POLICE SCIENCE

Australia & New Zealand Journal of Evidence Based Policing

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- the opportunity to network and learn from other practitioners.

About ANZSEBP

The Australia & New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing (ANZSEBP) is a police practitioner-led society, formed in April 2013 in Brisbane, Australia. The mission of the ANZSEBP is to develop and disseminate scientific research ('the evidence') and advocate for police to use it to guide best practice in all aspects of policing. The ANZSEBP Chairperson serves on the Executive Board of the British Society of Evidence Based Policing, ensuring that the ANZSEBP works collaboratively with international police practitioners and experts to advance evidence based policing.

The Society is made up of police officers, police staff, and research professionals, who aim to make evidence based policing practice part of everyday policing in Australia and New Zealand. The Society advocates that all aspects of policing, including police patrols, investigations, crime prevention, human resource management, and all other forms of service delivery, should be evaluated using sound, scientific methods.

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Chairperson, Australia and New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing
Assistant Commissioner, Queensland Police Service, AUSTRALIA
Adjunct Professor, University of Queensland, AUSTRALIA

As the Chairperson of the Australia & New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing (ANZSEBP), I want to warmly welcome you to the inaugural publication of *Police Science: The Australia & New Zealand Journal of Evidence Based Policing.* As Chairperson I am supported in our work through an Executive Committee with membership of senior police officers from every policing jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand. The Society comprises membership from police organisations in Australia and New Zealand, as well as others such as research professionals and others who aim to make evidence based approaches part of everyday policing in Australia and New Zealand.

The ANZSEBP was formed in April 2013 in Brisbane, Australia. The Society is practitioner led, meaning that it is led by police for the benefit of policing. The mission of the ANZSEBP is to develop, disseminate and advocate for police to use scientific research ('the evidence') to guide best practice in all aspects of policing. Although the work of the Society is outlined in our website (anzsebp.com) our aims are reasonably simple. They are to:

1. increase best use of the available research evidence to solve policing problems
2. produce new research evidence by police practitioners and researchers
3. communicate research evidence to police practitioners and the public.

Importantly, membership of the ANZSEBP is FREE. You can join the ANZSEBP by accessing our website at **www.anzsebp.com**. Membership entitles you, amongst other benefits, to:

*   full access to the website including, amongst other things, research resources
*   reduced price conferences (e.g. the annual ANZSEBP Conference)
*   reduced subscription to the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*
*   reduced subscription to *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*
*   the ability to network and learn from other practitioners.

Policing in the 21st Century is a challenging and vexed pursuit. These challenges are unlikely to lessen anytime soon. There is the challenge of meeting political and community demands and expectations and the need to be agile in responding to new priorities in an environment of significant challenges. The need to use our resources wisely and with due diligence, whether they are our valuable people, vehicles, operational equipment or finances, is of paramount importance. Using such resources in ways that add value to the citizenry, organisation, government, and importantly, making sure that we do no harm in the process—are all factors making the case for evidence to guide our decision making.

There is a movement globally in key international hubs such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and of course Australia and New Zealand—to both invest in research and to translate research findings into practical actionable strategies within police organisations. There are also calls internationally to move police organisations to be truly evidence based. But, how do police organisations move from the rhetoric of using evidence to guide practice to inculcating this into the very DNA of the police organisation? This is a key challenge for action.

Through the provision of dedicated resources, strong and effective strategic leadership, training and mentoring the next generation of officers with an understanding of and commitment to science—police agencies have a greater chance of becoming truly evidenced based. The Society of Evidence Based Policing (SEBP) serves as an enabling platform to support police agencies in this positive future change process.

I hope you find this Journal of value in the important work that you do.

Peter Martin APM Ph.D.
Chair, ANZSEBP

Message from the Editor

Professor Colin Rogers

The International Centre for Policing and Security, University of South Wales, (UK)

It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome you to the very first edition of *Police Science: The Australia and New Zealand Journal of Evidence Based Policing (ANZSEBP),* and I am honoured to have been asked to be its editor.

The aims of the society, and hence the journal, have been succinctly explained by Chairperson, Peter Martin, APM, Ph.D in his message, but I wish to support the comments concerning the future of policing and the very great challenges all police officers and staff will face. In times of economic austerity, coupled with local, national and international demands, police agencies across the world have realised that policing has to become smarter in order to remain effective and provide a quality service for its communities.

During my visits to Australia I have always been impressed by the number of excellent initiatives being carried out by different police agencies, but rarely, apparently, disseminated widely to other groups. This journal will, I hope, become a major contributor in spreading best practice in evidence led policing amongst policing agencies not just in Australia and New Zealand, but across the globe as well. I would therefore like to encourage readers, be they police practitioners, police administrative staff, academics or interested parties, to submit articles for consideration for publication within this journal in topics that fit in with the idea of disseminating best practice.

In this inaugural issue we have several important articles which set the scene for the evidence based policing (EBP) idea, such as Alex Murray's piece which explains the approach, EBP and leadership by Dr Vicki Herrington and a conversation piece between Peter Martin and Larry Sherman which is most insightful and informative. EBP is, of course, a global phenomenon and we provide three short explanatory articles from different countries to illustrate this, whilst Sarah Bennett and Mike Newman introduce us to a practical evaluation of the use of Mobile Community Police Offices.

In all, a wide range of informative and illustrative articles which we hope will be of use to readers, and that will encourage you to submit an article for consideration and thereby contribute to the dissemination of evidence based policing practices.

Professor Colin Rogers
Editor

The future of evidence based policing

An Interview with
PROFESSOR LAWRENCE W. SHERMAN, University of Cambridge
Conducted by
A/DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PETER MARTIN APM, Queensland Police Service

Editor's Notes:

Dr. Peter Martin is the Chairperson of the Australia & New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing and a career police officer, having served with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) for over 35 years, where he is currently the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police for Regional Operations. An Adjunct Professor at the University of Queensland, Australia, Martin earned his Ph.D. from Queensland University of Technology. He won the Australian Police Medal in 2008 and was inducted into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame at the George Mason University, Virginia, USA in 2010.

Professor Lawrence W. Sherman is Honorary President of the Society of Evidence Based Policing (UK) and Director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, where since 1996 the Cambridge Police Executive Programme has provided a part-time master's degree for mid-career police leaders from across the globe. Widely known as the founder of evidence based policing, he began his career in 1971 in the New York City Police Department. He is often a visiting lecturer in Australia, and has lectured in 38 other countries. His path-breaking experiments in hot spots policing, domestic violence, restorative justice and crime prevention have earned almost 19,000 citations, and his training course on evidence based policing—now on video—has been delivered to over 1,500 police officers.

Peter Martin: *Larry, what do you understand by the concept of evidence based policing?*

Lawrence Sherman: Evidence based policing is the process of using the best research to make the best decisions in police work. This applies to everything police agencies do, from crime prevention to investigations, from recruitment to purchasing. It especially applies to three kinds of high-volume decisions, none of which have historically been well-informed by research: *targeting, testing, and tracking.*

By 'targeting' I mean decisions to focus police resources on some targets and not others, getting greater returns on investment for public safety.

By 'testing' I mean decisions about whether a police practice has succeeded in accomplishing its goal.

By 'tracking' I mean decisions about whether a police unit or officer is doing what is supposed to be done, and to what degree.

Police make these decisions all the time, but they usually make them by thinking 'fast,' as Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman described it in his global best-selling book, *Thinking fast and slow* (2011). The starting point for evidence based policing—or 'EBP'—is to slow down the big decisions, and take time to apply good evidence to make better choices.

Peter Martin: *How would you say that to police who must make split-second decisions?*

Lawrence Sherman: Yes, they do, and for those decisions they can't slow down. But a lot of police decisions already take a long time to make. And once they are made, they often last for years. How many officers do we need in this district? What is our policy on domestic assaults with minor injury? How

do we measure patrol time in high-crime hot spots?

My 'Triple- T' (targeting, testing and tracking) way of summarizing these 'slow' decisions reflects what organisations do in many kinds of work, from sports to politics, from public health to manufacturing. For each of these decisions, organisations apply high-power research to answer the key questions for their organisations.

Peter Martin: *In policing terms, how do you recommend we make those decisions?*

Lawrence Sherman: Let's take one 'T' at a time:

For Targeting: when we systematically examine all of the known offenders, victims, places, or times we police, which ones form the small minority (5 or 10%) that produce the vast majority (51% or more) of the crimes, accidents or anti-social behaviour, or harm from those events.

For Testing: when we systematically compare the outcomes of using two different ways of accomplishing the same goal with the same kind of targets, which one gets better results per dollar invested?

For Tracking: when we systematically compare what police are doing to what they have been assigned to do, where are the biggest gaps in performance?

Peter Martin: *Larry, a lot of people say that EBP is all about randomised controlled trials. Are you disagreeing with that?*

Lawrence Sherman: Absolutely! The Triple-T way of defining EBP may not be familiar to many people—especially the critics—who think that EBP is simply about testing, or even a single method of testing called a 'randomised controlled trial.' But the way we have been teaching EBP for over

a decade encompasses all three kinds of decisions, the full 'Triple-T.'

It is true that my original formulation of EBP back in 1998 did not spell this out. But if you look back at my first lecture on the subject, you can clearly see all three elements there. It was only when I was preparing to give a lecture at the AIPM in Manly in 2012 that the Three T's appeared as a clear way to break down the categories of evidence based decision making.

Peter Martin: *Where and when did you first present the concept of EBP?*

Lawrence Sherman: Those three words were first presented to a small audience at the Police Foundation in Washington, DC, in early 1998. The Foundation's President at that time was Hubert Williams, the former Police Director of Newark, New Jersey. Hubert's senior research scientist was then Professor David Weisburd, who was co-director of the first hot spots policing experiment, which we did together in Minneapolis. David invited me to give one of the first several lectures in a now legendary series called *Ideas in American Policing,* which is still going strong (see www.policefoundation.org).

The Foundation then published the lecture on paper, but later posted it online for free download. Today, when you put the words 'evidence based policing' into Google (at least in the UK), the first choice that pops up is the Police Foundation's posting of the PDF of that lecture free for downloading.

Peter Martin: *But why did you decide to choose that topic for your lecture, Larry, out of all the ideas in policing you could have discussed?*

Lawrence Sherman: Actually, Peter, it had a lot to do with Australia. In the late 1990s, when I gave that lecture, I was working with the Australian Federal Police in Canberra on a program of experiments in police-led restorative justice conferences.

What we called the RISE Program has lasted for over two decades, and is summarised in a Journal of Experimental Criminology article that you can download at no cost from http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11292-015-9247-6).

But as you know, Peter, it is a very long plane ride from Australia to the eastern US. Those trips turned out to be a good chance to catch up on my reading, as I did one time going from Canberra to Washington. I read a book by Michael Millenson called *Demanding Medical Excellence* (1997). Google Scholar describes that book as a 'groundbreaking and accessible work that reveals how the information revolution is changing the way doctors make decisions.' But for me, it was a lot more than that. It was the 100-year story of what we now call 'evidence-based medicine,' but which had only recently acquired that name.

The book was such a revelation to me that I could hardly put it down. Every page I turned, I kept substituting the words 'police officers' for 'doctors' or 'surgeons' or 'anesthetists' or 'neurologists.' Then when I got to the section on heart surgeons having the death rates of their patients posted on the New York State government website, I put the book down and started to write. What I wrote turned into that Police Foundation Lecture on Evidence Based Policing.

Peter Martin: *So why do you think the book had that effect on you, Larry? Did you even think about how the ideas you were getting could change policing?*

Lawrence Sherman: That is all I *could* think about, Peter. By that time of my life, I had spent three decades doing research and experiments with police agencies. But I was frustrated that the research we did rarely got discussed, let alone used, outside of universities—by police or anyone else. There were some big exceptions, such as the domestic violence arrest experiment I did in Minneapolis with Richard Berk, or the hot spots policing experiment I did there with David Weisburd. Both of those projects had a big effect on police practices, even changing state laws on domestic abuse.

But that impact was not really in line with what the research had found to be true. There were too many slips twixt cup and lip for the application of research to policing. What we needed was a far more developed channel of communication and review between police decision making and the growing accumulation of research on policing.

