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Behavioural case linkage:
Linking residential burglary offences in New Zealand

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

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Abstract

Thesis title: Behavioural case linkage: Linking residential burglary offences in New Zealand

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This thesis aims to replicate and extend prior research on behavioural case linkage from the United Kingdom and Finland, using a sample of residential burglaries committed in New Zealand. Eighty-two solved residential burglaries, committed by 47 serial burglary offenders in Napier, New Zealand, are sampled from the New Zealand Police National Intelligence Application (NIA) database. Prior research using behavioural case linkage for residential burglary has found support for the usefulness of crime scene behaviours, inter-crime distance and temporal proximity to accurately predict offences committed by the same offender. Inter-crime distance has consistently shown higher degrees of accuracy in determining whether two crimes are linked to the same offender. Using the methodology followed by previous researchers, 41 linked crime pairs (two offences committed by the same offender) and 41 unlinked crime pairs (two offences committed by different offenders) are created. Three behavioural domains of crime scene behaviours, inter-crime distance and temporal proximity of offences committed by the same offender are compared with offences committed by different offenders. Logistic regression analysis and receiver operating curve (ROC) analysis is used to determine the ability of the three behavioural domains to accurately predict whether offences are linked or not. Similar to prior studies, all three behavioural domains showed moderate predictive ability in reliably determining the linked status of crime pairs. Contrary to prior studies inter-crime distance was found to be the least accurate predictor in
determining the linked status of crime pairs, with an optimal model combining temporal proximity with crime scene behaviours showing the greatest degree in determining whether crimes were committed by the same offender or not. These results provide support for the use of behavioural case linkage for linking residential burglary offences in New Zealand while caution is required when relying on inter-crime distance alone as a linking feature within small geographic areas.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................................ iii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................... viii
Introduction and Literature Review ................................................................................................ 9
  Negative effects on the victim ......................................................................................................... 12
  Resolution rates ............................................................................................................................ 13
  Minority of offenders commit the majority of crime .................................................................... 15
  Linking crimes ............................................................................................................................... 18
  Behavioural case linkage ............................................................................................................... 22
  Behavioural case linking research ............................................................................................... 23
  Behavioural case linkage research methodology ....................................................................... 25
  Behavioural case linkage with Burglary ...................................................................................... 29
  Cross-national differences ........................................................................................................... 34
  Behaviours used in behavioural case linkage research ............................................................ 36
  Inter-crime distance and temporal proximity ........................................................................... 41
  Limitations .................................................................................................................................. 44
  Study aims and hypothesis ......................................................................................................... 47
Method ................................................................................................................................................ 47
  Sample data base .......................................................................................................................... 48
  Materials and Procedure ............................................................................................................... 50
  Selection of linked and unlinked crime pairs ............................................................................. 51
  Data coding .................................................................................................................................. 52
  Measuring similarity ..................................................................................................................... 52
  Data analysis and model development ....................................................................................... 54
Results ................................................................................................................................................ 55
  Logistic regression and ROC analysis ......................................................................................... 59
  Regression equations for calculating probabilities ..................................................................... 61
Discussion ........................................................................................................................................... 65
  Inter-crime distance ..................................................................................................................... 65
  Temporal proximity ....................................................................................................................... 68
  Crime scene behaviours ................................................................................................................ 69
List of Tables

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality ........................................56
Table 2. Range and median scores for linked and unlinked behavioural domains ..........57
Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test outcomes.............................................................................58
Table 4. Logistic Regression analysis summary of model performance .........................60
Table 5. ROC AUC values for four models.......................................................................64

List of Figures

Figure 1. Seven steps of the Bennell Methodology commonly used for Behavioural Case
Linking research (Tonkin, 2015)......................................................................................26
Figure 2. Linked and unlinked crime pair distributions for the three variables of; Inter-
crime distance, Temporal proximity and Crime scene behaviours (Jaccard’s coefficient). ........................................................................................................................................59
Figure 3. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves for the three individual
predictor variables; inter-crime distance, temporal proximity and crime scene
behaviours, and an optimal model.................................................................................63