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## Recognising modern slavery

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## **Recognising Modern Slavery**

## **Abstract**

"Modern Slavery" comprises of forms of extreme labour exploitation. With its Modern Slavery Law 2015, the UK is said to be at the forefront of international efforts to address the crime. But to be effective, members of the public and officers of government agencies need to be able to recognize situations as modern slavery. Students and police officers were given seven scenarios developed from real cases and the literature. It turns out that police officers recognise most of the scenarios, in contrast to students. Identifying situations as modern slavery appears related to strong moral disapproval, resulting in preferences for harsher punishment. After all, modern slavery challenges the foundations of a liberal society.

*Keywords:* Modern slavery, labor exploitation, punishment preferences, moral judgement, police training, knowledge and opinion on law

## **Introduction**

The implementation of laws and policies meets a myriad of obstacles (Rendel, 1976; Mayntz, 1983; Knile, 2006). The UK has recently seen the introduction of a penal law that is intended to bundle together existing legal provisions in order to better address crimes so far insufficiently persecuted, more specifically “modern slavery” offences. For the new law to have an effect, lay people and police officers need to be able to recognise established patterns of modern slavery. Police officers have to spot cases in which modern slavery law potentially applies. Otherwise, victims of modern slavery will not be helped accordingly and perpetrators will escape the punishment set out for them. Furthermore, police significantly rely on members of the public alerting them to suspicious cases. The more aware citizens are of modern slavery, the more they can bring cases to the attention of the authority. The present study asks if this precondition of the law’s successful implementation is met and which factors are conducive to recognition.

On the global stage, there is a growing awareness of a crime phenomenon which comes under the label of “modern slavery”. It encompasses a range of offences that have been responded to internationally (e.g. Palermo Protocol 2000), including in the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in the United Kingdom. Tackling modern slavery has become a prominent political objective: Theresa May as Home Secretary and then as Prime Minister made it one of her trademark policies (May, 2016). The prominence is reflected in a growing number of media reports and the objective is increasingly supported by police forces. Despite these efforts to address modern slavery, there are ever increasing numbers of this crime (Bales et al. 2009). The widely noted estimates from the Global Slavery Index place the number of victims of modern slavery at 45.8 million across 167 countries in 2016, with the United Kingdom accounting for approximately 11,700 victims nationwide. This report lists the UK as one of the ten countries exhibiting the strongest response to modern

slavery (Walk Free Foundation, 2016), but an enduring problem that stifles all efforts is a failure to recognise situations as cases of ‘modern slavery’ in action. A recent review commissioned by the Home Secretary identified a significant lack of understanding in relation to the concept of modern slavery in law enforcement agencies (Haughey, 2016). Moreover, these agencies have to depend not only on the ability of individual officers but also on the public being aware of what largely is a hidden crime.

### **Defining Modern Slavery**

Modern slavery is typically defined in terms of exploitation through the utilisation of victim vulnerabilities. Cases are not only characterized by violent acts and threats, but also by the manipulation of victims even to the point that they may claim that they are acting under their own free will. Thus, typical examples may include labourers who toil on fields under abhorrent conditions or sex workers who believe that they are in a consensual relationship with their masters. Stereotypical cases often associate modern slavery with human trafficking (or human smuggling)<sup>1</sup> and evidence suggests that large numbers of individuals are trafficked for the purpose of slavery. However, modern slavery also involves the exploitation of local people and these cases are being exposed more frequently across the UK.

The use of the term ‘slavery’ carries a number of connotations that may contribute to the problem of operationally defining modern slavery. Many people are prompted to imagine historic forms of slavery, typified by the ordeal of North American slaves brought to the country in chains. “Generally, the term slavery is applied to extreme forms of subjugation, mostly for the purpose of labour exploitation”, defines Klaus Weber (2015, p. 20). It does not

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, the UK is a member state of the European Union. Citizens of other EU countries have the right to enter the UK without a visa. Therefore, many cases of human trafficking do not require the activity of smuggling.

necessarily require “complete control of one person by another” (Bales et al. 2015, p. 18) and victims may receive some form of payment for their work. However, this pay will not be appropriate for the work completed (significantly below the minimum wage), the individual may not have given legitimate and genuine consent to the work, and living/working conditions may be dangerous or substandard (e.g. BBC 2017 case report). Manzo (2005) identified an important difference between historic forms of slavery and their modern equivalents: the latter no longer involves the legally recognized ownership of people. However, the cultural stereotype of people in chains owned like cattle by their masters has been perpetuated in the media, and this has led to both opposition and confusion in relation to the label ‘modern slavery’ (Short & Lloyd, 2016b).

Referring to Article 4 of the Human Rights Convention, the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 in Section 1(19) defines a perpetrator as a person knowingly holding “another person in slavery or servitude” or knowingly requiring “another person to perform forced or compulsory labour”. The law lists potential scenarios that may exemplify modern day slavery. “All the circumstances” (Section 1[3]) have to be taken into account to establish modern slavery and the law makes a few constellations explicit: the “person's personal circumstances (such as the person being a child, the person's family relationships, and any mental or physical illness) which may make the person more vulnerable than other persons” (Section 1[4a]). In Section 3(3-5), some types of offences are marked clearly: the law refers to sexual exploitation, removal of organs, and “securing services etc. by force, threats or deception”. The “consent” of the victim does not preclude the effect of the law (Section 1[5]), as Parliament was aware of patterns of manipulation.

### **The Impulse to Punish**

Modern slavery is an emotive issue, often discussed in moral terms. The vocabulary of social justice is evoked in reports of outstanding cases. Classic sociological theory

suggests that serious crime elicits a more hostile response than lesser crimes. It is possible that people recognise cases as modern slavery when they are particularly morally outraged. Since the days of Emile Durkheim (1976), Eugen Ehrlich (2002), George Herbert Mead (1980) and Leon Petrazycki (2011) socio-legal theory emphasizes a strong, often emotional (Hogan & Emler 1981), response to law breaking. It manifests itself not only in directly affected people, but can be much broader (Tyler et al. 1997). On a basic level, observers may sympathise with the plight of the victim and want to retaliate against the offender (e.g. Sarat, 1995; Silver, 2017). People who are negatively stereotyped can expect harsher responses (Peters, 1973; Pepitone, 1975; Silver, 2017). If offenders belong to the same social group as the person who is judging, the perpetrator may be found guilty of putting it into disrepute, triggering a punitive response (Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997). Depending on the situation, people may find it easy to sympathize with victims of slavery, they may draw on cultural stereotypes in identifying exploiters and they may be appalled by those who affect their own group's—farmers, builders, store owners etc.—prestige negatively.