Peter Martin: *So you were looking for better ways to apply research, not just to do it?*

Lawrence Sherman Yes, and that is what I found in evidence-based medicine. What

floored me about *Demanding Medical Excellence* how it proved that research could be pushed into practice; not just offered up on a platter, but hooked up on an intravenous feed to recharge the decision making system of any organisation. After all, hospitals and police agencies have a lot in common, especially their decentralised decision making on a case-by-case basis in life-and-death situations. If the hospitals were establishing what they called 'evidence cops' to insure that patients got the best research results applied to them, then so could the real police. Anyway, that was what I was scribbling away about on the plane from Sydney to Washington.

Peter Martin: *How did you envision that police would change their decision making models with EBP?*

Lawrence Sherman: The main thing I envisioned was a culture of decision-making in which we take research seriously. A culture that makes research the first thing you do in making decisions, not the last. A culture that makes tough choices with strong evidence. A culture in which police officers do their own research, using good scientific methods, and publish it in their own journals. A culture that recognised police as heroes for showing what works, and not just for risking their lives on the street—a culture that says both those deeds are important.

Peter Martin: *But does that culture of EBP spell the end of the 'craft of policing' or 'police intuition'?*

Lawrence Sherman: Not at all. There is no way to do policing, or doctoring, without good craft skills and intuition. EBP does not *replace* skills; it *enhances* skills. And intuition enhances EBP. Experienced police officers have all kinds of theories about crime-fighting that they think about—or even practice. What EBP lets them do is to test those theories. They won't always be right. Most theories, or new drugs in medicine, fail to work for most patients. But it is only by trial-and-error, with high standards of research, that we can make major breakthroughs—like the polio vaccine, or the use of DNA testing in burglary investigations.

Peter Martin: *Why should a police officer or police organisation invest in EBP?*

Lawrence Sherman: For the same reasons that people become police officers: to protect and to serve. People join police agencies to do that to their utmost. Not just in an 'okay' way. But in the very best way. Even if those idealistic recruits get taught otherwise by cynical seniors in a police academy, I know that most of them joined with really high aspirations.

Peter Martin: *Do you think that EBP can help policing sustain that idealism, in the*

face of all the negative experiences police officers must endure?

Lawrence Sherman: That is exactly what one officer told me in Minneapolis, after he helped to plan the first experiment testing arrest for domestic common assault. I asked him why he said he did not want to join the experiment when it was rolled out the following week. He said 'I'm pretty burned out, and getting ready to retire. I don't want to work on this experiment because I am afraid it would make me really like my job again, and I don't want to risk that.'

Since then, hundreds of other officers who did work on experiments told me that they did change their outlook on policing—becoming more committed and enjoying their work more, because of their engagement with the research.

Peter Martin: *With respect to EBP and looking ahead—what do you see the future looking like?*

Lawrence Sherman: I think the future is still uncertain. It is very much about leadership, and politics, and what some people call the 'post-factual society.' I am cautiously pessimistic, and I never thought I would live to see a Society of Evidence-Based Policing formed by police professionals in any country—let alone five! So I get pleasantly surprised. And I will continue to do all I can to spread a culture of EBP across the world, especially in some of the most violent nations, including some in Latin America.

Peter Martin: *Where can police professionals go to find out more about your research publications and training videos?*

Lawrence Sherman: You can easily find us on Google at **Cambridge-ebp.net** where you can register as an associate member of the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing. We have many free publications and videos available for viewing, and some for downloads, as well as information about how police from around the world are able to study for and take the examination to become certified as a 'Champion of Evidence-Based Policing.'

Peter Martin: *Finally, Larry, when will you be coming back to Australia or New Zealand?*

Lawrence Sherman: Not soon enough! As you know, Peter, I have two fast-growing grandsons in Canberra I want to see at least once a year, not to mention their parents, so I visit Australia every December. And I hope to see you, too, as well as your QPS colleagues, before too long. Many thanks for your kind invitation to share these thoughts with the ANZ SEBP. I wish to all the best for your continued growth and success.

Vice Chair and Founder, Society of Evidence Based Policing, United Kingdom **Chief Superintendent Murray** graduated from Birmingham University in 1996 and joined West Midlands Police where he worked in CID and uniform roles in the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton.

In 2008, he graduated from Cambridge University, with a Master's degree in Criminology.

His thesis developed the understanding of police legitimacy within Muslim communities. He is a tactical firearms and public order commander. He has been the Commander of Birmingham East Local Policing Unit and now is responsible for the policing in Solihull where he is working to integrate local government and policing services. He is passionate about involving the community in reducing crime and has led West Midlands Police on preventing violent extremism.

He is the founder of the Society of Evidence Based Policing and has introduced randomised control trials into West Midlands Police as a means of understanding what works in reducing harm and providing value for money. In 2014, he received the Superintendents award for Excellence in Policing and has been recognised by George Mason University's Centre for Evidence-Based Policing. He is a visiting scholar at Cambridge University, has been associate director of the Cambridge Indian Police Service Training Programme and was part of the UK National Disaster Victim Identification Team.

The Society of Evidence Based Policing is a movement within policing that has three aims:

1. to use the best research evidence out there in the roles we are in today
2. to produce that research evidence ourselves or in partnership with others
3. to communicate that evidence to other practitioners.

SEBP exists in the UK (where it is now a charity), Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the States and more and more countries are eager to move in this direction too.

It is run by volunteers from within the police and professional researchers—they hold down full time jobs doing other things so the organisation is inevitably rough at the edges—but this is perhaps its beauty too, as everyone involved begins to practice what they preach.

I was fortunate enough to do a Cambridge Masters where as an officer of twelve years' service I was first exposed to criminology (from Professor Tony Bottoms) and then to the principles of 'What Works' from Professor Lawrence Sherman. I had ended up doing this degree by chance but was confounded by its relevance: Why did no-one ever teach me this before? Sherman will talk about how universities invaded hospitals as rigorous science became the norm in medicine. There needs to be something similar in policing—with at least police officers

using their natural curiosity to understand more effectively what works, what does not, and why.

SEBP started as a proposal in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral in the UK in a conversation with Heather Strang and Larry Sherman. How could the latest evidence be disseminated to maximise its impact? How we can get some great stuff out of journals and onto the streets? How can we distinguish between what is good evidence and what is not? And importantly, how can this happen without having to invest the time and money on a degree? SEBP aimed to be the channel though which this could be achieved. Conferences are now held around the world where the latest evidence is highlighted, ideas are spread and connections made. Numerous experiments were born at these conferences, as ideas were planted and partnerships with professional researchers established. The conferences often challenge our preconceptions and require us to not only think differently but to work differently.

SEBP Regional co-ordinators create local meetings where evidence is disseminated and testing new ways of working is encouraged. Websites, twitter feeds and soon-to-arrive podcasts aim to communicate new evidence quickly. SEBP members have been asked to sit on regional and national bodies with the remit of ensuring that policy is evidence based. Each country's SEBP is loosely affiliated at the moment, but the connections are growing stronger.

There is also an increasing realisation that in developing countries there is one organisation that can protect the vulnerable more than anyone else and that is the police. Sadly though the police can often contribute to vulnerability rather than prevent it (I would encourage everyone to read 'The Locust Effect', Haugen, 2014, www.thelocusteffect.com).

At the same time philanthropists like Bill Gates are becoming smarter and themselves taking an evidence based approach (Fiennes, 2012, see **www.giving-evidence.com**). SEBP as a movement within policing then has a great opportunity to transform lives not only in the West but increasingly internationally as professionals within those countries take personal responsibility for driving improvements with support from development funding.

Please join SEBP and become involved, not because you will get a great membership card and professional literature through the post, but because you want to continue to learn, to professionalise what you do and most importantly, maximise the transformative effect that good policing can have.

Reference

The Cathedral was bombed in the War and now stands as a symbol of reconciliation; perhaps a natural piece of serendipity as much of Heather Strang's work has demonstrated the effectiveness of restorative justice.

Renée J. Mitchell has served in the Sacramento Police Department for seventeen years and is currently a Police Sergeant.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of California, Davis, a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from the University of San Francisco, a Master of Business Administration from the California State University, Sacramento, and a Juris Doctorate from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, where she was awarded an academic scholarship.

She was the 2009/2010 Fulbright Police Research Fellow where she attended the University of Cambridge Police Executive Program and completed research in the area of juvenile gang violence at the London Metropolitan Police Service. She is a Police Foundation Fellow and is currently a Jerry Lee Scholar in the Institute of Criminology, at the University of Cambridge where she is completing a PhD.

Her doctoral dissertation is based on a 15 minute high visibility intermittent random patrol hot spot policing program conducted in Sacramento, CA with the Sacramento Police Department. Sergeant Mitchell's hot spot study won the 2012 International Association of Chiefs of Police Excellence in Law Enforcement Research Silver Award. She is also the President of the newly organised American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. Her two latest projects are randomised control studies at the Portland Police Bureau. The first is a procedural justice/communication course studying the effects of the training on officers' beliefs and the public's perception of police legitimacy.

The second is a hot spot study on the effects of community engagement in hot spots of crime. Renée's primary research interests are place-based policing, procedural justice, police legitimacy, police training, communication, and evidence based policing. She has lectured internationally on evidence based policing, hot spot policing, crime analysis, procedural justice, police legitimacy, police training, and police leadership.

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand or more perilous to conduct… than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things ~ Niccolo Machiavelli

Within the past decade, police leaders in democratic nations across the globe have started to recognise the importance of evidence based policing. Evidence based policing simply suggests that police practices should be based upon scientific evidence about what works best (Sherman, 1998).

This appreciation is a result of increased demands for accountability by the public, forced reductions and shared services through austerity and an emphasis on advanced learning for those who wish to attain the senior ranks within their respective agencies. Organisations designed to increase the acceptance and use of such practices have been established in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and have collectively worked to incorporate research findings at both the operational and policy levels.

For example, in the United Kingdom, the College of Policing has been established as a central professional body designed to review policing practices to ensure they are based upon sound evidence and continues to drive research in British policing. Unfortunately, such a national agenda is more difficult to institute in the United States as it faces a policing system comprised of different standards, rules, and agendas. Despite these differences however, informed police leaders are recognizing that scientific findings from around the world can have implications for their agencies and the formation of these global groups can increase the flow of information at an ever-expanding rate.

There are more questions than answers when it comes to the current practices and strategies being used in American Policing. A patchwork of hiring, training and operational standards exists, resulting in a fragmented approach to policing across the nation. This salmagundi of practices stems from officers relying on experience over research and using few tools to learn about research (Telep & Lum, 2014).

Even with tools available research findings are not being uniformly communicated to those who drive police policy, resulting in the continuation of ineffective practices based solely upon tradition and instinct (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2013). Science can be a foundational paradigm that moves American policing away from fractured practices towards a more united evidenced-based approach.

The American Society of Evidence-Based Policing (ASEBP) intends to facilitate this paradigm shift by building policing practices using a scientific infrastructure. The ASEBP was created in strategic partnership with the Police Foundation in Washington, DC. It is a non-profit organisation designed to drive the national conversation towards ensuring that the least harmful, most effective, fairest and safest research-based strategies are employed to prevent crime, reduce harm and improve community wellness.

Currently evidence based policing (EBP) is advanced in the United States through two mechanisms: federal government grant funding and universities creating partnerships with police departments to engage in research.

The missing link is practitioner involvement: both in the production of research and promoting the use of the evidence. ASEBP bridges this gap through membership comprised of practitioners and academics. It is designed to advocate, educate, and facilitate the use of research in policing through a mixed media approach using direct involvement of the officers that police our society on a daily basis.

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CAN-SEBP

Laura Huey is the Director of the Canadian Society of Evidence Based Policing and Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Ontario.

She is also a member of the Council of Canadian Academies' Expert Panel on the Future of Policing Models, a member of the Board of the Smart Cyber-Security Network and a Senior Researcher and University Representative for the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society. Laura is also the London Police Service Research Fellow and sits on the Research & Policy Committee of the Canadian Association of Police Governance.

The Canadian Society of Evidence Based Policing (CAN-SEBP) is a voluntary network of police, researchers, educators and public safety groups dedicated to creating actionable policing research.

