

Essay one:

Evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies (e.g. problem-oriented policing, predictive policing, intelligence-led policing, reactive policing) in relation to a specific type of crime of your own choosing. Your answer must be based on academic research, not personal experience.

This essay will evaluate the effectiveness of Proactive Policing, Evidence Based Policing, and Problem Oriented Policing as crime prevention strategies in relation to knife crime. It seeks to highlight how the strategies complement one another rather than how a single strategy is the stand-alone solution to tackling knife crime.

Knife crime is a significant issue for forces across England and Wales. While knife crime figures for 2020/21 suggest a decrease on previous years (UK Parliament, 2023) this may be because of the restrictions imposed by the first COVID-19 lockdown. A study by Hickland et al (2022) suggests a decrease in hospital admission for penetrative injuries during the first lockdown, though this is not true of the second and third lockdowns. 2020/2021 aside, knife related offences rose steadily from 2014-2019 (UK Parliament, 2023.) This is not merely a police issue, hospital admissions for knife related injuries rose accordingly over the same period, putting significant stress on the national health service (Allen and Harding, 2021). Aside from the obvious physical impact on those involved, crimes of this nature have a wider impact on victim's families, as well as their communities, and their perception of safety (Ranstead, 2021.)

It is a reasonable starting point to suggest proactive policing alone will reduce knife crime. As posited by Leicester Police Federation's (2019) "three strand approach", the greater number of stop-and-searches conducted, the more likely officers are to find knife carriers, and this should serve as a deterrent to others considering carrying knives. In 2019, ACC Sebire (NPCC, 2019) highlighted the positive impact proactive policing had on the increase in knife crime prosecutions and the reduction in first time offending. In contrast, research conducted by Skarlatidou et al (2021) highlighted the damaging effect overzealous stop-and-search can have on young people's trust in the police and their sense of procedural fairness. A lack of trust in the police and their ability to "protect" young people can in turn be a factor which increases weapon-carrying as a means of "self-protection." (Brennan, 2018. Palasinski & Riggs, 2012.)

Proactive policing, when used appropriately is an effective method for tackling knife crime. The pressures on front-line policing due to resource levels can hinder effective proactive policing (Police Federation, 2021.) As such, additional strategies, like evidence-based policing can help direct limited resources to the areas where they can be most effective.

Evidence based policing is defined by Sherman (1998, p.3-4) as "policing practice guided by the best available research." Sherman (2020) is of the opinion Evidence Based Policing can improve police effectiveness in respect of knife crime, and refers to research conducted by DCI Massey of the Metropolitan Police which seeks to identify where a knife related homicide is likely to occur. DCI Massey's research shows the more non-fatal knife attacks in an area, the higher risk of a fatal knife

attack occurring (Massey *et al*, 2019). This allows resources to be directed to the areas where the risk is the greatest. In a large metropolitan area with a finite pool of officers, this is invaluable.

While evidence-based policing as an anti-knife crime strategy has its benefits, it does not have the same immediate deterrent effect as proactive policing. Further, while Lumsden (2017) has found police staff at all levels are receptive to research guided policing, the findings of Palmer (2019, p. 7) suggests evidence-based research is not widely discussed at an operational level and as such it relies on individual forces putting policies in place and widely communicating its benefits.

An additional approach to tackling knife crime can be found in Problem Oriented Policing. Devised by Herman Goldstein (1979), Problem Oriented Policing (POP) seeks to focus policing resources on the areas which require the most attention and tackling the source of persistent problems to prevent them reoccurring. POP utilises a four-stage approach (SARA) to tackle problems. The four stages are “Scanning” wherein the issue is identified, “Analysis” where the underlying cause of the issue is identified, “Response” where a means of managing the problem is implemented and “Assessment” where the impact on the problem has been implemented.

Knife related crime is a “problem” which could benefit from a problem-oriented approach, the College of Policing label it as such in their “Knife Crime: A Problem-Solving Guide” (2021). However, it is highlighted that POP cannot be used to target broad categories such as “knife crime” (2021, pp. 12-15). Clarke and Eck (2003, pp.40) set out the “CHEERS” criteria which help identify if a problem is suitably narrow to benefit from a POP approach. The criteria are effect on “community”, the problem must be “harmful”, there must be an “expectation” for the police to address the problem, the problem must be broken down into discrete “events”, it must be a “recurring” problem and there must be a “similarity” between the recurring events. As such, if a narrower, well-defined problem like “knife crime outside local secondary schools from 1500hrs-000hrs” was identified in a force area, proactive patrols could be directed to the highest risk areas at the relevant times.