The legal order—at least in parts—develops from the rules by which people lead their lives and they are connected to “ideas, feelings and emotions” (Ehrlich, 2007, p. 105). In turn, laws derived from the social order will contribute to forming it (Ehrlich, 2007). Positive law may influence how people subsequently feel about law (Petrazycki, 2011). Breaking a law, adopted by the state, that the public have become aware of then also results in an emotional response. Considerations of retributive justice can lead to especially punitive responses, expressing the perceived severity of the disregard for accepted social rules. Already the sheer offending against a rule can attract a punishment (Tyler et al., 1997; Machura, 2001). In a Durkheimian perspective, people feel the need to defend the way they live. Two liberal voices from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrate what is at stake when it comes to modern slavery and why it causes alarm. The historic development from slave

labour to the system of “free labour, economic freedom, and competition (independent free motivation)” signifies a “cultural advance of human masses”, claimed Petrazycki (2011, p. 328). Principles of modern work relations, outlined Weber (1978), include that workers are “personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligation” (p. 220), they can decide to leave their work, and their remuneration follows socially accepted rules. The type of abuses that come under the Modern Slavery concept fall in the category of law-breaking that challenge the core of a liberal, capitalist society. Furthermore, the punishment set out by the law can be read as an – although rather rough – indicator of the severity of the crime (Pepitone, 1975). UK law allows severe punishment for those convicted under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The maximum penalty is life in prison and, in a repeat case, the court has the power to go for a “whole life order” (Haynes, 2015, p. 40). Clearly, the government wanted to send a strong signal that the law is dealing with serious offences. Reflecting this official stance, individuals may be more likely to label a situation as “modern slavery” when they already advocate a stern response to the offence.

### **Public Perceptions of Modern Slavery**

A recent survey of 1,672 adults across the UK found that 55% of those questioned were unaware of the common signs of modern slavery and 67% were unaware of the measures in place to tackle modern slavery in the UK (YouGov & University of Hull, 2016). Again, many of the responses reflected misconceptions about the nature of modern day slavery. Those surveyed focused primarily on female exploitation through sex work, despite the fact that 48% of the 3805 cases identified in the UK in 2016 were for males (National Crime Agency, 2017).

This finding supports earlier results of a survey comparing attitudes to human trafficking across Europe (Sharapov, 2014), which concluded that the media focus on female ‘sex slaves’ from overseas has dominated public attention in the UK. Since 59.8% of



respondents indicated obtaining their information about human trafficking from watching a news programme on the television and 40% reported gaining information from newspaper articles, Sharapov (2014) argued that the media has a substantial impact on the misinformation held by the general public in relation to modern slavery. The ‘imaginarium’ of overseas female sex slaves has the effect of associating human trafficking (or even smuggling) and modern slavery with the emotive issue of immigration<sup>2</sup> and implies that the crimes can be addressed by tightening border regulations (Sharapov, 2014). This conclusion, however, is in conflict with data from the National Crime Agency which reported 326 identified cases of modern slavery for British nationals in 2016, placing the country after Albania and Vietnam as one of the top three countries of origin for such cases occurring in the UK (National Crime Agency, 2017).

In addition to misunderstandings relating to the victim profiles, further research reveals a lack of public understanding in relation to the characteristics of the crime itself. One survey conducted in the West Midlands (Dando et al., 2016) used opportunity sampling of students, people attending public university events, and adults approached in a city centre. Respondents typically did not grasp the concept of non-physical “psychological coercion” common to modern slavery offences. They “believed that human trafficking was the illegal movement/illegal immigration of people from one country to another; either for prostitution, or work” (Dando et al., 2016, pp. 9-10).

Since public discussion about modern slavery focuses on stereotypes, human trafficking of overseas nationals, and the blunt application of force rather than cunning

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<sup>2</sup> Public opinion in the UK often fails to distinguish between immigration resulting from citizens of other European Union states exercising their treaty rights to live and work in the UK, and illegal migration as the result of people smuggling.

manipulation, the systematic intention of anti-slavery laws may not come to fruition. Short and Lloyd (2016a) acknowledged that the crime of modern slavery remained ill-defined and poorly understood by both the public and the authorities.

The absence of a clear understanding of this crime has significant ramifications for tackling modern slavery: the general public and those working with potential victims (e.g. healthcare workers) fail to recognise and report instances of slavery; those who are reported as potential victims of slavery fail to cooperate with the authorities because they are unwilling and fearful to identify themselves as ‘slaves’; and law enforcement agencies (e.g. police) fail to identify cases of modern slavery, particularly when the offence overlaps with other criminal acts (Short & Lloyd, 2016a).

### **Professional Perceptions of Modern Slavery**

The lack of understanding in the populace may extend to those most likely to come into contact with potential victims, such as nurses, mental health advisors, shelter staff, and social workers (Jones et al., 2007). According to a research report by PROTECT (Provider Responses, Treatment and Care for Trafficked People), 86.8% of NHS health professionals did not know what questions to ask in order to identify a potential victim of trafficking and 78.3% felt insufficiently prepared to manage trafficking cases (Oram et al., 2016, p. 99).

