeat victimization, for example, which the second author is so closely associated with). It posits that opportunities to identify and apprehend serious offenders is undermined by a lack of attention to their less serious offences which are also commonly a part of their lifestyle. So by showing that serious offenders also commit less serious crimes, that they are versatile and generalist rather than specialist, they refocus attention away from more traditional approaches which link a person to an event, and instead focus attention on linking events to events. Moreover, it draws attention to people who have already justified the attention of the police.

The book is not presented as a 'how to' book on SSP, although readers are introduced to a range of ideas on improving the process of investigating or, more generally, tackling serious crime. Rather the authors set about presenting a theory and practice approach, or perhaps more specifically a new approach to practice, drawing from an evidence base

promoted by a range of theories including environmental criminology, criminal careers, rational choice and routine activity theory. In addition to the why of SSP they also consider the how and importantly consider the implications in terms of both logistics and ethics in implementing their approach.

They don't shy away from assessing the barriers and hurdles to the wider adoption of SSP. Looking retrospectively their focus is drawn to: common perceptions of offending patterns (and not least what they argue is the overestimation of offence homogeneity); police policy and practice (and the ways offences are screened thereby de-prioritizing minor offences), and the lack of a dedicated research programme (specifically in recognizing the importance of minor offences to identify serious offenders, what they call the 'major-minor link', and the ways minor offences can flag serious offending). The book ends with the authors' own ten commandments which are an engaging read.

Roach and Pease set the context for their work when they argue that 'to us this book is very much a beginning and not an end, a work in progress in need of fresh input from others'. They have then set the challenge and one they and I hope other researchers will embrace. If they are right SSP has the potential to have a significant influence on practice and as a consequence reduce the chances of some people being victimized by serious offenders.

April 2016

Martin Gill

Acknowledgements

Over the ten years or so that we have been thinking about SSP, many people have helped us. Some we do not mention individually by name, primarily because too much time has passed and we are forgetful ingrates. If you helped and we did not give you a name check, contact us and we will remember and apologize. Of course most of the help will have come without either helper or helpee realizing it. So thanks to all those who let us listen to them and to share ideas with.

Some of our helpers have self-selected (you see what we did there!) so conspicuously as to deserve overt thanks. Warm thanks to Michael Barton (Chief Constable of Durham) who has been one of our keenest supporters (mind you he supports other losers such as Blackpool Football Club) and has taken our ideas and made some of them happen. Along with Mike, we also thank all the staff at Durham and Lancashire police, whom Mike often nudged into helping us. Chief Constable Simon Byrne and Chief Inspector Brian Roberts of Cheshire Police provided an affiliation and a sounding board throughout the work. Chief Superintendent Alex Murray of West Midlands Police (and the Society of Evidence-Based Policing) and our friend Rich Harris (also of West Midlands) helped us more recently by allowing us to test empirically some SSP ideas on their patch. Without the help of these 'thinking out of the box' police officers, we would never have been able to test SSP as a viable addition to the police cognitive armoury. Alex even proofread the whole manuscript.

There are also many academic colleagues whom we must thank for their help and encouragement over the last ten years, but again we only have space to mention a few by name. Kate Bowers, Paul Ekblom, Gloria Laycock, Nick Ross, Max Taylor and Richard Wortley warrant our gratitude for their friendship and rigour. JR would also like to thank Alan Shepherd for his continued help with data collection and entry—thanks Al. Camilla and Tommy Luff were inventive and patient in designing the cover (and some of the figures). How the thin image on the cover manages to convey the central idea of SSP is a source of wonder to us.

Dominic and Jules at Palgrave spent much time and showed saintly patience—we know that we push our luck. We are always late with delivery (and we have a lot of form on that score) but we do get there (at least somewhere) eventually.

Last, we would like to thank our families. JR would like especially to thank Clare, Matthew, Maddie and Heidi for putting up with Daddy and his strange job.

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