Launched in April 2015, our network has steadily grown to include three types of members:

Partners: 11 police organisations, 7 universities, 5 police education, governance and/or community safety groups

Collaborators: 26 active and retired police leaders, university researchers, college educators and interested others

Members: 173 police officers, police analysts, graduate students, researchers, educators, community safety group members, police governance officials.

We espouse four core tenets of Evidence Based Policing (EBP):

1. scientific research has a role to play in developing effective and efficient policing programs

2. research produced must meet standards of methodological rigor and be useful to policing

3. results should be easily translatable into everyday police practice and policy

4. research should be the outcome of a blending of police experience with academic research skills (sources: Telep and Lum 2014; Sherman 2015).

To promote EBP, we have adopted two roles: **knowledge broker** and **knowledge mobiliser**. As a knowledge broker, we use our resources to help police agencies, researchers and funders to find each and co-develop policing and community safety research projects. On occasion, we have also provided other resource support, by lining up police agencies with external expertise and advice on policing research issues.

As a knowledge mobiliser, we work to not only promote evidence based policing research, but to share research and EBP knowledge as widely as possible. This includes not only speaking on EBP at conferences, workshops and other events, and creating a series of open access summaries of existing research, but also developing EBP course materials and curricula for both college and police lecture halls (online and in the real world).

Each year CAN-SEBP is dedicated to creating a set of annual objectives. In 2016 we have committed to the following projects:

a. regional EBP workshops across Canada

b. a video clip project for which we will tape 10 minutes segments on EBP research and themes from across the globe

c. establishing Research Fellows at police organisations across Canada

d. establishing EBP research grants for graduate students to encourage greater research production

e. creating the replication & reproduction project to replicate existing research as a means of building our evidence base and generating the highest degree of confidence possible in those interventions, strategies, policies and programs that we promote as 'what works'.

To access any of our resources, or to follow our news and events, we can be found at:

Website: www.can_sebp.net
Twitter: @can_sebp
Instagram: cansebp
Facebook: Canadian Society of Evidence Based Policing

For more information, you can also contact our Director:
Dr. Laura Huey, University of Western Ontario: lhuey@uwo.ca
Or our Deputy Director:
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Policing isn't a science. If it was anyone could do it.

Chief Superintendent Alex Murray

Introduction

Billie Bean is the manager of the Oakland A's baseball team. They are mid table and struggling, but can't get the money to buy the players the scouts identify. The manager turns to a statistician. First, they work out what the problem with their team is, then they look at what solutions are needed. Finally, they scan the market for players that fit those requirements but rely less on the expertise of the scout and more on the verifiable performance of the player. In essence, the statistician, using an algorithm, identifies the players. It draws Billy Bean into an argument with his team of scouts.

> Baseball isn't a science, if it was anybody could do it. They don't know what we know, they don't have our intuition, they don't have our experience. There are intangibles that baseball people don't understand. You're discounting what scouts have done for the last 150 years.

The Oakland A's go on to win twenty games in a row. This true story has been made into a film, *Moneyball*, where Brad Pitt plays Billie Bean. It tells the story about how baseball became evidence based. The methodology has now been widely adopted throughout the sport and is increasingly common in football.

The majority of people join the police because they want to make a difference. We learn on the job from our experience and the experience of our peers. Like the scouts for the Oakland A's we develop a nose for what works and what does not. Unlike *Moneyball* though, evidence based policing never seeks to replace that experience but instead complement it with a scientific approach about what works and what does not.

A lot of people say a lot of things about policing. We are not short of policy think tanks making recommendations, politicians expressing views, reviews with recommendations following tragedies, charities writing reports, national bodies creating infrastructure or academics publishing articles. A lot of this is invaluable and should be welcomed. The trouble is that real change will not take place in policing unless the police themselves drive that change and design the future for a professional service.

ANZSEBP is an organisation that does just that. ANZSEBP was set up by police officers, open to all and with the sole purpose of encouraging the use, communication and production of applied research evidence. Applied research evidence that will enable officers and police staff to better realise their ambition of making a difference.

This is important, because somewhere from the point we decided to join this great profession and where we are now, some lose sight about what matters. What matters is that we make a difference. But the question is 'how do you know you have made a difference?' The quandary is seen in the narrative of senior officers who will attribute crime reductions to their outstanding leadership and launching of operations. The same leader will tell a different story when crime goes up. It may be socio-economic conditions, police numbers, immigration, poverty, drug markets or the weather, but I have never heard the senior leader say it was down to their poor leadership. We cannot have it both ways. Knowing you have made a difference can be seen in the definition Cloud (2006) gives to integrity:

> Having the courage to meet the demands of reality.

This is hugely relevant for policing. We need to push the definition of police integrity beyond not being racist, stealing or abuse of power (Murray, 2013) and engage in the mission of understanding what causes crime, what is the reality of what we actually do on the ground and what is the effect of our actions. There is only one way to do this and that is to adopt an evidenced based approach to our profession.

Evidence Based Policing

The formulation of modern scientific method has been attributed to Karl Popper and taking an evidence based approach to policing puts scientific method at the heart of what we do (Sherman, 1997).

A not-so evidence-based police leader may sound like this

> Team, theft of mobile phones is up in the city-centre. It is going to be groups of immigrants working in gangs. So we need to crack down on it, increase the searches and send a strong message that it will not be tolerated.

Those who watch crime figures will know that generally they go up and they go down. An operation normally starts when a crime peaks, crime then goes down (often called regression to the mean). The above police leader can now claim victory when perhaps in reality nothing has happened (apart from perhaps creating a problem around police legitimacy in a hard-to-reach population group).

The evidence based police leader would notice that mobile phone theft is up but would now start working on creating and then trying to disprove hypotheses. Is it immigrants? (What is the evidence?), is it people being targeted because they are drunk in the night time economy? (What is the evidence?), is it people reporting their phones stolen because they need a crime number? (What is the evidence?), is it opportunists? (What is the evidence?). If there is no evidence, you have an intelligence requirement. The police leader hasn't even started working on tactics yet. Perhaps the evidence pointed to four main pubs in the city and victims being people on a night out. What works in these situations? Police presence? Advice notices? Plain clothed officers? CCTV? Well trained door staff? A mix of all? (in which case, which has the greatest impact? Because that is where we should focus our scarce time and money).

If there is evidence about which tactic works then use it. Otherwise you need to employ a testing framework to understand what is most effective. In this example then the evidence-based police leader makes an assessment and decides on hot spot patrol of the four main pubs where the problem is most acute. What then, are the officers actually doing? Are they in the hot spots at exactly the right time and what are they saying to customers? Increasingly it is obvious that what we say we do and what we actually do are profoundly different things. What is equally important as 'what works' is 'what happens'.

A useful synthesis of this approach is Sherman's 'Triple T' approach to policing (Sherman, 2013). The old style of policing is confined to the three 'R's. Random patrol, reactive investigation and responding to incidents. The evidence based approach adopts the three 'T' s. Firstly, using good data we *target* effectively. In an era of scarce resources we focus on where the greatest problem is. The most prolific offenders, the repeat victims, the crimes that can actually be solved, the cost effective interventions or the highest crime areas. The pareto principle is important here (80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes). The second 'T' is to test tactics. Certain methods enable us to understand whether a tactic we are engaging in is having a desired effect or not (see below). Finally, the third 'T' tracks what is really happening. Are officers doing what was decided? What are the outcomes? The advent of body worn video and GPS proves invaluable in this area.

Methods

An evidence based approach first understands what the problem is, it then tests a tactic and measures outcomes and outputs. There are different methods to get an answer to the question you are posing and these can be quantitative or qualitative.

Qualitative methods like focus groups, ethnographic research or observation often help understand the 'Why?' type of question. 'Why did you target that house to burgle? Why did you attack that victim?' Quantitative approaches are useful in assisting the 'what?' type of question. Quantitative methods become increasingly useful as data becomes cleaner and data sets more sophisticated. 'Which hot spot shall I target? Which offenders pose the greatest risk? Which crimes shall I file and which ones should I allocate for investigation?'

When we move into the area of testing an intervention the Maryland Scale (Sherman, 2007) can be a useful device in deciding how you evaluate what you are doing. It is a scale of the effectiveness of evaluation techniques. Level two describes where much of policing is now and can be termed the 'before and after approach'. You have a crime rate, engage in a tactic, observe the crime rate and then attribute the reduction in crime to your tactic. This is the least effective method of evaluation because so much can affect crime rates outside the tactic you are engaged in. There have been many spurious claims made about the effect of police operations using this method. A better approach is level three, which is the use of a test and control group. Engage in the police tactic in the test area and not in a similar control area. If crime goes down in both test and control you know it is less likely to be as a result of your operation. But to make this evaluation more effective move to level four on the Maryland Scale and have multiple test and control groups and look at averages in the test areas against averages on the control. Finally, there is a problem with picking test and control groups and that is the fact that we inherently want our operation to work. We pick the test areas and the control areas because we know what will work where; this is often referred to as 'selection bias' and can be combatted using randomisation. Level five on the scale then is the randomised control trial (RCT), often referred to as the gold standard in scientific research. If you want to get published in a journal (perhaps like this one) you will need a high level of academic rigor. We in policing, however, do not always operate in the world of journals, so to become more evidence based we can take easy steps like embracing test and control groups when engaging in an operation—that will be much more effective in informing our responses than relying on the unreliable approach of 'before and after'.

To put some perspective on this the following sections use violence and the policing of hot spots as two examples of where an evidence based approach is useful.

Violence

A well-known Peelian principle is that the measure of success of the police would be the prevention of crime rather than solely its detection. This is where evidence can sometimes become inconvenient. Petrosino et al. (2010) concluded the following from a systematic review of available evidence:

Based on the evidence presented in this report, juvenile system processing appears to not have a crime control effect, and across all measures appears to increase delinquency.

His research suggested that rather than reducing crime—putting young people through the criminal justice system *increased* it. So the criminal justice system created rather than reduced victimisation. If our job is to prevent crime we have a problem here. Our role is to prevent crime but much of our activity is focused on compiling evidence for

prosecution that does little more than potentially add to the problem. Acting on this evidence, West Midlands Police in the UK commenced operation Turning Point (Sherman and Neyroud, 2012). Offenders at point of charge were randomly allocated to go to court as usual (the control group) or to be diverted to an offender manager (test). The offender manager would try to understand from the offender why the crime happened (the cause) and then set an action plan to address that cause. If the offender complied with the action plan, after six months they were free to go with no criminal record. Comparisons were then made over time with the frequency of rearrests and harm caused by both the test and control group. Early results appear promising, particularly in the area of violent crime, but it is too early to be commented on here. It is however an example of how a police service focused on reducing crime can test alternative methods of policing in a way that allows for real outcomes to be measured.

Any medical practitioner will tell you that for a treatment to be demonstrated as effective it needs to be replicated again and again. This assists in understanding whether the effect of the intervention is local or universal (often referred to as internal and external validity). This experiment is currently being replicated in Western Australia as well as in another force in the UK.

Domestic violence is also an area of great concern for most police forces, yet it is one of the areas that is full of un-evidenced assumptions of what works and what does not. We all know for example that domestic violence gets worse over time both in frequency and seriousness. We know that arrest is best. We also know that the average complainant will have been assaulted 28 times before they call the police. Recent evidence though has started to unseat these assumptions. Sherman and Harris (2015) demonstrated that arrest and incarceration as opposed to official warnings and staying at home, led to an increase in the death rate (for any cause) by 64% following one trial in Milwaukee. Bland and Ariel (2015) examined 36000 domestic violence dyads (couples) in Suffolk, England and found little evidence in increasing severity and frequency over time: 76% of couples were a one-off call to the police and 80% of the harm was restricted to 2% of all partnerships. Strang and Neyroud (2014) have demonstrated that the 28 assaults before calling the police assertion has been based on unsound assumptions. It is, as they describe, a *'mythical number'*.

Rehabilitation for domestic violence perpetrators is still a controversial concept but a recent experiment in Hampshire, England has begun to test in this area. Called Operation CARA, low risk domestic violence perpetrators were randomly allocated to two treatments. The control was a conditional caution that required no reoffending within six months, the test was the same but with the additional requirement that they attended two four hour workshops largely based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy. The experiment has been conducted in partnership with Cambridge University and is awaiting publication. The results show a statistically significant reduction on charges by over 50% for those who attended the workshop (compared to control).