For the scanning stage of a POP approach to work, the accuracy of the data is essential. If incidents are not reported to the police, the true extent of the issue is unlikely to be clear. As noted above, if proactive policing powers are abused, trust and in turn crime reporting, is likely to suffer (Bradford & Jackson, 2016). Similarly, figures are likely to be wrong if officers do not accurately record incidents involving knives. To this end, the College of Policing (2021, p.18-20) indicate alternative methods of primary and secondary sources of data on knife crime which can help illustrate the true extent of the problem. Further, for an effective analysis of the root cause to take place, the body of research on the street perspectives needs to be broadened (Palasinski & Riggs, 2012.)

In conclusion, it is evident no single strategy can “tackle” knife crime alone, but each of the strategies discussed can help direct and inform the other to develop a holistic approach which identifies and tackles the root cause of knife crime as well as dealing with those already involved with offending behaviour. Together, the strategies allow the multi-agency approach espoused by HM Government (2018) and Skarlatidou *et al* (2021) to be implemented.

Word count: 1,041.

Essay two:

Counter-terrorism policing – assess the role of community policing in supporting counter-terrorism policing.

This paper assesses the effectiveness of community policing in supporting counter terrorism policing. In keeping with much of the literature on this topic, it will initially focus on community policing in Muslim communities before considering the effectiveness of community policing in relation to other types of terrorism.

Community policing is defined as an approach to policing which places community engagement at its core to foster trust and confidence in the police and deliver a more bespoke service which combats crime and meets the needs of a specific community (Bryant & Bryant et al, 2020, p.162.)

The Policing Vision 2025 recognises how the challenges posed by globalisation and increasingly diverse communities at a time when resources are limited, can be met by developing “a proactive and sophisticated understanding of community needs.” The 2025 Vision also highlights how work with individuals and community groups is essential to tackle modern-day issues (NPCC, 2019.) In a diverse Britain, terrorism is such an issue.

In the past two years, the UK terror threat level has oscillated between Severe (an attack is highly likely) and its current level of Substantial (an attack is likely) in respect of international terror (Mi5, 2022.) Recent terror attacks at Fishmonger Hall and Manchester Arena were perpetrated by British-born Muslims who were radicalised by international terror groups. Both perpetrators were known to the security services and in the case of the latter, members of his community had raised concerns with authorities about his radical views (Fox & Abbit, 2017. Cobain et al, 2017.) While the perpetrators in these cases were able to carry out their attacks with fatal consequences, intelligence provided by members of perpetrators/potential perpetrators communities is a clear benefit of neighbourhood policing (College of Policing, 2018) and allows the police to direct their limited resources to the areas where they are needed the most. Further, building stronger relationships with diverse communities develops integration and seeks to reduce feelings of isolation/marginalisation which are exploited by recruiters from terrorist organisations.

To this end, the government’s counter terror strategy *CONTEST* (and the workflow *Prevent* which forms part of the strategy) (H.M Government, 2011) places neighbourhood policing at their core as a means of fostering trust and sharing intelligence. This intelligence can help identify those who need greater scrutiny from the police and the security services. Further, research conducted by Huq et al (2011, p.742) found a considerable disparity between what Muslims in Greater London considered concerning behaviour and what they

would be willing to report to the police. Effective community policing and enhanced trust can reduce this gap.

CONTEST highlights the importance of fostering “common ground and shared values” with communities where those vulnerable to radicalisation live (H.M Government, 2011, p.10). Community policing is an ideal approach to achieve this goal. Local PCSOs and neighbourhood officers are well placed to build relationships with community and religious leaders as well as community groups and educational establishments. While this early intervention can disrupt the radicalisation process, it is worth noting research into “relative deprivation” and the extent to which integration reduces the risk of radicalisation indicates it is less of a significant factor on radicalisation than CONTEST suggests (Youth Justice Board, 2012, p.24-25.)

Research by Lambert & Parsons (2017) and Huq et al (2011, p.750) suggests that the greater a respondent’s sense of procedural justice, the more likely they are to co-operate with, and report concerns to the police. As such it is paramount that members of the community are treated fairly and ethically by neighbourhood officers and are involved in the development of community policing policy. As part of the CONTEST strategy, the *Prevent* workstream seeks to “stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism” (H.M. Government, 2011, p.13) and highlights the important role communities play in implementing this strategy (2011, p. 24.)