Law enforcement officials form a specific group of frontline staff for whom an understanding of modern slavery is essential to the success of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. However, there is currently very little research in the UK on police perceptions of modern slavery and human trafficking. An inspection report found severe shortcomings, based on a lack of understanding (HMICFRS, 2017). Farrell and Pfeffer (2014) revealed that the perception of trafficking held by police officials in the US does not reflect the reality of trafficking recorded in actual cases. In line with the survey findings for the general public in the UK, Farrell and Pfeffer (2014) found a strong focus on adult female sexual exploitation

and this has led to significant problems in recognising and addressing male labour exploitation. Their research has also highlighted problems associated with overlapping crimes and the difficulties in avoiding criminalising victims of slavery. These complications were particularly relevant to those working across trafficking and vice, since it became difficult to distinguish between individuals engaged in voluntary prostitution and individuals enslaved in sexual exploitation (Farrell et al. 2015). Qualitative data in the form of quotes suggested that many police officers struggled to understand the role of consent in such circumstances (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014).

Poor understanding of psychological coercion was also found across the community survey data presented by Dando, Walsh, and Brierley (2016), and these findings highlight one of the key problems in understanding victims of modern slavery.

While media influence may be more pronounced for the general public, evidence suggests that police officer's perceptions of modern slavery may be influenced by the media (Farrell et al. 2015). They may also learn about it from a wide range of other sources, including discussions with family and friends. In particular, however, police officers and other professionals working in the helping fields may be given specific training on modern slavery and related issues like human trafficking, or employment law as part of their initial or ongoing training. Therefore, these individuals may draw on this training when they are exposed to cases involving forced labour and other abuses.

In addition to the misconceptions and misinformation held by the police and public, victims themselves may hold similar misunderstandings about modern slavery. It may affect their ability to recognise their own situation as an example of modern slavery thus resulting in a failure to raise an alarm or cooperate further with the authorities. People who have been trafficked may not identify with the 'victim' label (Jordan, 2013; Bjelland, 2017), and this impacts negatively on victims making themselves known to the authorities and their

cooperation with law enforcement and support agencies. The addition of a 'slave' label may lead to further rejection by the individual, as the word carries racial connotations of historical slavery and chattel slavery. For victims who do not find their situation analogous to that of historical slaves, the use of this label could serve to distance the victim from the allegation and further confuse the defining features of the crime. All of these factors may contribute to the inaccurate perceptions of those professionals with whom the victims interact: if the victim denies the crime then the professional may be less inclined to identify and pursue it as an offence.

Despite the difficulties outlined previously, increased numbers of cases identified, investigations, and prosecutions in relation to modern slavery provide some evidence for a gradual improvement in public and police understanding. The National Crime Agency (2017) noted that identified cases have increased every year between 2013 and 2016, with an 87% increase between 2013 (when the Modern Slavery bill was first presented to the House of Commons) and 2015 (when the Modern Slavery Act was given Royal Assent as law). These cases that came to the attention of the authorities, however, still fall short of the estimated number of victims across the UK. A recent report by the Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMICFRS, 2017) highlighted that identified cases have not increased significantly between 2014 and 2016 for most police forces. The difficulties in detecting and recognising modern slavery may be contributing to this failure.

### **Hypotheses**

The present study aims at finding out if police officers and members of the public (here: university students) are able to recognise patterns of modern slavery and which factors contribute to their ability. Based on the discussion above, the following hypotheses were tested with samples of students and police officers.

H1: As scenarios of modern slavery are akin to more familiar breaches of criminal law, both students and police officers will recognise the scenarios as depicting criminal acts, but not necessarily cases of modern slavery.

H2: As modern slavery law is relatively new, many of the scenarios will not be identified as modern slavery, although the police officers will be more successful than the students in recognising cases.

H3: Students or police officers may be more likely to identify cases of modern slavery when they are being influenced by any of the following sources of information:

H3.1: The media (films, TV shows, novels; news about crime; reading internet sites; social media)

H3.2 Experiences and views of family and friends

H3.3 Being a victim or interviewed as a witness of crime

H3.4 Observed or participated in police action

H3.5 Training.

H4: Modern slavery is more likely to be identified in a case when the respondent wishes to impose a harsher punishment.

H5: People from outside the UK will be less able to recognise modern slavery.

## **Method**

Two surveys were conducted: one with students at *Bangor* University, and one with officers from *North and South Wales* Police. These studies used self-completion questionnaires and online questionnaires for students and online questionnaires only for police officers. The latter received an invitation to participate by email or on their screen saver from a contact within their police force. All surveys were anonymous.

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the *College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, at Bangor University*. The project complies with research

ethics guidelines of said institution and of the British Society of Criminology. The answers were analysed using SPSS.

Case descriptions for the scenarios were developed drawing on court reports, other literature, and news items. Readings and experiences while working with police were used to formulate the modern slavery scenarios.

After reading each scenario, respondents had to indicate whether they believed that no crime had occurred or a crime had occurred in breach of one or more of the following laws: modern slavery, domestic abuse, immigration, employment, or human rights. They would then indicate whether the scenario warranted punishment and, if so, which level of punishment should be received by the perpetrators. The set of scenarios was introduced with the sentence “In our first questions, we will present you with a number of situations”. In the following, we will first outline the crime background for constructing the individual scenario and then present the wording provided for the respondents.

**Domestic Worker.** Rich individuals or diplomats from abroad were found to exploit and abuse domestic servants brought legally into the UK.<sup>3</sup> After arriving in the country, victims suffer from a wide variety of abuses, including living and working in squalid conditions and receiving little financial remuneration (Montouvalu, 2016).

Scenario 1 in the questionnaire read: “An overseas domestic worker is employed in a wealthy private household. The worker is female and 25 years of age. She works 12 hour shifts 7 days a week and is paid only in lodgings and food. The living conditions are poor and she receives little food. However, the maid consents to the work and conditions. She believes that she can leave at any time.”

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<sup>3</sup> Craig, 2015: p. 137; Haynes, 2015: p. 52; Short and Lloyd, 2016a: pp. 5, 10; similar in other countries like Belgium or Austria: Gerster, 2016.

**Housewife in Domestic Servitude.** One example of a constellation that does not meet the standard template for modern slavery is provided by the conviction of a husband for holding his own wife in servitude (Crown Prosecution Service, 2016; Paz-Fuchs, 2016; Walker, 2016). Cases of this nature would more commonly be associated with domestic abuse.