Here then, we see how detailed analysis and experimentation has highlighted that all may not be as it seems in how we target violence.

Hot Spots

We all know that when we police an area, crime moves around the corner. Rarely does a day go by without an officer stating that they conducted an operation in an area, they achieved a grip on crime, but as a result it has increased in the neighbouring area. Evidence around hot spots is now strong and Stockholm prize winner David Wesiburd demonstrated that the concept of 'moving crime around the corner' is largely a fallacy (Weisburd et al. 2006). Instead, and counter-intuitively, there is a 'diffusion of benefit'. His experiment in New Jersey monitored hot spot patrol in high crime street segments. He also analysed data in the surrounding areas where there was no extra police presence. His findings indicated there was more likely to be a diffusion of benefit rather than the displacement of crime. In the spirit of scientific method this has been replicated many times and the

most recent systematic reviews in this area show the same to be true (Braga et al. 2014). Interestingly, what you do in hot spots is more important than simply being there—with problem solving being the preferred tactic.

There is no doubt that most police forces do hot spots but what actually takes place in those hot spots and what the results are would largely be unknown. Superintendent Jo Smallwod from West Midlands Police in partnership with Barak Ariel, Cambridge built a hot spot model where community support officers were used (uniformed, non-warranted officers). Geo-fences were used to cover defined small areas and officers were required to patrol in 15 minute bursts[1] three times a day. Groups of hot spots were randomly allocated to test and control. The results (awaiting publication) were positive, indicating a net reduction in crime and incidents of anti-social behaviour in the test areas compared to the control areas (where hot spots are also supposedly targeted). This was also great evidence on the crime-reduction effects of community support officers whose purpose is often considered to be solely community engagement.

Little Ones

Not all experiments have to be like this and not all experiments have to be published, although it does assist the greater good of policing as other police officers can learn from what you have been through. In 2013, satisfaction in my area for victims of vehicle crime deteriorated significantly, largely because we stopped visiting them as a matter of routine. We needed to understand what would work in increasing that satisfaction without reversing the policy. Inspector Ruth Lockyer conducted an experiment where we called back victims of vehicle crime to assist with any further questions they had, but we did this on a random basis using Excel. The officer doing call backs was restricted from active duty. We then measured satisfaction rates between those receiving the call back (test group) and those not (the control). The difference in satisfaction could then be measured against the cost of using an officer in this way. In this case there was a small increase in satisfaction by making the telephone call.

Similarly, the division that I am currently responsible for policing now suffers high rates of theft from insecure vehicles and many neighbourhood officers will try car door handles and inform the owner of the car that the vehicle is insecure. Does this have an effect on the crime rate? We will only find out by ensuring that the tactic is completed in two test areas and not in two controls and comparing the before and after rates. Community Officer Dave Monk is leading on this piece of work.

Neither of these experiments will be published, but assist in making local policy decisions on evidence that, whilst imperfect, is still better than we had before.

The Society of Evidence Based Policing (SEBP)

We have spoken about how to change policing for the better. Action needs to be taken within policing, by front line officers and leaders who are serving the community every day. The Society of Evidence Based Policing started as a group of officers who recognised that there was an opportunity to make that change through conferences and spreading the knowledge of how to get to what works. Whilst it is essential that external organisations advocate for an evidence based approach or assist in providing some of the infrastructure to enable it to operate, it is only the police themselves who can make transformation happen. This is where SEBP can operate—challenging the prevailing attitudes and practices that police officers use every day. The symbiosis between SEBP and national infrastructure can be seen in relationships that have developed in the UK between SEBP and the College of Policing. The college provides frameworks

for promotion that can stress the importance of evidence, they can provide expert advice, and importantly, they have the capacity to synthesise evidence. For example, the 'What Works' center **(http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Briefings/Pages/default.aspx**) provides an understandable synopsis of the evidence around police tactics (in the form of systematic reviews). The acronym EMMIE assists in the translation of this evidence Johnson et al. 2015).

> E—the overall effect direction and size (alongside major unintended effects) of an intervention and the confidence that should be placed on that estimate
>
> M—the mechanisms/mediators activated by the policy, practice or program in question
>
> M—the moderators/contexts relevant to the production/non-production of intended and major unintended effects of different sizes
>
> I—the key sources of success and failure in implementing the policy, practice or program
>
> E—the economic costs (and benefits) associated with the policy, practice or program. (Johnson et al. 2015, p.463)

Recent additions to the 'What Works' centre include the efficacy of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as an offender management tool, the impact of restorative justice and the value neighbourhood watch. The evidence suggests these policies really work. The absence of the use of these tactics in the mainstream is then somewhat surprising and demonstrates where the relationship between SEBP and central policy makers has utility. SEBP has police officers at the heart of its membership and it is these officers who can look at the evidence and start using it. Change in any organisation though is challenging. Much literature identifies that there will be blockages and frustrations. The police service becoming evidence based is not short of obstacles.

The Challenges

1. Police culture

A senior police officer once referred to EBP as 'academic bullshit'. An analysis of the debate around levels of education needed for policing highlights the strong emotions felt in this arena. It is natural to polarize what you are not. A false dichotomy emerges in the area of EBP: the academic police officer versus the practical police officer, ivory towers versus time on the street, brains versus brawn, common sense versus analysis. The dichotomy is false because a good police leader, like a good doctor, should have the personal experience to be credible. Equally they should not accept the status quo, should be professionally curious and be able to make decisions based on good evidence. To understand what constitutes good evidence and how to commission it must therefore also be a skill for a police leader.

2. The methods war

Most police officers are not trained in research methods. Most academics are and have their preferred method through which they have established their professional reputation. University criminology departments have a penchant for a particular method depending on where their expertise rests. Much has been written about evidence based policing and a significant amount of it has been arguments around methods. Academics who conduct RCTs are coined as 'randomistas' (see Sparrow, 2011 for a comprehensive critique of evidence based approaches). Quantitative measures are deemed unfit for the social sciences. Qualitative academics have been hastily disregarded and don't feature in systematic reviews of evidence. This can be bewildering for a police audience particularly as force areas are situated in localities where partnerships emerge with local universities—who may be for or against an evidence based approach or interpret

the meaning of 'evidence' with such relativity that it carries no meaning at all. 'Evidence Based' in some areas has come to mean that a university is involved in evaluation. At its most common and sadly its worst, this means a large scale operation is conducted, a university is often paid to evaluate it and what is provided is a descriptive analysis of what took place with an attempt at analysis that may lean more towards correlation than causation. The report sits on a shelf until a new leader occupies the office and puts it in the bin.

There is no easy way around this problem other than the evaluation should be designed at the start of an operation or project and the method should reflect the research question being asked.

3. Inertia

Another trait of police culture, some would say, is a certain amount of organisational arrogance. This can be seen in the response you often receive when presenting evidence, *'I know that, we do it all ready'* (think especially about procedural justice or hot spots as an example). It's only when you challenge that, using observational methods or test and control groups, that we find out that what we know happens actually does not. There are three reasons why good evidence is not replicated or adopted in another police area and I ask you to consider how many times you have heard the following:

a. 'We do it already'

b. 'We did that and it didn't work'

c. 'It's different here'

Some have noted that there is a correlation between these rejections and the size of the force in question, but that is just an assertion and would need to be tested.

When officers are faced with the above challenges and meet reactions like this, the easiest thing to do is to continue doing what is expected, what you have always done. Stepping out and exposing your reputation and career is difficult. Chief Ed Flyn of Milwaukee (who authorised the first randomised control trial testing warnings versus arrests) once stated:

Failing conventionally is always the safest option.

If crime goes up, a leader more senior than you will look at what you did—if you did everything that leader would have done then you are okay. If you did something different, even something based on evidence, and crime rose—then that is where you become exposed.

This is where organisations like SEBP can assist. Senior management support can be built and space provided to experiment with concepts and new ways of working.

There are a number of things that a police officer of service can do right now to become more evidence based.

1. If you want to deal with a particular problem—first look at what the good evidence is out there. The University Of Queensland has set up the first global policing database (which is still being developed) but can be found at **http://www.gpd.uq.edu.au/search.php**

2. Get research under the belt. Start simple. Are you about to launch an operation? Try testing whether it really has the outcome you are aiming for.

3. Build partnerships with local academics. We have spoken about how they have the expertise in methods. At the same time we have the data and exposure. There is a great symbiosis where we exchange access for their methods. Academics are more than ever remunerated for demonstrating *impact.* No money needs to change hands.

4. Statistics. None of us really like it but it is important and there needs to be analysts within your force area who do understand and can teach others about it.

5. Foster the right culture. Try to end the argument between university versus school of life. Recognise utility in both experience and evidence based approaches.

6. Define best practice. A force that requires an evidence based approach to claims of crime reduction will enforce rigorous standards. Control groups will become the norm and the force will have more integrity around the claims it makes around reductions.

Conclusion

Australia and New Zealand have some of the best police officers in the world and will continue to operate well, with or without adopting an evidence based approach. The important question though is whether that is enough. Is there space amongst years of valuable experience and much common sense for policy decisions made on blending those skills with empirical data and solid evaluative methods? If there is, how should this evidence based approach be inculcated into the DNA of an organisation to the extent that it becomes second nature? Hopefully, this short article has articulated that there is space for this approach, that we do not know everything, that some activity we are engaged in right now is harmful and that the communities we serve should accept only the best. It has also indicated that it will be far from easy. Some will adopt an evidence based approach—find it difficult and revert to what has always been done. Others will criticize from the margins. Some though will become evidence based. They will make gains that no doubt will appear marginal but when aggregated, provide the difference between success and failure. It is those officers who will do more than most to professionalise what we do.

If SEBP stands for anything it is to encourage police officers and staff to start building evidence in the work place now. Evidence needs to go from being fringe to mainstream. I look forward to the day when SEBP no longer exists, in the same way that evidence based medicine seems somewhat anachronistic.

End Notes

1. Demonstrated by Koper (1995) as being the most effective time an officer could spend in a hot spot

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The importance of evidence based policing for the thinking professional police officer

Dr Victoria Herrington, AIPM

Introduction

There has been much discussion in recent years about evidence based policing (EBP). Policy documents across the world refer to evidence based policing; it has made its way into the lexicon of police officers at all levels of the organisation; and—alongside evidence based practice in other disciplines—governments are increasingly requiring hard evidence that public monies are being spent in the most efficient and effective way possible.

But is EBP just another fad? Is it the preoccupation of a couple of academically minded senior officers keen to change business for change, or promotion's, sake? Or is it a more fundamental challenge to the way policing practice is done. The title of this paper somewhat telegraphs the author's opinion and the paper's conclusion. The aim is to convince you—the police practitioner—that evidence based policing is vitally important to the future of your work on the street and in our communities. In doing this, this paper will explore the challenge for EBP in gaining traction in our police organisations, and the need for individual efforts throughout the hierarchy to be complemented by a broader transition to innovative, agile, learning organisations.

To add weight—dare we even say 'evidence'—to what might otherwise seem a series of self-serving opinions, this paper will draw on two bodies of work. The first is a series of three roundtable discussions that were held at the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM) in late 2015 and early 2016. These workshops bought together academics, police officers, and others from government and non-government organisations interested in advancing the conversation about the value of research and academic insights to issues of public safety. An organisational attendance list for the three workshops can be found at the end of this paper so as to be transparent about the breadth of perspectives represented. The second body of work this paper draws on is the National Police Research Inventory, which was a piece of scoping research undertaken by the AIPM to ascertain the amount and type of academic research on policing currently underway (or recently completed) in Australian universities. Full details about this research are available on the AIPM website, and a summary of the information gleaned will be presented as appropriate here.