It is worth assessing the effectiveness of the CONTEST strategy. There have after all been 12 Islamist Extremist terror incidents in the UK since 2011 and a further 8 prevented, failed, or aborted attacks (“List of terrorist incidents in Great Britain”, 2022.) One potential downside of the CONTEST strategy is that scrutiny on a very specific section of the population runs the risk of alienating rather than promoting trust (Haq et al. 2011, p. 748.) This potentially benefits terrorist organisations. Butler highlights feelings of marginalisation was a common feature among a large proportion of European extremists and terrorists (Butler, 2015.) Lambert and Parsons also warn of the risk of the strategy conflating all strands of political and religious conservatism as “extremism” rather than focussing on those groups who actively promote the use of violence to further a political or ideological agenda (2011, p.1063.)

While government policy and much of the literature on the topic focusses on terrorism inspired by Islamic Extremism, there is also a real threat of terrorism from Northern-Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT), and emerging threats of Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism (ERWT) and Left, Anarchist and Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT). It is difficult to see how community policing can assist with the latter two groups whose members appear to operate independently within a worldwide online community of likeminded individuals (Intelligence & Security Committee of Parliament, 2022 p.13.) While it is possible that members of the public can pass informal intelligence to the police about potential perpetrators of ERWT/LASIT, this would require a far broader application of neighbourhood

policing and the objective of tackling issues unique to each-and-every community would be difficult. It is likely, as with Islamic Extremism, that an improved sense of procedural fairness could be more effective in securing the trust and cooperation of diverse populations (Bradford, 2012.) The need to adapt the counter policing strategy to tackle the changing face of terrorism has recently been acknowledged by the government and the Prevent strategy has been independently reviewed (Shawcross, 2023) albeit this led the Home Secretary to pledge to “rid Prevent of any cultural timidity” in tackling the ideological causes of IE rather than focussing on all kinds of extremism (Home Office, 2023.)

To conclude, used appropriately as a method of building trust and engagement, community policing serves a valuable purpose in developing an intelligence picture and addressing the underlying social factors which place young people at risk of radicalisation. It is vitally important that the focus remains on tackling groups who pose a genuine danger and not all conservative religious groups. As the perpetrators of terrorist activities and their ideologies change, it is important our policing strategy develops to ensure we are focussing resources on those who pose the greatest risk to public safety.

Word Count: 1,085.

Essay three:

What impact can personal bias have on investigations, and how effective are the measures in place to prevent this? Your answer must be based on academic research rather than personal experience.

This essay will consider the impact conscious and unconscious biases can have on investigations and assess the effectiveness of the measures in place to prevent this impact.

A criminal investigation is defined as “an investigation conducted by police officers with a view to it being ascertained whether a person should be charged with an offence, or whether a person charged with an offence is guilty of it” (*CPIA*, 1996.) An investigation commences as soon as the matter is reported to the police and is conducted by various officers from the initial response to the point of charge. These officers are responsible for the collection, retention and disclosure of information which has the potential to prove the case against the accused or exonerate them. The College of Policing recognise everyone, including officers are prone to both conscious and unconscious biases and highlight the discriminatory effect biases can have on the course of an investigation and individual liberties (College of Policing, 2016.)

Much has been written about conscious bias in policing. The Scarman (1981, cited in Williams, 2009) and McPherson (1999) reports highlight the damaging effect racial prejudice has on police investigations. The introduction of PACE (1984) has done a great deal to codify investigative procedures, to ensure compliance with the Human Rights Act (1998), the Equality Act (2010) and to reduce the possibility of prejudices impacting an investigation. Under PACE, each step of an investigation, from identification of a suspect (Code D), detention (Code C) and interview recording (Codes E & F) are clearly set out. Failure to adhere to PACE is counterintuitive, it can render any evidence gathered inadmissible, and this impacts the prospects of a successful conviction. Unfortunately, PACE alone has not completely eliminated biases from police investigations. The disproportionate use of stop and search powers on minority groups which led to the Brixton Riots is still evident today (HMICFRS, 2021) despite the College of Policing raising awareness among officers and implementing training and guidance.

Unconscious biases have a less problematic source. Meterko and Cooper (2022) define unconscious biases as “mental shortcuts or rules of thumb” which help us process the vast amount of information we are faced with each day and allow us to make decisions more easily. Daniel Kahneman (2012) points out that unconsciously “jumping to conclusions” is a harmless and efficient way of making simple decisions, but it is a much riskier practice in police investigation where the stakes are higher.