Scenario 2 on the questionnaire: “Sarah is 32. Her husband requires her to work in his shop and their home. She is allowed no freedom or interaction with family and friends, but chooses to stay under these conditions.”

**Sex Worker.** Selling sex is one of the activities most commonly associated with modern slavery, and this is even more common if the prostitute is a female immigrant. However, these cases of modern slavery can be difficult to detect as victims may prefer to stay within the exploitative setting. A trafficked person, for example, may choose to continue working as a slave because the alternative involves a return to abject poverty or a war-torn country. They may feel that cooperating with law enforcement authorities equates with “sawing off the branch on which they sit” (Renzikowski, 2015, p. 126). Modern slavery may be more detectable for victims under the age of consent as minors cannot agree to partake in the sex trade. However, even children used as prostitutes have preferred to return to their exploiters (Haynes, 2015).

Scenario 3 was worded: “An underage sex worker is taken off the streets by the authorities. She has been transported into the UK by a gang having originally been told they would find her work in the beauty industry. When she is put into safe youth accommodation by the council, she absconds and returns to the gang.”

**Cockle Pickers.** In 2004, 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned in incoming tide at the English coast. They had been illegally trafficked into the country and their gang master had forced them to work for little money without regard to basic safety considerations (BBC,

2006). The case exposed issues of enforced labour and contributed to the passing of the Modern Slavery Act (Craig, 2015).

Scenario 4 read: “The coast guard locates a cockle picker gang of overseas workers. When interviewed the men report that they receive as little as 8 pence per day. They now want to return home but their passports have been confiscated by their boss.”

**Cannabis Farm Worker.** Criminal utilization forms a variation of modern slavery: “victims are forced to engage in criminal acts (...) with all illegal profits going to the offender” (Short and Lloyd, 2016a, p. 5). A notorious setting for modern slavery offences are cannabis farms (Craig, 2015; Haynes, 2015). Gangs order and manipulate individuals, typically smuggled in from a Non-European country, to cultivate the illegal plants. Victims may be threatened and unwilling to cooperate with the authorities. Often, the perpetrators tell them that they must work to pay back a debt: for example, payment incurred for smuggling them into the country or living and accommodation fees. The illegal nature of the activity means that the issue of consent is clouded in such cases, as those arrested for cannabis farming could choose to claim to be a victim of modern slavery to mitigate punishment. This means that it is difficult to distinguish between legitimate victims forced into criminal acts and those who have consented to participate. However, irrespective of these issues, minors cannot lawfully agree to engage in such activities thus cases of underage criminal utilization can be considered as examples of modern slavery.

Scenario 5: “A Vietnamese girl, 12 years of age, has been brought to the UK on the back of a truck. She is told that she must work in a cannabis farm to pay for her journey to the UK. When interviewed by police, she claims that she has agreed to work on the cannabis farm and does not feel constrained at all.”

**Forced Beggar.** Children forced into begging is more commonly associated with countries of low socio-economic status. There have, however, been a number of high-profile



cases in the UK of vulnerable individuals forced to beg for money that is paid directly to a master. For example, one deaf and mute female was trafficked from Romania and forced to beg alongside a child in the West Midlands, with a punishment of physical beatings if she did not obtain sufficient money (Rayment, 2013). Other deaf Romanian victims were detected after she reported her situation to the police through sign language. Forced begging in the UK can be categorised as a form of criminal utilisation, and the fear of arrest and prosecution for begging leads to difficulties for the police in identifying legitimate cases of modern slavery.

Scenario 6 contained the description: “Peter is a 22 year old man with an IQ of 40. He is found begging on the streets. He tells social workers that he was forced to do this by the people he lives with.”

**Nail Bar Worker.** Females smuggled into the UK from outside Europe are frequently employed in the beauty industry, and there has been a recent increase in the detection of modern slavery victims working in nail bars to pay off debts owed by their family or incurred by their travel into the country (BBC, 2016). Alongside the enforced labour of the staff within the establishment, these nail bars may also be used as a front to launder money from prostitution (information provided by local police officers) or sell illegal drugs (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2013).

Scenario 7 concluded this part of the questionnaire: “A girl (15 years of age) was taken from Bulgaria by a woman who claimed to be her aunt. She was told she had to work in a nail bar in the UK to pay off a family debt. When interviewed, she explained to police that she agreed to work in the nail bar and wants to help her family.”

**Respondent Reactions.** Further items explored influences on respondent reactions. A set of items asked for their self-perception of the sources of influence, including various media, personal experiences and discussion with others. Another series of questions explored whether respondents had received any training in relation to modern slavery and

neighbouring areas of the law, such as employment and immigration law. Importantly, the respondents provided their self-assessments regarding levels of training. Final items included age, gender, and country of origin. The survey instrument concluded with an opportunity to provide further comment.

To find out which factors significantly influenced the answer behaviour, separate multivariate regressions were conducted for students and police officers. We started with the student subsample and then tested the same factors for the police officers. Ethics approval included both studies.

### **Study 1: University Students**

#### **Method**

**Procedures.** Data were collected between the end of January and the end of February 2017. The students from the School of Psychology and the School of Education were given the electronic version of the survey. Psychology students received points towards their required participation in experiments using a procedure that secured anonymity of their answers. Students from the other schools completed the questionnaire in class. Students had been instructed not to fill in the questionnaire twice if they had already the opportunity previously.

**Participants.** The 538 respondents were undergraduates from *Bangor* University studying a variety of subjects including; criminology and criminal justice (159, 29.6% of the sample), law (51, 9.5%), business (114, 21.2%), psychology (195, 36.2%) and education (19, 3.5%)<sup>4</sup>. Respondents were predominantly female (73.2%, n = 394). The largest age group was 18 to 25 years (87.7%, 472), to be followed by 26 to 35 year olds (5.8%, 31). UK

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<sup>4</sup>They were regular students of those subjects, only by a rare coincident one of them might have been a police officer or a police volunteer.

respondents (70.3%, 378) dominated the participant population. Chinese students, mainly following Business and Law degrees, formed the second largest group (9.1%, 49). Almost all of them would have arrived in the UK for their studies. Many will have spent their final year at Bangor University, having been two years at the university's China campus. The remaining respondents came from a wide range of different countries. All respondents received information indicating that their participation was voluntary and their data would be protected and anonymised. All respondents included in the analysis consented to the use of their data.