Characterising the AIPM Roundtables

A total of 51 people representing 16 organisations attended at least one of the three roundtables on research in policing held at the AIPM. These roundtables were held on the 10th and 11th of November 2015, and on the 29th February 2016. The aim of these roundtables was to bring together those with a self-declared interest in the use of research in policing, and advance a conversation about how research could be most effectively used to support the strategic leadership aims of our organisations. The catalyst for these roundtables were the AIPM's 2015 and 2016 Professors in Residence—Professor Betsy Stanko from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London; and Professor Gloria Laycock from University College London—respectively. The AIPM Professor in Residence program seeks to invite esteemed academics to the AIPM for two weeks a year to support the AIPM and Australian policing in its understanding of contemporary issues. In 2015 and 2016 one of the most salient themes in policing was evidence based policing, and the role that research could play in assisting public safety

organisations deal with both complicated and complex problems (see Herrington and Colvin, 2016 for more on the complicated and complex environment). Each roundtable session comprised a number of short, 10 minute, thought provoking presentations that stimulated more detailed group discussion. During these sessions the importance of EBP was explored, as were the hurdles to EBP, and examples of the successful use of research evidence in everyday policing. The ideas presented in this paper emerged from the contributions made by workshop participants, and can be grouped around four key themes emerged:

- What is the *evidence* in evidence based policing and how can research evidence help police organisations?

- Why does good research evidence fail to get traction in police organisations?

- How can police organisations organise their EBP endeavours?

- What broader organisational and cultural change is required in order for EBP to thrive?

This paper will consider each of these points in turn, as a way to broaden the conversation further and provide insights into how these issues are being discussed across Australia and New Zealand.
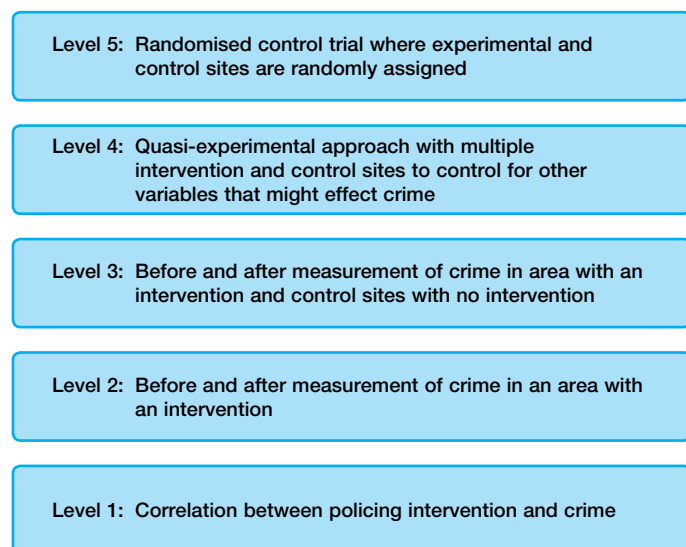
What is evidence?

There is much academic debate about what we mean by 'evidence' when we talk about EBP and a range of esteemed and well respected senior academics and practitioners hold diametrically opposed views. For many in the world of practical policing this is unhelpful and can be dismissed as academic bickering. But who are we to believe and how are we to navigate this debate in a way that helps us move forward with EBP? It helps to bear in mind that all engaged in such debates, on whatever side of the fence they sit, share a deep and passionate belief that research can help police organisations address their public safety challenges. They simply differ in their opinions on the way in which this help can be best offered. The first step for the practitioner is to better understand the main components of this debate, to be better able to judge for her or himself the relative merits.[1]

Perhaps the most well documented conflict of opinion within the EBP movement is the notion of **methodological quality.** Methodological quality refers simply to the extent to which the way you collect research data increases or decreases the chances that you will be able to reliably answer the research question that you have posed. It is more accurately about **methodological suitability** to the question being posed. However within EBP, conversations about research methodology and quality/suitability have been dominated by an assumption that the only question worth asking is the evaluative one of 'what works'. And as a result, methodological quality has become associated with how best to determine *cause and effect*. There has been a lot of work by academics to determine what the best methodology is to determine cause and effect, and an approach called randomised control trials has often come out on top.[2] Unfortunately, as the EBP debate has progressed, the terms 'evidence' and *'randomised control trials'* have started to be used interchangeably, with other sorts of research often dismissed as low quality.

In the view of this author—and among many that attended the roundtables—this is misleading.

'What works' is an important question for police organisations to ask, of course, and evaluating policies or practices for their intended outcome is an important focus for those engaged in EBP. As mentioned above, to help policymakers and practitioners get a better sense of how to determine 'what works', scholars have developed a hierarchy of methodologies, which is represented in the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (MSMS) (Farrington et al., 2002) (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Maryland Scientific Methods Scale

Level 5: Randomised control trial where experimental and control sites are randomly assigned

Level 4: Quasi-experimental approach with multiple intervention and control sites to control for other variables that might effect crime

Level 3: Before and after measurement of crime in area with an intervention and control sites with no intervention

Level 2: Before and after measurement of crime in an area with an intervention

Level 1: Correlation between policing intervention and crime

(Adapted from Farrington et al. 2002)

While the randomised control trial (RCT) is often lauded as the 'gold-standard' for evaluation methodology, there are a couple of important things to bear in mind:

• The MSMS is not a general measure of **research quality.** There are many high quality qualitative and quantitative methods that would score very low on the MSMS, but would be ideal when answering research questions other than *cause and effect.* Practitioners and others engaged in the EBP debate have a responsibility to be clear that all good quality research has value to policing in different ways, and as such RCTs can only be regarded as the most appropriate methodology when answering questions of *cause and effect.*

• The MSMS is not without its critiques and has (self-declared) flaws, but because the overriding aim of the scale was that it be simple to communicate and 'all methods of improving the MSMS would make it more complicated, less meaningful, and less easy to communicate', these flaws have not been attended to (Farrington et al., 2002: 19). For practitioners the take home message should be to not over-privilege the hierarchy as set out in the MSMS. It is not an uncontested 'truth' even if it serves as a useful rule of thumb (see for example critiques of RCTs as the best way to undertake evaluations by Hope, 2009; Hough, 2009; Tilley 2009).

• To extend this point further, while RCTs have an important place in establishing *cause and effect* in the scientific world (they are, after all the most important way in which new drugs are trialled in the medical sciences), the social world of policing presents different challenges. Chief among these difficulties is the issue of *group contamination,* which is when interventions designed for implementation in an 'experimental' group find their way into

a 'business-as-usual' control group. This might be because personnel move areas and take their new 'experimental' way of doing things with them; because the experimental and the control groups are close together and there is an overlap between personnel at shared facilities like hospitals, or courts; or because the experimental group does not implement the intervention, and continues with 'business-as-usual'. These logistical challenges are not insurmountable with monitoring and accountability, although this comes with resource implications.

• A related challenge to the value of RCTs in determining 'what works' concerns understanding the mechanisms at play. In the UK, the College of Policing's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction has synthesised reports from multiple crime reduction RCTs to determine not only whether an intervention 'works', but also how it works, where it works, and what it costs **(see: http://whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/Toolkit. aspx)**. What is painfully clear from this work is that, nothing works everywhere; but lots of things work somewhere, (G. Laycock, personal communication, 29th February 2016). This finding speaks volumes to the importance of context when determining 'what works' and reinforces that evaluating an initiative for only its outcome can only be part of the EBP story. If we do not have a theory on how something works (Stanko and Dawson, 2016) or the context in which it works (Hough, 2009), how can we be confident that it will work elsewhere? And if our solution to this ongoing uncertainly is to test it using another RCT in every new location, then how much return on investment are police organisations really seeing for their commitment to RCTs?

This is a difficulty well known to those who advocate for RCTs as well as those who do not. For example, Professor Larry Sherman articulated the ultimate aim (that is the ultimate 'return on investment') from multiple high quality *cause and effect* evaluations would be a repository of information accessible to all, which sets out what works (Sherman, 2009: 16). The certainty of an absolute guide to 'what works' is seductive, particularly for busy police officers trying to make a meaningful difference to public safety across the world. But experience through the UK's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction suggests it is unlikely that we will realise this goal because context is such an important piece of the puzzle in determining what is effective and where. This reason on its own underscores the importance of the EBP movement moving beyond a sole focus on RCTs to encompass multiple methodologies to determine 'what works'.

There is another reason to guard against confusing methodological appropriateness and RCTs when talking about EBP. And this is recognised by the Australia and New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing (ANZSEBP) in its mission statement: to 'develop, disseminate and advocate for police to use scientific research ("the evidence") to guide best practice in all aspects of policing.' (ANZSEBP website **http://www.anzsebp.com/8-anzsebp**). The aim to influence all areas of policing is much broader than establishing only cause and effect and 'what works' and recognises that the questions that police organisations have that can benefit from the insights generated by different types of research are multifaceted. By reinforcing that 'evidence' is not exclusively about 'RCTs', different types of research across a broad range of pressing questions become accessible. Without this *conscious uncoupling* of 'RCTs' and 'evidence', policing and EBP risk asking only those questions that can be answered using RCTs, or misusing RCTs as a methodological 'hammer' to attack every policing 'nail' (Tilley, 2009). Importantly it is the broad value that research and insights can have for police practitioners that is lost in the mix, and too the shared goal of all involved—that research can assist police in answering the pressing questions that they have about their practice.

Lost in translation: Why good research fails to have an impact on police organisations

Taking as our starting point for the remainder of this paper a broad understanding of what constitutes evidence in EBP, the roundtables discussed why important and meaningful research seemed to have little impact on police organisations and their practices. This is not a new phenomenon and in 2009 David Bradley and Christine Nixon highlighted this problem using the term first coined by MacDonald in 1987, 'the dialogue of the deaf'. (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2: The Dialogue of the Deaf

The dialogue of the deaf	
Academic:	Why do the police ignore research findings?
Police:	Why don't researchers produce useable knowledge?
Academic:	Why do the police always reject any study that is critical of what they do?
Police:	Why do researchers always show the police in a bad light?
Academic:	Why don't police officers even read research reports?
Police:	Why can't researchers write in plain English?
Academic:	Why are the police so bloody defensive?
Police:	Why are researchers so bloody virtuous?
Academic:	Why are the police unwilling to examine their own organisational performance?
Police:	Why are researchers unwilling to produce information that a practical person exercising power can use to change a limited aspect of the organisation instead of theoretical and explanatory structures of no use to the problem-solver?
Academic:	Why do the police insist that they know better, when the researchers are the experts in knowledge construction?
Police:	Why do researchers write recipes when they can't even cook?

Reproduced from Herrington, (2011)

In addition to the points made by Bradley and Nixon (2009), several other reasons for the disconnect were identified by participants in the roundtables. First, and as noted above, there remains a lot of uncertainty about what research tells us about policing. Studies can be contradictory, and research findings can be heavily laden with caveats. Even efforts to synthesise research on cause and effect (through meta-analyses such as those that contribute to the College of Policing's What Works Centre for Crime reduction) end up concluding *nothing works everywhere.* It is easy to get frustrated with this *fence sitting* and to wonder what value research is really adding to our understanding of policing and practice. And all too easy to understand how in the face of ambiguous research evidence practitioners continue to rely on *experience* to guide their working practices.

That is not to diminish the importance of police experience in contributing to decision making in policing, and there will always remain a critical role for professional judgement when thinking about applying EBP. This is akin to the critical role of *clinical judgement* in the medical profession. But there are some distinct advantages to drawing on research that it serves to remember. First, what differentiates all types of research from professional experience is that research conclusions are based on rigorous, systematic and transparent

assessments and observations, and therefore not limited to personal or vicarious experience. There is always a risk when we see the world through our own eyes that we can miss alternative explanations or perspectives on a given issue. Drawing on our professional experience relies heavily on the experiences we have had: who we worked with, how we have gone about our business, as well as our more deeply held convictions based on upbringing and beliefs. Research can open our eyes to other ways of viewing a problem, which can be important when thinking about practice.