As part of an investigation, it is common practice for investigators to form an investigative hypothesis to help direct their investigation. This hypothesis will be

based on factors such as prior experiences of similar investigations, or knowledge of an offender's modus operandi. While this practice can be helpful in expediting an investigation, it leads to a risk of unconscious biases impacting how the investigator interprets and presents evidence and information. Confirmation bias is the psychological phenomenon of selectively relying more heavily on information which supports a view/opinion one has already formed over and above information which leads to a contrary explanation, regardless of its accuracy. Another common psychological phenomenon which can arise is tunnel vision, this is differentiated from confirmation bias as "an over reliance on internal sources" rather than external sources (Elaad, 2022.)

MacFarlane (2008) highlights the pressure placed upon officers by the public and the media to solve crimes quickly as a possible reason for officers to become blinkered in their investigation. This may be the case in high profile cases which ignite a passionate public reaction, but most investigations are not brought to the attention of the wider public. More pertinently, Ask et al (2011) suggest an organisational culture which values efficiency of investigation above thoroughness can lead to investigators being less receptive to contrary evidence/information.

At an internal level, every case is subject to a supervisory review prior to a police charging decision being made or the file being submitted to the CPS for a charging decision. This review should identify any "blinkered" investigating and correct it prior to a charging decision being made (COP, 2016.)

Thereafter, the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 is central to ensuring that investigating officers remain impartial. Paragraph 3.5 of CIPA 1996 Code of Practice (2015, pp. 6) highlights investigators' legal obligation to pursue all reasonable lines of enquiry, whether these point towards or away from the suspect." CIPA also highlights the obligation to record, retain and disclose material to prosecutor, this includes any material which could undermine the prosecution or assist the defence (CIPA, 1996 s2(1)(a).) Disclosing the evidence to an individual who is unconnected to the initial investigation should result in the prosecutor making an impartial charging decision based entirely on the strength of the evidence without any preconceived opinion as to the suspect's guilt. This of course relies on the investigating officer honestly exhausting all lines of enquiry and disclosing all the evidence they uncover. Reassuringly, Elaad found that while police officers are more susceptible to tunnel vision than laypeople, they did not wilfully ignore exonerating evidence (2003, p.7.) The disclosure process also relies on the prosecutor making an impartial decision free from any organisational pressures such as performance targets/charging rates.

The promotion of Pre-Charge Engagement (Attorney General's Office, 2020, p.35) is another positive step in tackling bias investigations, as it provides an opportunity for the suspect to suggest further lines of enquiry and assist with overcoming any investigative barriers.

The CPS are transparent about the disclosure failings which have led to several high-profile cases collapsing (CPS, 2018) and recommendations and a national improvement plan (CPS, 2018) have been put in place to ensure this vital function improves. In practice however, Polykarpou suggests the underfunding and understaffing of both the police and the CPS has led to an inexperienced work force in both organisations who are ill-equipped to properly discharge their disclosure obligations (2022, p. 46.) Reviews like the Mouncher Investigation Report (Horwell, 2017, p.221) and more recently, the HMCPSI point out the issues are far from resolved and “much more needs to be done” (2020). An independent review body, as recommended by Coerkamp (2018) and further training and education for police and the CPS as espoused by Polykarpou (2022, pp. 57) are a sensible starting point.

In conclusion, officers are susceptible to conscious and unconscious bias, and these can have a detrimental impact on investigations. The measures in place are theoretically sound and have gone some way to negate this impact, however, more needs to be done to ensure practitioners are complying with the statutory measures.

Word Count: 1,085.

Essay Four:

What characteristics or factors increase the risk of exploitation by Serious or Organised Crime Gangs? Your answer should examine both the psychological and socio-economic characteristics of victims of exploitation.

This paper explores the psychological and socio-economic characteristics which increase the risk of exploitation of young/vulnerable victims of Serious and Organised Crime Gangs, with a specific focus on "County Lines" gangs.

Organised Crime is the term used to describe criminal activity structured and run in a similar way to a legitimate business (Joyce & Laverick, 2020, p.107-108.) "County Lines" is the term used to describe a form of organised crime whereby drugs are trafficked from urban areas to regional locations as a means of establishing new customers in less saturated markets (Robinson et al, 2019, p.694.) This is facilitated by gangs utilising young and/or vulnerable people as a resource to deliver, store and deal drugs. These individuals are manipulated through grooming, threats, and violence to secure their compliance (Stone, 2018, p. 286.) County lines is also associated with the practice of "Cuckooing" whereby gang members take over the home of a vulnerable person, as a base of operations for their "line."

