

# The pleasures and pains of transdisciplinary research for Criminology: Insights from the Digital Police Officer Project.

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This paper explores the use of online discussion forums for engaging in criminal networks. We specifically focus on the buying and selling of stolen credit cards, termed carding. Previous studies on underground forums have examined the topological properties and functions of these forums, highlighting their significance to the cybercrime ecosystem. More recent research has looked at how forums evolve over time. Building on the work of Yip, Webber and Shadbolt (2013), we have set out to discover if it is possible to track those who communicate on these forums as each forum is shut down by Law Enforcement and replaced with another. Such actors often need to port their reputation from one forum to another in order to continue with their business. Some do this in plain sight, using the same username, email and other identifying features. However, other actors use more sophisticated anonymisation techniques to avoid easy identification, yet still publicise their presence to their customers. This paper draws on findings from a research project called the Digital Police Officer. This project is a 'transdisciplinary' collaboration between Criminology, Computer Science and Web Science. By transdisciplinary, we mean that the different techniques are merged without recourse to disciplinary boundaries based on epistemological ideologies. This study created a methodology drawn from both social and computer science, requiring the synthesis of large-scale data analytics, Natural Language Processing and qualitative discourse analysis. We explore the benefits and problems of stepping outside of one's disciplinary boundaries and present a critical review of this approach for criminology.

*Yip, Michael, Craig Webber, and Nigel Shadbolt. "Trust among cybercriminals? Carding forums, uncertainty and implications for policing." Policing and Society 23, no. 4 (2013): 516-539.*