Another reason why research fails to get traction in police organisations is it can be difficult to operationalise research conclusions into practical implications. There are a number of reasons why academics—who have traditionally been the 'creators of new knowledge'—have not focused on translating their findings into practical implications for police. First, academics are generally not professionally rewarded for doing so. Academic credibility is gained from writing highly technical and theoretical papers in highly specific (and hard to get into) journals. Such articles can be impenetrable to all but a handful of scholars, and to date there has been little to encourage academics to think about their findings in terms of implications for practice. Second, and related, the focus of much academic work—particularly in Australia (the tradition in the UK and the US is slightly different)—has been on contributions to theory, and many academics choose not to engage in empirical work that has an applied potential. That said, universities across the world are becoming increasingly concerned with research impact, and with that we can expect to see greater motivation among scholars to consider how their findings can inform professional practice. In Australia we are seeing a growing cadre of applied policing scholars, who focus on the 'so what' for policing of the academic research that they do, and work closely with police forces across the country. Yet the dissemination of research findings that have an implication for policing remains uncoordinated, and there is no central mechanism for applied policing scholars, or interested practitioners, to identify research that has an implication for policing[3].

This observation, made during the roundtables, led the AIPM to undertake a *snap shot* of policing research being undertaken across the country[5]. Full details of the National Police Research Inventory can be found on the AIPM website, although in summary it identified 209 pieces of research that had an implication for policing being undertaken across 21 (of 40) universities in Australia. Topics being researched included forensic and technological innovations; police officers and their organisations; crime, victims and offenders; and interactions with the rest of the criminal justice system. Interestingly, only half of respondents noted that final research reports would clearly identify the implications for police (n=104); although just over half noted that they would develop a publication tailored for practitioners (n=122). This is important because it suggests that almost half of the current, or recently completed, research being undertaken in policing in universities has little intention of being translated into accessible and digestible implications for the police, meaning that 50% of the possible insights that might assist policing are being lost.

How can police organisations organise their EBP endeavours?

The roundtables explored the different ways in which police organisations were advancing their EBP agendas, underscoring not only mixed approaches, but also variation in the appetite with which EBP was being adopted across the country and New Zealand. The Queensland Police Service and Western Australia Police had both explicitly adopted the language of EBP, and had committed to undertake experiments and RCTs; while EBP principles had been

incorporated in different ways in endeavours in South Australia Police, Victoria Police, New South Wales Police Force, Tasmania Police, the Northern Territory Police Force and New Zealand Police. While it is entirely appropriate that different police forces adopt different approaches to EBP, the roundtables highlighted that the lack of national coordination of EBP (outside of the work of the ANZSEBP) meant that lessons learned on one side of the country were not routinely shared with others tackling similar challenges on the other side. Such lessons lost included the sharing of research findings and insights into how to manage and organisation relations with academic partners and internal stakeholders. Some organisations had taken very bold steps toward building such partnerships. For example, Queensland Police Service had developed a partnership with Griffith University to share police data in a secure crime laboratory, allowing suitably security vetted academics to explore the data for patterns and relationships that could inform research questions, and with that the development of better practice. Western Australia Police had committed to employing a full time academic to join its EBP team at Director/Professorial level, to contribute to the management of EBP and facilitate its impact on the organisation. Sharing the insights gained from such activities and the hurdles faced as they roll out is an important part of the national learning about EBP and the impact that it can have.

A question that emerged from the roundtables was whether police organisations should control the research agenda, and in that, what role was there for academics in EBP. Relations between academics and police have traditionally been fraught in Australia, and even in recent times well-intentioned folk on both sides have become frustrated with the other for all the reasons outlined in the *dialogue of the deaf* (Bradley and Nixon, 2009). It is easy to appreciate why police organisations may prefer to do research in house, to control the agenda, ensure the utility of findings, and manage the personnel undertaking the research. What use are academics anyway? But there is a fine balance to be struck. Outsource the production of research to academics outside the organisation and you risk **1**) not getting answers to the questions you want, and instead getting something academically rigorous and professionally impenetrable in return; **2**) the negotiation of publishing sensitive findings and the associated fear of reputational damage; **3**) and perhaps most importantly, the investment in research does not then have the dual benefit of contributing to the research literacy and research capacity of the organisation while answering pressing questions.

The ANZSEBP clearly supports police professionals to undertake research to contribute to the body of knowledge (under Aim 2) although recognise this is not an exclusive role. The roundtable conversations echoed this point and added a note of caution: as police organisations invest heavily in their own capacity to do research, they should ensure that relations between police organisations and professional researchers (those resident in universities and organisations like the Australian Institute of Criminology) are given due care and attention too. While there are significant benefits for police being more actively engaged in contributing to the body of knowledge, this needs to be partnered with more effective communication with professional researchers to enable more meaningful and applied research to be undertaken by research specialists as needed.

Investments in relationship with academics is also an important safety measure for those times when research must stray into politically uncomfortable areas and the organisation and its stakeholders would benefit from hearing such messages from outside; or when operational requirements require the reassignment of police researchers to more immediate and operational concerns. To say the same thing another way, while it is undoubtedly important for police organisations to

internalise a research culture (which is something we will return to in the next section), a blend of internal and external research engagement is optimal, and most achievable, in helping our organisations move forward.

To this point, the issue of transparency around police data was a significant area of discussion. There are many complaints to be levelled at police data: its ease of extraction from cumbersome case management systems; the reliability of the data that is inputted; the absence of important [for research] fields; and the variation in quality contained within the narrative, to name a few. Yet police data is a goldmine of information for researchers, the above caveats notwithstanding, yet releasing police data has historically caused police organisations concern. There is a certain folly in not releasing data that the public has given the organisation in the first place. They are not police data, but community data (B. Stanko, personal communication 10th November 2015). Aggregate data are already largely available through state bureaus of statistics, and in London the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (drawing on Metropolitan Police Service data) have gone a step further allowing citizens to drill down into crime and policing data at the local level, the crime level, and—for domestic violence and sexual offending—the victim level (**https://www.london. gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/ data-and-research/crime**). There are few police organisations across the world who make their data so publically available. Even fewer still allow data related to the use of intrusive policing tactics such stop and search to be publically available (**see https://www. london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/mayors-office-policing-and-crime- mopac/data-and-research/policing/intrusive-tactics**); or present data on the performance of other areas of the criminal justice system (**https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing- and-crime-mopac/data-and-research/criminal-justice**) or public perceptions of police effectiveness, fairness, and confidence in the police based on local areas (**https://www.london.gov.uk/webmaps/ neighbourhoodconfidencetool/**). Yet the Metropolitan Police Service do and there is much to be gleaned from such. Not least of course is that such data hold the police organisation to account to the citizenry, which is an overarching theme relating to legitimacy in policing in the UK. Nonetheless, at times when more brains are better than less, releasing suitably de-identified data to the public may be one way police organisations can multiply the research resources available to it, as clever people use this data to do clever things.

Evidence based policing and culture change

The need for *cultural change* is often said about policing, and while police officers might be forgiven for tuning out this familiar *catcall,* it is an important point for us to conclude on. Research evidence has an important role in informing police organisations about what works, what counts, and what matters. Yet in order for the organisation to fully benefit from these insights it must be willing to invest in building such an evidence base in the first place, and must be willing to change in the light of new evidence as well. As such it is not simply enough to have the *evidence.* That evidence must meet with an organisation that values it as a way of informing itself about practice.

Time and again we have seen how it is not good enough to simply assume that the organisation will see sense and adapt its practices as a result of a new piece of information. Our public institutions are stubbornly resistant to change (Schafer and Herrington, 2016). Something else is required in moving toward being evidence based, and one factor is having a culture of organisational learning. The roundtables spent some time discussing the role of culture in EBP, and the role of leaders in enabling a culture of learning.

Learning organisations are those in which 'people continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspiration is set free, and people learn how to learn together' (Senge, 1990: 3). Learning helps organisations push ahead with new ways of operating and the organisation sees learning as an important investment. As such learning is rewarded formally and informally.

But learning requires the organisation to take risks, and our police cultures have evolved to be risk averse. Within the context of EBP such risks might include testing an intervention that does not work; finding out something unsavoury about the organisation's interactions with the community through research; or discovering that a deeply entrenched practice does more harm than good. There are many ways an organisation can respond to such findings, including ignoring them, or finding someone to blame. But it is those organisations that embrace the unexpected finding, the opportunity for learning, that optimise the learning culture required. And it is those organisations with a learning culture that are best placed to deal with the ever changing demands of the public safety environment and the complex challenges that our organisations face (Flynn and Herrington, 2015; Herrington and Colvin, 2016).

EBP requires a culture of learning to thrive, but it also offers organisations a vehicle to create that learning culture itself. Certainly there is a role for formal leaders in setting the organisational climate that encourages experimentation, innovation, evidence and learning. And certainly there is a need for such endeavours to be rewarded by the organisational architecture of performance management and promotion in the same way that sticking to established practices might be. But EBP also requires individuals at all levels of the organisation to become more research literate; to engage with the body of knowledge and find answers to everyday questions of *'why do we do it this way? Is this the best way we can do this?'* Evidence based policing starts with asking what the evidence is for a practice, or policy, or idea. And if there is none available, it seeks to fill that information gap. As such, while much of this paper has been concerned with higher order strategic implications of EBP, at its very core is an appeal to police members at all levels of the organisation to take an active role in EBP and the cultural change that it represents. EBP has tremendous value to offer policing, and has the potential to change the way we do policing for the better.

There will be the need for cultural and attitudinal change at all levels of the organisation. From the senior executive, to mid-level leaders; front line supervisors and police officers working the truck. Each level can will it to fail, but must work for it to succeed. In making your decision it pays to remember that if our shared goal is to ensure that policing helps keep our communities safe, what is there really to fear from embracing research evidence that can tell us if we are being successful or not?

Concluding thoughts

This paper has sought to provide a summary of the discussions held during three roundtable conversations about police research that were held at the Australian Institute of Police Management in late 2015 and early 2016. Four key themes emerged:

- That the term 'evidence' should be inclusive and not limited to thinking about randomised control trials. That there were merits in multiple ways of collecting research evidence, and that methodological suitability to the research question being asked was a more important consideration for those with an interest in EBP.

- That there continues to be a *dialogue of the deaf* between police and academics, and that this could be ameliorated by both police and academics working more closely and collaboratively together to answer questions that are meaningful, and have suitably 'applied' outcomes.

- That police organisations across Australia and New Zealand are approaching EBP in a range of ways, but that in taking greater control of the research agenda and resources internally, care must be taken to maintain a meaningful dialogue with academics in traditional research settings. While managing these relationships can be challenging there is more to be lost than there is to be gained from moving all EBP endeavours in house.

- And that the success or failure of EBP as a means of doing policing differently is heavily contingent on the willingness and ability of those at all levels of our organisations to embrace a culture of learning, and truly value new ways of thinking and doing things.

There is, of course, much more that can be said about EBP, and the debate is far from over. The role of the ANZSEBP is crucial in continuing this dialogue, and this journal offers an unrivalled opportunity for research about policing to be shared with those to whom it matters most. That is, front line police who—perhaps more than anyone else in the organisation—have a vested interest in ensuring that their interactions with members of the public, the levels of safety in our communities, and the levels of 'harm' caused by crime and our policing of it are as optimal as they can be. Importantly nothing in these roundtables suggests that research evidence would, or ever should, replace the discretion and professional judgement of the police officer.

Much as the doctor or surgeon will blend evidence based guidelines on medicine with their clinical judgement, so the police officer will always need to blend research findings with their discretionary judgement. That is not the same as saying that police can be excused for sticking rigidly to experience based practice, but that conscious engagement with research does not mean blindly following research findings either. Police officers are already thinking professionals. They have to be because so much of their work is in a fast paced and dynamic environment. EBP simply provides another piece of the puzzle to assist officers in going about their business.

So to answer our starting question: is EBP just another fad? There is certainly a risk that EBP will be seen as a *fringe dweller* to real policing, to be wheeled out conveniently to make governments and the senior executives who are accountable to them feel better about the money that they invest in the cops. But its potential is much more than that. Of course, this potential can only be realised if we work collectively and consciously to achieve this. The aim of this paper has been to convince you—the police practitioner—that there is value in embracing EBP, and that by understanding some of the nuances in the debate this may be easier to do. Time will tell if EBP reaches its potential, or if it will be replaced by the *next big thing.* But as long as we are a profession that deals with people, systematic, thorough and rigorous (research) insights that allow us to better understand the work that we do will be of benefit in helping us succeed at *the job.*

End Notes

1. The inability of academics to provide busy police officers with a straight answer is one of the perennial tensions between the two professions (Bradley and Nixon, 2009). Instead, busy police officers must navigate a plethora of competing ideas, and oftentimes make sense of ambiguous or contradictory research. This can be frustrating for busy police looking for a clear answer. But ambiguity and caveats are ubiquitous in research findings—for very good reasons—and the critical thinking skills required to digest and make sense of such is an important quality for the 'thinking professional' (Stanko and Dawson, 2016).