Family background is a significant risk factor for young people. Sharkey et al highlights the impact copying learned behaviour, familial disorganisation and childhood physical/emotional/sexual abuse has in respect of future gang membership (2011, p.49.) Windle et al found a prevalence of children in care and children who acted as care givers among victims of gang exploitation (2020, p.67). Sharkey et al suggests such familial maltreatment and disorganisation makes a child more likely to seek the structure and support of a gang (2011, p.48-49) and this structure is often enough in itself to secure and maintain their engagement (Robinson et al, 2019, p.696.)

Strain theory tells us individuals from poor backgrounds are often enticed to commit crimes to achieve wealth and success which would otherwise be denied to them (Merton (1968) in Joyce & Laverick (2020) p.35.) Criminal gangs will be aware poor/marginalised individuals will be easier to entice into illicit activities. Storrod & Densley (2017, p.685) highlight how respondents suggested money was the primary motivator for joining a gang. The reward does not necessarily have to be financial, Thompson (2019, p.106) suggest the "social capital" which comes with gang involvement is a strong motivating factor.

Poor educational attainment and children being excluded from formal education is another common feature among young people exploited by crime gangs (Robinson et al, 2019, p.703, Dando et al, 2022, p.4,6, Sharkey et al, 2011, p.46-47.) Again, lower levels of academic achievement leads to lower earning potential which in turn may result in a "strain" which is resolved through the trappings of gang membership. Respondents to both Dando et al (2022) and Robinson et al (2019) glamorised their lucrative lifestyle while respondents to Thompson (2019, p.112) reported being given free gifts by their recruiter during the "grooming" phase. This is likely to demonstrate the potential rewards of their line of work.

It is this lucrative lifestyle which blurs the lines between victim and willing participant in criminal activity. Robinson et al (2019) and Dando et al (2022) both refer to rational choice theory, with those engaged in county lines dealing seeing themselves as rational actors who are attaining status and financial success. Olver and Cockbain raise the point that this perception should be considered against the backdrop of significant power-imbalance and scepticism over the alternative “choices” available to the individual (2021, pp. 356.) Many victims may be indebted to their violent groomer because of their dependencies.

In their 2019 study, Robinson et al found habitual cannabis use was a commonly reported by respondents as the “hook” used by gang elders to engage victims in their drug dealing operations. Debt-bonding often allowing users to incur large debts which are leveraged against them to secure their “labour” or to allow their property to be cuckooed (2019, pp.700.) As many victims are vulnerable due to their poor socio-economic status, or dependance on illicit drugs, their prospects of repaying these debts through legitimate means are limited, something gang elders are acutely aware of, and at times purposefully engineering (Thompson, 2019, p.112.)

While it is clear there are commonalities in the socio/economic background of victims of exploitation, a 2022 study on parental experiences of grooming of children involved in county lines drug dealing conducted by Dando et al (p.4-5) found many respondents did not come from the “typical background.” They argue the widely accepted view of children who become exploited by crime gangs is a harmful narrative and leaves parents from other backgrounds ill-equipped to recognise the early warnings signs and deal with the threat of exploitation. Storrod & Densely (2017) indicate that the “business” of county lines gangs is now inextricably linked to “trap” rap music, which is used to advertise a gang and their business. Their study explains how gangs monitor “likes” and “shares” on their social media posts to identify new targets for exploitation. Given the large audience trap music has and the ubiquitous nature of social media, the reach of gang elders is now far wider than it has ever been. It is highly likely this has contributed to the changing face of a “typical” victim of exploitation.

If background alone does not dictate a person’s susceptibility to being exploited, it is reasonable to assume certain factors have a psychological source. These factors may be deeply entrenched from the victim’s upbringing. As noted above, poor family structure can leave a young person seeking the companionship and protection they feel they are missing from their new “family” (Sharkey et al, 2011, p.48.) Conversely, the psychological vulnerability may be transient and a result of the young person’s development into adolescence (Dando et al, 2022, p.2,6.) The period when a young person moves from childhood into adolescence is a time of significant change which is often associated with low self-esteem. This presents exploiters with a prime opportunity to entice victims with gifts, rewards, affection, or the promise of a lucrative lifestyle. If the latter is correct, it further highlights how anyone could be vulnerable to exploitation if they are groomed at an “opportune” time.

Exploitation of young and vulnerable people by organised crime gangs is a complex issue and there is significant overlap in the factors which make individuals more vulnerable to gangs. The typical picture of who is vulnerable to exploitation is overly

simplistic and the internet has played its part in changing the “typical” victim profile. As a respondent to Olver & Cockbain’s study suggests, a more sensible approach would be to address these risk factors rather than arresting participants who have been exploited “so they do not feel so enticed into the offer of supplying drugs” (2021, p.354.)

Word Count: 1,093.

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