## **Results**

Seven scenarios were presented and the respondents rated the type of crime committed and indicated a punishment preference (see Table 1).

Table 1 here

In each case, only small minorities stated that no criminal offence has occurred. For every case, another type of offence was pointed out more commonly than an offence against modern slavery law. With the exception of the cannabis worker case, human rights offences were consistently more likely to be identified than modern slavery offences. The cannabis worker case was widely understood to represent an offence against immigration law, followed by the sex worker and cockle pickers cases. The domestic worker and the cockle picker situation are very clearly seen as offences of employment law. In regard to domestic abuse law, the housewife case featured most prominently, followed by the forced beggar case with a significant difference.

When identifying modern slavery across the seven cases, most of the respondents associated the cockle pickers scenario with modern slavery law while the house wife and forced beggar cases were least likely to be associated. To measure the respondents' ability to recognize cases of modern slavery as such, an index variable was created summarizing the number of scenarios correctly identified as modern slavery. Only 15 students (2.8%) were

able to recognize all seven cases of modern slavery, 27 (5.0%) six scenarios, 64 (11.9%) five, 92 (17.1%) four, 94 (17.5%) three, 101 (18.8%) two, 91 (16.9%) one, and 35 (6.5%) no cases at all.

All respondents who answered to the scenarios recognized at least one in which an offence had occurred. The majority (58.9%, 317) found the law broken in some way for each case. A quarter failed to identify one scenario (133, 24.7%), 8.0% (43) two, 3.0% (16) three, 0.9% (5) four, 0.7% (4) five, and 0.4% (2) six.

The respondents were most likely to assign punishment in the cockle picker case and least likely in the forced beggar case (see Table 1). The most severe prison sentences are suggested for those responsible for the offences in the sex worker, cockle picker, and cannabis farm cases. In contrast, the lightest sentences tended to be favoured in the domestic worker and housewife cases. Nevertheless, the majority still selected a custodial sentence in these cases.

Punishment preferences are used as a proxy for hostile responses to the crime scenarios. To measure punishment preferences across the seven scenarios, a score of preferred sanctions was calculated<sup>5</sup>. The minimum score would have been '0', for no punishment favoured by a respondent at all, over all scenarios. The maximum score, when a respondent preferred "life in prison" for all the seven scenarios, would be '35'. The scores in the student sample mainly fall into a middle range (mean = 17.45, SD = 5.330, n = 499), that is between the extremes.

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<sup>5</sup> Coding of individual variables forming the punishment index: 0 = no punishment, 1 = community service, 2 = prison sentence of 6 months, 3 = prison sentence of 5 years, 4 = prison sentence of 14 years, 5 = life in prison.

The respondents were asked to indicate to what degree their opinions on crime were influenced by a range of factors (refer to Table 2).

Table 2 here

The students believe that the media plays a significant role in forming their perceptions of crime. The majority indicated that news about crime had a major impact. Social media, films, TV shows, novels and internet sites were also highlighted as impacting substantially on their perceptions. Training events, school, or university degrees were also seen as potential causal factors. Another layer of influences consisted of discussions with family members, colleagues, and friends. These discussions may have been direct conversations or have been channelled through social media. The students were to a much lesser degree influenced by personal experiences in the world of crime, with the greatest impact having been a victim of crime and far smaller impact reported for interacting with police officers, having been interviewed as a witness, or observed/participated in police action.

Table 3 (see below) shows how much training the respondents had received the following areas: modern slavery, human trafficking, immigration law, victim support, domestic abuse, employment law, child abuse and human rights. Training in these areas may have informed their answer behaviour. Generally, the student respondents had not participated in any training, with the exception of human rights. Of particular relevance to this study, 72.1% had received no training on modern slavery.

Table 3 here

Three multivariate regressions are used to identify the relations between the responding behaviour. As described earlier, an index variable was constructed to measure the number of scenarios in which the students recognized modern slavery. The first column in Table 4 (see below) shows how demographics, perceived information sources, and training

received contribute to a statistical explanation of the number of scenarios recognised as modern slavery.

Table 4 here

Chinese students recognised significantly fewer instances of modern slavery. Business students, along with those students who felt influenced by social media and by having been interviewed as witness, showed marginally significant effects. In contrast, students influenced by internet sites and training in human rights identified more scenarios as modern slavery, with the latter factor only marginally significant.

An index of the punishment preferences was also computed. The multivariate analysis (refer to Table 4) reveals only one significant factor: respondents feeling more influenced by crime news advocate more severe punishment. The overall explained variance of the last model is extremely low. When it comes to the number of cases recognized as modern slavery the explained variance is initially not much higher. However, this picture changes when the punishment preference is taken as an indicator of the perceived severity of the offence committed (Table 4, third column). Now, the explained variance of the model rises and punishment preference becomes the one most influential factor. Higher punishment preferences coincided with recognising more cases as modern slavery. Still, Chinese students were less likely to identify those scenarios; as were those students who felt influenced by having been interviewed as a witness of a crime. Business students were marginally less able to identify modern slavery ( $p = .059$ ). Those who felt influenced by observation of police action were marginally more likely to do so ( $p = .096$ ).

## **Study 2: Police**

### **Method**

**Procedures.** Study 2 was identical to Study 1, with the single critical difference of the sample taken from the police force across *North and South Wales*. From April to June

2017, 287 staff working for *North and South Wales* Police participated in the survey. From this total, 267 indicated working for *North Wales* Police and 3 were employed by a local authority (likely to have been seconded to the police thus were included in the survey).

**Participants.** Of the respondents, 7.3% (n = 21) were between 18 and 25 years old, a further 20.9% (60) between 26 and 35, 27.5% (79) between 36 and 45, 33.4% (96) between 46 and 55 and 8% (23) between 56 and 65. Information on age was not provided by 2.8% (eight). Females constituted 36.2% (n = 104) of the sample and males constituted 61% (n = 175) of the sample. The remaining respondents did not answer the gender question. Almost all respondents indicated they originated from the United Kingdom (n = 275, 95.8%).