2. Randomised control trials are a scientific approach—often used in the field of medicine—to determine the impact of a particular treatment or intervention, over another treatment or no treatment at all. In medicine this might involve giving a group of people Drug A (group A), and another group of people a placebo (group B), and seeing what the impact of the treatment is on their condition. The randomised part of the randomised control trial refers to the allocation of individuals to group A or group B. Which is random. This, it is hoped, negates any selection bias and the impact that this might have on the results, so that we can be confident that it is the drug—rather than any other existing variable—that is causing the effect. For example if all the women were allocated to group A and all the men to group B we could not be sure the results were not as a result of something to do with gender.

3. There are, however, repositories of RCT and quasi-experimental designs in service of answering 'what works' questions, including the aforementioned UK College of Policing's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, and the Campbell Collaboration (www.campbellcollaboration.org). These repositories exclude research that is below level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale and as such do not provide a comprehensive one-stop-shop for a comprehensive understanding of applied policing scholarship.

4. The AIPM approached the Deputy Vice Chancellors (Research) in each of the 40 universities in Australia, as well as the Deans of faculties within each university that were likely to have some involvement in police research, and asked them to disseminate a short online survey to active researchers in their teams. The AIPM asked for the details of research that was currently underway (in December-January 2015/16) or that which had been completed within the last 12 months and as such was unlikely to have yet found its way into the formal published literature.

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Appendix 1:

Organisational representation across the AIPM Roundtables

Australian Crime Commission
Australian Institute of Police Management
Australian Institute of Criminology
Australian New Zealand Police Advisory Agency
London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
Australian Federal Police
New South Wales Police Force
Victoria Police
Queensland Police
New Zealand Police Service
Western Australia Police
Hong Kong Police
Bond University
Western Sydney University
University College London
University of Sydney
KPMG

Enhancing EBP:
Insights from neighbourhood policing and community intelligence

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Keywords: neighbourhood policing; community engagement; community cohesion; citizen focus; problem solving; community intelligence; evidence based policing

Abstract

A comprehensive review of the available literature on neighbourhood policing and community intelligence revealed a number of key recurring themes. On further critical examination of these emerging themes and the messages they contained, it became evident that they were interlinked, with one theme affecting the development of a number of others and that the relationship between these themes may be represented in the form of an interconnected web, where the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is suggested that by synthesising the various elements from these emerging themes, it may be possible to enhance the development and delivery of effective evidence-based and cohesive policing services.

Introduction

On completion of a comprehensive review of the academic literature and the United Kingdom (UK) official guidance in relation to neighbourhood policing and community intelligence, a number of key recurring messages and themes emerged, which appear to have significance to the democratic style of neighbourhood policing proposed by Lowe and Innes (2012) and enhance the development and delivery of effective evidence-based and cohesive policing services for diverse communities. These key themes were identified as follows: (1) Neighbourhood, (2) Neighbourhood Profiles, (3) Key Individual Networks (KINs), (4) Partnerships Resource Audits, (5) Community Engagement, (6) Community Cohesion, (7) Citizen Focus, (8) Problem Solving, (9) Community Intelligence, (10) Communication, (11) Social Marketing and (12) Evaluation.

Further critical examination of these 12 key themes and the messages they contained, identified that there were also a number of contentious and conflicting ideas often associated with police culture. For example; the competing priorities between citizen-focused neighbourhood policing, problem solving through problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing utilising community intelligence and evaluation in the form of performance management, all exist within a police culture influenced by crime fighting and crime detection (Scott, 1998; Maguire and John, 2006). However, by contrast many of the themes identified also appear to complement and enhance one another. For example, identifying and profiling neighbourhoods, and identifying and utilising KINs and partnerships may enhance community engagement, community cohesion, citizen-focus, problem solving and community intelligence (Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), 2006b; National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), 2009).

The Key Emerging Themes

The following provides a summary of the 12 key themes identified above, how they may be interlinked and affect each other's development, how their relationship may be represented as cyclical and progressive, commencing with Neighbourhood and concluding with Evaluation, all within the context of an interconnected web and how the evidence obtained from the synthesis of these themes may enhance the development and delivery of effective evidence-based and cohesive policing services.

Neighbourhood

The first of these themes involves identifying the parameters used to define a neighbourhood, which will be critical to future decisions on what should be profiled. The terms neighbourhood and community are often used interchangeably to describe a geographical area. For example, the terms neighbourhood policing and community policing are often used to describe the same model of policing for a known geographical area. However, community rather than neighbourhood is generally preferred when referring to community engagement, community cohesion or community intelligence.

However, a neighbourhood (or community) can be more than just a geographical area, such as an electoral ward (in the UK), an easily identifiable community, or a locality. Some communities are not easily identifiable and do not fall within established geographical boundaries (ACPO, 2006b, p. 18; Flynn, 1998, p. 9). These are often referred to as virtual or non-traditional communities and may be regarded as a group of people who have common concerns or a shared identity, but are not confined by geographical boundaries. Flynn (1998, p. 9) defines a community as follows:

> *Community may be defined by the following three factors: geography (people who live or work in a given place), shared character or identity (people share common characteristics, such as ethnicity, age, economics, and religion), and common concerns or problems (people tend to join together when they share common concerns or problems).*

> *Groups of people who more or less exhibit each of these three factors can be considered a community, at least for the purposes of community policing.*

Thus, a community may include the more hard to reach or hard to hear groups within diverse communities. These groups are also referred to as failed to reach groups, as the use of engagement techniques has not been exhaustive (NPIA, 2010d).

Official guidance suggests that the definition of a neighbourhood can be decided upon through local agreements between statutory partners (e.g. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), formerly Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) in England); non-statutory partners (e.g. the third or voluntary sector); and the community, taking into account traditional and non-traditional communities (ACPO, 2006b, p. 18; NPIA, 2010b, p. 106). Putnam (2000, pp. 273-274) observes that 'Community means different things to different people' and suggests that; 'Each of us derives some sense of belonging from among the various communities to which we might, in principle, belong'.

However, consideration may also be given to adopting a more corporate approach to defining traditional communities and neighbourhoods, to avoid confusion when the police and their partners provide services and move from one geographical area to another.

Neighbourhood Profiles

Once a neighbourhood has been defined, it is then possible to create a neighbourhood profile. The official guidance from the UK National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) advises that a neighbourhood profile

should contain the following categories or sections, which are relevant to a particular neighbourhood: A contextual map, general and housing demographic data, physical and human infrastructure, neighbourhood priorities, data sets on satisfaction, confidence and the fear of crime, and an overview of the neighbourhood demographics (NPIA, 2009, p. 10).

Ottiwell and Hashdi (2007) argue that the data collected for each category should include all the available partnership data, which may be shared in accordance with data sharing protocols (Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), 2007) and the Data Protection Act, 1998 (Home Office, 1998). Neighbourhood profiles can then be used to identify and engage with diverse communities, identify real or perceived areas of risk, vulnerability and tension, identify high, medium or low priority neighbourhoods for the intelligence-led deployment of staff, and assist in deciding on the most appropriate policing model or combination of models for those neighbourhoods, for example, intelligence-led policing or problem-oriented policing (Audit Commission, 1993; Goldstein, 1979, 1990, 1996, 2006; NPIA, 2009; Ratcliffe, 2008a, 2008b).

The data and information contained within a neighbourhood profile can also be used to identify Key Individual Networks (KINs) and partners, and to develop bespoke engagement techniques for a specific neighbourhood (or community) (NPIA, 2009). Official guidance also suggests that a neighbourhood profile should be reviewed and updated every three to six months to inform the CSP Joint Strategic Assessment and to assist with police and partnership decision making (ACPO, 2006b), and should be managed in accordance with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Guidance on the Management of Police Information (ACPO, 2006a, 2010).

Key Individual Networks

A KIN is comprised of individuals who are able to use their experience and influence to resolve specific problems within the community in which they live or work. For example, a local head teacher, religious leaders, the chair of the local chamber of commerce, the chair of the local residents association or neighbourhood watch, or a local councillor (NPIA, 2009, p. 12).

Members of a KIN are, therefore, ideally placed to assist in enhancing and developing community engagement, intelligence, cohesion and local partnerships, and identifying community tensions at an early stage. The official guidance suggests that a KIN should form part of a neighbourhood profile under the heading of human infrastructure (NPIA, 2009, p. 12).

The notion of a KIN appears to be associated with the concepts of social capital, collective

efficacy, the Big Society and citizen participation, where KINs may be seen to facilitate coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993), introduce elements of social control (Bandura, 1997), volunteer and take part in social action (Home Office, 2010), and obtain varying degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969).

These concepts also feature in Lowe and Innes' democratic style of policing. Lowe and Innes (2012, pp. 296–297) suggest that the introduction of neighbourhood policing and the UK Government's drive for the Big Society and local accountability through elected Police and Crime Commissioners has instigated a more 'democratic' style of policing, which focuses on three main principles; 'Seeing like a citizen' (where defined community problems become neighbourhood policing priorities), 'Participative policing' (which includes the idea of informal social control as part of the Big Society) and 'See through services' (which involves transparent local accountability and decision making).

Partnership Resource Audits

The official guidance suggests that various policing partners, such as local authorities and voluntary organisations, should be included in a neighbourhood profile under the heading of human infrastructure (NPIA, 2009, p. 10). Therefore, it may be advantageous if a partnership resource audit was also included as part of the neighbourhood profile, as this may assist in improving community engagement, partnership problem solving and the development of the CSP Joint Strategic Assessment as part of the UK National Intelligence Model (NIM) process (ACPO, 2006b; Home Office, 2007). The ACPO (2006b, p. 31) suggest that a partnership resource audit:

- *provides a brief summary of the role of all organisations within the CDRP/CSP*
- *outlines existing information-sharing protocols*
- *lists existing joint working protocols*
- *identifies existing community engagement structures*
- *lists local initiatives, e.g., crime reduction, regeneration and education*
- *describes financial opportunities to fund activity*
- *assesses the relevant capability and capacity of partners.*

Thus, undertaking a partnership resource audit for a specific neighbourhood may assist individuals and agencies in identifying existing and new partners, and in assessing what their capability and capacity is within the partnership. A partnership resource audit may also identify all available resources, ensure that engagement opportunities are not lost, that there is no duplication of effort and that public funds are utilised to the maximum effect (ACPO, 2006b). This

may be particularly relevant in times of austerity, which often results in the reduction of funding to public services by central and local governments.

Community Engagement

Myhill (2006, p. 8) defines community engagement in policing as follows:

The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in policing at their chosen level, ranging from providing information and reassurance, to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions.

The police, citizens and communities must have the willingness, capacity and opportunity to participate. The Police Service and partner organisations must have a responsibility to engage and, unless there is a justifiable reason, the presumption is that they must respond to community input.

At the heart of this definition is the proposal that the engagement process enables members of a community to become involved in and influence policing at a level that is most appropriate for that individual or the community. Thus, community engagement with the police allows members of the community to express their needs, fears and expectations of policing, including the fear of crime and perceived risks, threats and harms to the community, and for the police to respond by providing a service that the community wants and not what the police believe the community wants (Lowe and Innes, 2012). It also allows the police to gather community information and intelligence on all sorts of issues, including anti-social behaviour, organised crime and terrorism.

To ensure comprehensive and effective community engagement, it may first be necessary to identify a community or neighbourhood, prepare a neighbourhood profile, identify a KIN and undertake a partnership resource audit. This process may serve to enhance the quality and completeness of community engagement, as it could provide the information necessary to develop bespoke engagement techniques for every section of our diverse communities. In order to engage with the more hard to reach or hard to hear groups, it may be necessary to use a combination of engagement techniques that are tailored to individual needs and consideration may need to be given to other factors, such as; race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, faith, ethnicity and culture (NPIA, 2010b).