Table 5 here

Of the respondents, 15.3% (n = 44) recognized all seven scenarios as modern slavery and 40.4% (116) recognised six scenarios. Together, they form the majority of the officers. Five cases were identified as modern slavery offences by 25.8% (n = 74), four cases by 12.9% (37), three by 4.9% (14) and only two by 0.7%. With the exception of the house wife scenario, a clear majority of police officers recognized all cases as falling under modern slavery law (refer to Table 5, above). To the police officers, the house wife case was predominantly an example of domestic abuse. The forced beggar situation was recognised as modern slavery by 71% of respondents and is the second least likely identified. The cannabis farm worker, sex worker, and cockle picker cases lead the statistic with 95% recognition. These three were also frequently recognised as offenses against immigration law (together with the nail bar worker scenario) and as breaches of human rights. The three offenses also attract the strongest punishment preference (see Table 5). Many of the respondents preferred a prison sentence punishment for all of the seven scenarios, although community service was preferred by a minority in the housewife and domestic servant case (17% and 23%, respectively). To have a proxy for the hostile emotions prompted by the scenarios, a score for

the punishment preferences was created following the same procedure as for study 1. Again, the majority of scores gravitated towards the middle of the spectrum (mean = 20.19, standard deviation = 4.545, n = 260).

Aside from ‘news about crime’, most police officers indicated that they were not influenced by the media (see Table 6). They also rarely felt influenced by their experiences as a witness or victim of crime. More than training and education, experiences and views of family and friends as well as ‘police officers among colleagues, family and friends’ had an impact on their responses to the survey. However, the majority indicated that they were most influenced by their own professional experience of police action.

Table 6 here

In terms of training, a majority of police officers stated that they had received training on domestic abuse (see Table 7, below). Conversely, employment law was least reported as a training experience. Immigration law also featured little in police officer training. For modern slavery, human trafficking, human rights, victim support, and child abuse, answers indicated that a moderate amount of training had been experienced by most of the respondents. A multivariate analysis shows which factors explain the police respondents’ recognition of the modern slavery scenarios. An initial model was not significant, and significance only occurred when punishment preference was added, although the explained overall variance is small (adjusted  $R^2 = .183$ ). Table 4 shows that punishment preference again formed the single most influential factor: the higher the punishment preference, the more scenarios were identified as modern slavery. In addition, three marginally significant variables were noted: older respondents and those who had more human rights training were more likely to recognise scenarios ( $p = .068$  and  $.084$ , respectively), while those informed by TV, films and novels ( $p = .060$ ) recognised fewer.

Table 7 here



## **Discussion**

Modern slavery is increasingly discussed as a problem in countries world-wide. It takes a variety of forms. The common denominator is extreme labour exploitation. They typically involve an abuse of vulnerable people and an element of deception. In the United Kingdom, the Modern Slavery Law 2015 represents an attempt to address those problems. In order to have an effect, people must be able to recognise cases of modern slavery when they occur in their various guises. Members of the public have a role to alert the authorities and representatives of the state—especially police officers—need to be able to recognise them as well. The present study tested a number of related hypotheses with samples of university students and police officers.

Our first hypothesis (H1) stated that both students and police officers would recognise the scenarios presented in this study as criminal acts because these cases of modern slavery are akin to more familiar breaches of criminal law. The hypothesis was supported in the current study, as students and police overwhelmingly identified the seven scenarios as crimes of some other type. It appears logical as the Modern Slavery Act addresses crimes that already fall under other offenses, thus aspects of the cases presented could potentially be investigated as alternative crimes. This finding may also mitigate any failure to identify modern slavery itself: when members of the public (such as students) understand that any offence has taken place, then they may alert the authorities to the situation thus allowing the case to be investigated further. Not labelling an offence as “modern slavery” does not necessarily mean that a crime will not be reported to the police. Therefore, while it is preferable, it is not necessarily essential for the general public to recognise modern slavery, provided that they recognise some element of criminal behaviour prompting a report to the authorities. It is, however, not sufficient for the police to merely identify a crime in action as

the execution of the legislation within the Modern Slavery Act requires that officers are able to recognise modern slavery in order to appropriately direct the investigation.

Our second hypothesis (H2) was based on the fact that legislation in relation to modern slavery is relatively recent, with the current Modern Slavery Law introduced only in 2015. We assumed that many scenarios would therefore not be recognised, although police officers would be more successful than students. This hypothesis was supported in the current study, as the student sample failed to identify modern slavery in five out of seven cases whereas the police sample detected modern slavery in six out of seven cases. This finding is reassuring because, as noted in relation to H1, public failure to identify crimes of modern slavery can be mitigated by reporting alternative crimes from the same scenarios, whereas police detection of modern slavery is essential to the successful execution of the Modern Slavery Act.

Unlike many extant crimes (for example, murder or rape), crimes of Modern Slavery are less familiar to the public as the recent changes in legislation have provided less time for exposure to investigations and prosecutions. The student sample indicated that from a variety of sources, news about crime had a noticeable impact on their perceptions. But although there have been a few high-profile cases in recent years, there is still a limited number of examples from which the public could draw their knowledge of these cases, relative to other crimes. As a new form of legislation, media exposure is currently limited. Thus cases may not yet be immediately accessible to the public consciousness when considering possible crimes. In contrast, the police officers were substantially less likely to rely on the media for their understanding of modern slavery. Police officers were more likely to detect modern slavery across a wider array of scenarios than the student sample. Notably, however, this enhanced understanding of the crime did not extend to the housewife case. The recent prosecution under the Modern Slavery Law of a similar housewife case was reported in several media

sources, but may not have been known to police in *Wales* since the prosecution took place in London.

As highlighted in the discussion of H2, there are a multitude of influences that may have informed the respondents' understanding of modern slavery. Our third Hypothesis expected that individuals may recognise modern slavery more easily if they were influenced by certain sources of information. As part hypothesis (H3.1), we assumed that the respondents' understanding of the crime was influenced by entertainment and news media (H3.1). However, only in our student sample did we find that those who were more influenced by news about crime significantly preferred harsher punishments and this did not directly influence their ability to detect modern slavery. Furthermore, our findings did not support the hypothesis that influence through family and friends might impact on their ability to detect modern slavery (H3.2). Personal experience in terms of being a victim or witness of crime (H3.3) was not found to have an impact on the police officers. Students feeling influenced by having been witnesses of crime were less likely to identify modern slavery. It is possibly a consequence of the nature of their personal experience which is likely to come from situations unlike those of modern slavery.

When it comes to feeling informed by witnessing or taking part in police actions (H3.4), police officers were more likely than students to believe that they were. In the multivariate analysis of their recognition patterns, this factor did not become significant, though, and it was only marginally significant for students. It suggests that neither of the two groups could typically draw on observations of (or participation in) actions that helped them understand patterns of modern slavery.

Training may influence the successful detection of modern slavery (H3.5). However, the results from both students and police revealed no significant relation. It suggests that appropriate police training for modern slavery cases may not yet been utilised, or there is

insufficient training as evidenced by the modest training levels indicated by the police respondents. Similarly, students rarely had any education on modern slavery and the related issue of human trafficking.

Our penultimate hypothesis (H4) was based on the criminological theory that the perceived severity of the offence, as expressed by the preference for harsher punishment, drives the reaction to crime. This hypothesis, and the underlying theory going back to Durkheim and other's ideas, is supported in the current study as the harsher the suggested punishment for a breach of the law, the more accurate the definition of a scenario as a case of modern slavery. Typically, both students and police respondents wanted the perpetrators to go to prison. In the publicised discussion, modern slavery unambiguously appears as one of the worst ills in society. If it continues to simmer on the public agenda, there is one likely effect, given the strong punitive response to case scenarios. Modern slavery may eventually be established as one of the top categories of the most severe crimes. Until then, the public and staff of authorities need to be made more aware of its manifestations.

Finally, we assumed that respondents from outside the UK who have been unlikely to witness the debates on modern slavery and the Modern Slavery Law will be less likely to recognise cases of modern slavery (H5). Our student sample allowed to test this hypothesis, taking advantage of a sizeable number of Chinese respondents. Their ability to identify modern slavery proved less developed than that of fellow students. Within the context of the present study the causes for this cannot be cleared up. If the Chinese students are following British affairs at all, they would still have missed the lead up to the 2015 Modern Slavery Act.

In assessing people's awareness of modern slavery, we confronted them with descriptions of situations of extreme abuse. Typical police action – exemplified by the work of patrolling police officers – is triggered by the nature of the case at hand “and only

secondarily by general norms” (Bittner, 1990, p. 234). No doubt, there are more analytical functions of the police in which they will work more systematically. But the scenario method may be a reasonably accurate way to measure the recognition of modern slavery, not only by lay people, but also by police officers.

Our findings depend on the reliability of the scenario method, especially the case descriptions provided. We have varied the nature of the crimes and the personal attributes of the victims, as well as the victim’s response to authority intervention, in order to reflect the rich spectrum of cases. It remains to be seen how much, for example, varying the gender or age of the victim influences responses when all other aspects of the case are held constant.

To summarize, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 makes a start to address the issues. Critics have emphasized the vagueness of the law and even the label “modern slavery” may be entirely misleading. It will need extended media coverage and wider discussion in order to more firmly establish the concept in the public consciousness. The present study suggests that moral disapproval of crimes committed against what Leon Petrażycki called a “cultural advance of human masses”, the abolition of slavery, and the wish to see perpetrators severely punished will assist in the implementation of the 2015 law.

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Table 1: Student Views on Crime Scenarios: Percentages for Perceived Type of Offence and Punishment Preference

Case Scenario	Perceived Type of Offence						Preferred Punishment					
	No Crime	Employment Law	Domestic Abuse Law	Modern Slavery Law	Immigration Law	Human Rights Law	No Punishment	Community Service	Prison Sentence of 6 Months	Prison Sentence of 5 Years	Prison Sentence of 14 Years	Life in Prison
1. Domestic worker	8.9	69.0	10.2	46.1	11.7	57.2	10.2	30.9	30.1	21.6	5.9	0.6
2. Housewife	10.6	15.8	69.0	21.7	1.1	49.6	12.3	21.6	30.3	26.4	6.7	1.1
3. Sex worker	5.8	25.7	13.8	52.4	57.1	58.9	4.8	3.2	9.5	37.5	30.9	12.3
4. Cockle pickers	1.1	74.0	4.1	62.5	54.5	71.4	1.7	5.4	14.1	41.1	27.9	8.6
5. Cannabis farm worker	6.7	49.8	4.8	45.7	69.1	41.3	5.9	7.2	15.4	38.8	24.0	6.1
6. Forced beggar	16.9	5.2	45.2	22.9	1.9	55.6	15.4	19.1	24.3	25.1	10.6	1.3
7. Nail bar worker	11.0	50.4	13.9	39.2	43.5	40.7	12.3	13.2	25.5	33.1	11.3	2.0

NOTE: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding and missing data.

Table 2: Percentages of Students Self-assessed Influences on Opinion about Case Scenarios

	1 = Very	2	3	4	5 = Not at all
News about crime	16.2	37.7	26.8	12.6	4.5
Social media	12.1	30.7	26.4	15.1	13.9
Experiences and views of family and friends	14.1	22.3	23.6	17.8	19.9
Training events, school or university degrees	11.2	24.0	27.1	15.1	20.8
Films, TV shows and novels on crime	8.4	23.0	30.7	21.9	13.8
Reading internet sites	8.0	25.5	28.8	21.4	13.9
Police officers among colleagues, family and friends	7.1	14.3	18.8	19.3	38.1
Having been a victim of crime	10.4	9.3	10.8	9.7	57.4
Having observed or taken part in police actions	5.0	10.8	15.8	16.2	50.0
Having been interviewed as witness	4.8	6.3	11.7	10.8	63.8

*NOTE:* Percentages: differences to 100 are missing answers.

Table 3: Percentages of Students Indicating Training Experiences

<i>Training in</i>	1 = Very	2	3	4	5 = None at all
Modern slavery	2.0	4.1	7.2	11.9	72.1
Human trafficking	1.9	3.0	9.3	11.0	71.9
Immigration law	1.5	5.4	9.3	14.1	67.1
Victim support	2.6	8.4	11.7	11.9	62.5
Domestic abuse	3.7	8.2	15.1	11.5	58.9
Employment law	6.7	8.6	12.8	12.8	56.3
Child abuse	5.6	9.9	16.2	11.9	53.7
Human rights	7.4	14.1	19.3	11.7	44.8

*NOTE:* Percentages: differences to 100 are missing answers.

Table 4: Student and Police Officer Opinions on Modern Slavery (multivariate linear regressions)

	<i>Students</i>			<i>Police Officers</i>
	<i>Cases Recognized</i>	<i>Punishment Preference</i>	<i>Cases Recognized, Punishment Preference Added</i>	<i>Recognized Modern Slavery Cases</i>
Age	.03	.01	.03	.13*
Female	.06	.01	.06	.08
From UK	.07	-.03	.08	-
From China	-.18***	-.06	-.15***	-
Criminology	.03	.02	.03	-
Law	-.08	-.08	-.04	-
Business	-.10*	.03	-.10*	-
Education	.03	.02	.03	-
<b>Sources of information:</b>				
Film, TV, novels	-.01	.01	-.01	.16*
News about crime	-.05	-.16***	.03	.01
Experiences of family and friends	-.07	-.04	-.04	-.13
Family, friends in police	.02	.07	-.04	.01
Observed police	-.05	.13*	-.10*	.01
Interviewed as witness	.12*	-.10	.17***	-.07
Crime victim	.09	-.01	.08	.16
Internet sites	-.11**	-.08	-.06	.05
Training, education	-.07	-.08	-.03	.09
Social media	.10*	.08	.08	-.06
<b>Trained in:</b>				
Modern slavery	-.01	.04	-.03	.11
Human trafficking	-.04	-.08	-.01	-.20
Domestic abuse	.01	.03	.02	.03
Child abuse	.06	-.05	.10	.01
Immigration law	.10	.07	.08	.03
Employment law	-.04	-.08	-.03	-.02
Victim support	-.07	-.06	-.07	.08
Human rights	-.12*	-.06	-.08	-.16*
<b>Punishment preference</b>	-	-	.44****	.40****
N	489	471	471	212
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.121	.042	.301	.183
P	.001	.011	.001	.001

NOTE: \* p ≤ .10, \*\* p ≤ .05, \*\*\* p ≤ .01, \*\*\*\* p ≤ .001. If not noted otherwise, entries are betas.

Table 5: Police Views on Crime Scenarios: Percentages for Perceived Type of Offence and Punishment Preference

<i>Case Scenario</i>	<i>Perceived Type of Offence</i>						<i>Preferred Punishment</i>					
	<i>No Crime</i>	<i>Employment Law</i>	<i>Domestic Abuse Law</i>	<i>Modern Slavery Law</i>	<i>Immigration Law</i>	<i>Human Rights Law</i>	<i>No Punishment</i>	<i>Community Service</i>	<i>Prison Sentence of 6 Months</i>	<i>Prison Sentence of 5 Years</i>	<i>Prison Sentence of 14 Years</i>	<i>Life in Prison</i>
1. Domestic worker	5.2	62.7	3.1	81.2	12.5	39.4	5.6	22.6	25.8	36.9	6.3	1.0
2. Housewife	5.2	9.8	87.8	25.8	0	24.4	5.2	17.4	38.0	32.8	5.6	0
3. Sex worker	2.1	13.2	4.2	94.4	64.1	50.9	2.1	0	3.8	40.8	43.9	7.7
4. Cockle pickers	0	64.1	1.0	95.8	54.7	57.8	0	0	6.6	48.4	39.4	3.8
5. Cannabis farm worker	1.4	34.5	2.8	94.4	80.5	52.6	2.1	0.3	4.2	39.0	46.0	7.0
6. Forced beggar	9.4	5.6	25.8	70.7	2.1	37.6	8.4	9.4	24.4	34.5	17.4	1.7
7. Nail bar worker	2.8	48.8	15.0	84.0	53.7	39.4	3.5	7.7	22.6	40.4	20.6	1.7

NOTE: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding and missing data.



Table 6: Percentages of Police Self-assessed Influences on Opinion about Case Scenarios

	1 = Very	2	3	4	5 = Not at all
News about crime	1.0	4.5	10.8	17.8	65.5
Social media	4.5	17.8	26.5	19.2	30.7
Experiences and views of family and friends	3.8	15.0	19.2	19.2	41.1
Training events, school or university degrees	14.3	21.6	24.7	11.5	25.8
Films, TV shows and novels on crime	29.6	26.5	17.4	6.6	17.4
Reading internet sites	1.7	3.1	7.7	4.5	81.2
Police officers among colleagues, family and friends	4.5	3.8	7.0	4.5	77.0
Having been a victim of crime	1.4	7.3	18.8	18.1	52.3
Having observed or taken part in police actions	10.1	13.9	22.6	11.1	41.5
Having been interviewed as witness	1.4	8.7	21.6	16.7	51.6

*NOTE:* Percentages: differences to 100 are missing answers.

Table 7: Percentages of Police Indicating Training Experiences

<i>Training in</i>	1 = Very	2	3	4	5 = None at all
Modern slavery	8.4	26.5	29.3	13.6	20.2
Human trafficking	6.6	26.5	29.3	13.6	23.7
Immigration law	1.4	7.7	20.6	25.4	43.9
Victim support	13.2	20.2	24.0	15.7	25.8
Domestic abuse	27.2	30.7	19.9	8.7	12.5
Employment law	1.7	6.3	11.8	25.1	54.4
Child abuse	17.4	29.3	26.5	9.8	15.3
Human rights	15.0	29.3	27.9	15.3	12.2

*NOTE:* Percentages: differences to 100 are missing answers.