The 'Practice Advice on Professionalising the Business of Neighbourhood Policing' (ACPO, 2006b, p. 15) highlights a number of critical success factors for community engagement:

- *sharing resources with local authorities to develop community engagement plans*

- *taking an approach to neighbourhood engagement that goes beyond public meetings to include, for example, street briefings, house-to-house calls, 'have a say' days, use of KIN and other innovative methods*

- *tailoring community engagement processes to the specific needs of individual communities—including the police going to the community rather than expecting communities to come to them*

- *ensuring that engagement strategies specifically address the needs of hard-to-reach/hear groups and minority groups*

- *dedicating [Police Community Support Officers] PCSOs to neighbourhoods in order to increase community engagement*

- *developing officers' visibility and familiarity to incorporate accessibility and the delivery of interventions to improve public confidence*

- *using community engagement processes as opportunities to actively involve community participants in problem-solving processes.*

Rogers and Robinson (2004, p. 50) argue that community engagement can assist in building stronger active communities through; 'socialisation' (informal social controls), 'guardianship' (social support networks) and 'information flows' (providing public bodies with information on how services could be made more effective). Thus, community engagement may be considered a key factor in the development of community cohesion, citizen focus, problem solving and community intelligence (NPIA, 2009).

Community Cohesion

Two key elements of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's (CIC) (2007, p. 42) definition of an integrated and cohesive community are that:

- *those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment.*

- *there is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.*

This definition was mirrored by the previous UK Labour Government's (Home Office (Communities and Local Government (CLG)), 2008, p. 10) vision of an integrated and cohesive community based on:

- *people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities*

- *people knowing their rights and responsibilities*

- *people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.*

Thus, to ensure community cohesion in this context, community engagement is essential in giving diverse communities similar life opportunities and access to public services based on their rights and responsibilities, and to develop their trust in local institutions. This also resonates with the 'democratic' style of policing espoused by Lowe and Innes (2012, pp. 296–297). Only by including people from different backgrounds within our diverse communities can service providers be truly citizen focused. Creasy, Gavelin and Potter (2008) argue that if the circumstances are right in diverse communities, then the drivers for citizen participation and community cohesion can complement one another and the two agendas can be addressed together.

Citizen Focus

The Home Office (2006, p. 10) suggests that; 'A citizen-focused culture exists when every member of staff considers the impact that their actions have on the people they serve and proactively seeks ways of improving the quality of the service that they provide.' The Home Office (2005) also produced 'The Quality of Service Commitment', which aims to make it easier to contact service providers, provide a professional and high quality of service, deal with initial enquiries appropriately, keep customers informed, ensure the customer's voice counts and support victims of crime.

In order to truly understand the customer or citizen and to provide the services they require it may first be necessary to gain an insight into the customer, which is also referred to as customer insight or customer intelligence. Customer insight involves; 'the use of data and information about customers to better understand their needs, wants, expectations, behaviours and experiences' and 'the active application of this understanding in the design and delivery of services that better meet customers' needs' (Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), 2006, p. 8).

Customer insight and thus citizen focus may be achieved through comprehensive community engagement and consideration of the key elements of an integrated and cohesive community, which allows everyone in the community the same opportunities to influence service providers in the design and delivery of services to meet their needs.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (2006, p. 8) advocates that 'Citizen Focus policing is about developing a culture where the needs and priorities of the citizen are understood by staff and always taken into account when designing and delivering policing services.' In an attempt to develop a citizen focus culture within the principles of neighbourhood policing, the NPIA (2008, p. 4) developed four Citizen Focus Hallmarks: 'Understanding People', 'Understanding Services', 'Designing Services' and 'Delivering Services', which

were underpinned by five key enablers: 'Leadership', 'Communications', 'People', 'Partnerships' and 'Processes'. These were designed to improve public confidence in the police and partners and to empower communities to identify the services the community needs and how those services are provided.

Mastrofski (1999, pp. 2–4) argues that citizen focused policing or what he terms 'policing for people' has six main elements: 'Attentiveness', 'Reliability', 'Responsive service', 'Competence', 'Manners' and 'Fairness'. Lloyd and Foster (2009) agree and suggest that by exploiting these elements the police can provide good service, enhance customer satisfaction and improve community engagement. However, Lloyd and Foster (2009, p.1) also argue that there is a lack of understanding about citizen focus and community engagement and that citizen focus, neighbourhood policing and community engagement activities are 'bolted on' to existing policing structures, rather than transforming the service delivery.

Problem Solving

Herman Goldstein is credited with being the first to develop the concept of problem-oriented policing, the foundations for which originated in his book entitled *Policing a Free Society* (Goldstein, 1977). He developed this concept further in an article entitled; 'Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach' (Goldstein, 1979) and in greater detail in a later book *Problem Oriented Policing* (Goldstein, 1990). However, Eck and Spelman (1987, p. xv) are regarded as being the first to use the term 'problem-oriented policing' in their research into solving persistent community problems in Newport News in 1984 and defined it as follows:

Problem-oriented policing is a department wide strategy aimed at solving persistent community problems. Police identify, analyse, and respond to the underlying circumstances that create incidents.

For the purpose of the Newport News problem-oriented policing project, the dedicated Newport News Police Department Task Force identified two main problems: theft from vehicles and dwelling burglaries. Eck and Spelman (1987, pp. xix–xx) give credit to the Task Force, for designing a four stage problem solving process, involving scanning, analysis, response and assessment. This process is now commonly referred to as the SARA problem solving model and is widely used by policing agencies in the UK and the United States of America (USA).

Cordner (1988, p. 15) argues that it is essential to get the community's views on their problems, and their solutions, and his experience with the Baltimore County Police Department (BCPD) Citizen Oriented Police Enforcement (COPE) project had 'demonstrated the fallacy of assuming that a police department's sense of a community's

problems matches community resident's actual concerns'. Thus, community engagement is essential in defining the problem and in finding the best solutions to resolve the problem together with the police and other partner agencies (Goldstein, 1990). Goldstein (1990: 21) also emphasises the importance of the community in policing:

A community must police itself. The police can, at best, only assist in that task.

In the opening vignette of a paper entitled 'Reform of Neighbourhood Policing: Making Public Problems Policing Priorities', the ACPO (2004, p. 1) state that by engaging with communities, enabling and strengthening community cohesion, building relationships and problem solving the police service could help communities be more confident and secure:

By making public problems policing priorities the Police Service can be a positive force for good within neighbourhoods, enabling and strengthening community cohesion. By listening, building relationships, problem solving, and acting together we will engage with communities, helping them to become confident and secure.

Therefore, public problems may be identified and prioritised through a more citizen focused cohesive community engagement process, which, if appropriate, may be included in the CSP Joint Strategic Assessment (Home Office, 2007). Less serious problems may be prioritised and dealt with at a local neighbourhood level, (e.g. through a partnership neighbourhood tasking and coordinating process), which may involve members of the KIN in the decision making process and in influencing outcomes, by using social capital (Putnam, 1993), delegating power and promoting citizen control (Arnstein, 1969).

Myhill and Quinton (2010, pp. 278–279) agree with the ACPO (2004, p. 1) statement above and argue that the evidence suggests that if the police provide a service that deals with the concerns of local communities and are able to influence public perceptions through improved community engagement, then they are likely to increase public confidence in the police. Thus, it is envisaged that by being more citizen focused and solving local community problems this will increase confidence, satisfaction and trust in the police, increase citizen participation and reduce the fear of crime (Jackson and Bradford, 2010; Jackson and Sunshine, 2007; Myhill and Beak, 2008; Myhill and Quinton, 2010).

Community Intelligence

The official guidance suggests that community intelligence does not only provide intelligence on crime and disorder (including organised crime and terrorism), but also on community problems and priorities; tensions between

the same and different communities; threat, harm, risk and vulnerability; and on emerging communities (Chainey, 2008; NPIA, 2010d). Thomas (2016, p. 41) defines community intelligence as:

…information acquired directly or indirectly from a variety of sources, including the community (a geographical area or a group of people with shared identity or common concerns) and partner agencies, which when processed is used to understand issues affecting a community (including their views, needs, problems, priorities and expectations) and to reduce the level of uncertainty, by providing forewarning of threats, harm, risks, vulnerability and tensions (including serious crime and disorder, and terrorism), and of opportunities, which assists the decision maker to achieve particular objectives.

Community intelligence may also provide valuable intelligence for identifying neighbourhoods and KINs; for assisting with neighbourhood profiles, partnership resource audits and community engagement; and for providing evidence for cohesive policing services.

Due to a sustained period of technological development, the quest for efficiency and effectiveness, and an increase in recorded crime during the 1990s, greater emphasis was placed on more proactive law enforcement styles of policing (Clarke, 2006; Flood and Gaspar, 2009). Intelligence-led policing came to the forefront of policing in the UK and was given even more prominence as a result of a report produced by the Audit Commission (1993) entitled; 'Helping with Enquiries: Tackling Crime Effectively'. The Audit Commission (1993, pp. 54–56) report recommended that policing should 'target the criminal and not just the crime', as analysis by the Home Office suggested that a small number of male offenders were responsible for a disproportionately larger number of detected crimes (Home Office, 1989, p. 8). The Audit Commission report focused on proactivity and performance issues in relation to the detection of crime, and supported the notion of intelligence as evidence.

Ratcliffe (2008a, p. 89) defines intelligence-led policing as follows:

Intelligence-led policing is a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through both strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders.

Lowe and Innes (2012, p. 315) argue that a community intelligence-led version of neighbourhood policing (Neighbourhood

Policing v2.0) is more responsive to community needs and demands, and can change people's perceptions of the police.

The 'Practice Advice on Professionalising the Business of Neighbourhood Policing' (ACPO, 2006b, p. 26) suggests that greater community engagement and citizen focused problem solving will lead to an increase in confidence and trust in the police and partners, which in turn will lead to an increase in community intelligence and engagement, through what is generally referred to as the 'Confidence Cycle'. This notion is supported by other researchers, such as; Jackson and Sunshine (2007), Myhill and Beak (2008), Jackson and Bradford (2010) and Myhill and Quinton (2010).

Communication

The police and their partners use various forms of communication, such as; newsletters (Rix et al. 2009; Wunsch and Hohl, 2009) and Social Media (ACPO, 2013) to provide information and feedback to communities on a variety of issues. However, the NPIA (2010c) advocates that the communication process should also allow members of the community to express their feelings on the quality of the customer experience and be able to report complaints and dissatisfaction with policing services. It is therefore important that the police and their partners develop an effective communication strategy to address the issues highlighted by the NPIA (2010c).

The NPIA (2010c, p. 17) suggests that any communication strategy should be mindful of internal and external communications, keeping people informed, the methods of communication to be used, delivering core messages, pursuing marketing and media opportunities and ensuring that partner and stakeholder needs are considered. Keeping people informed and delivering core messages on the positive outcomes of problem solving initiatives as a result of community intelligence, may increase confidence, satisfaction and trust in the police, enhance community engagement and provide further community intelligence (NPIA, 2010c).

Partnerships such as CSPs, may consider a joint communication and marketing strategy to ensure corporacy between all partners and that all communications represent the mission, vision and values of the partnership, whilst reinforcing the ethos of community safety and what can realistically be achieved.

Social Marketing

Kotler and Zaltman (1971) are often credited with being the first to use the term social marketing and believe that marketing thinking and planning could be of benefit to specific social causes. Having reviewed a number of definitions of social marketing including that of Kotler and Zaltman (1971), Andreasen

(1994, p. 110) defines social marketing as; 'the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part.' Stanford (2009, p. 3) suggests that social marketing can be used in policing to assist in understanding communities, to deliver effective prevention techniques and to positively affect behaviour.

With the dramatic increase in technology over recent years, social media has become one of the most effective marketing tools. The police in the UK, supported by ACPO, have been using social media since 2008, but due to the constraints of a risk averse police culture and restrictive guidelines (ACPO, 2013; Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, 2010; Flanagan, 2007, 2008; NPIA, 2010a) platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have only been used to reinforce existing communication methods and are used mainly to ask the public for information (Crump, 2011). This view is supported by research in the USA, where social media is mainly used for informational purposes, as opposed to transactional or collaborative purposes (Brainard and McNutt, 2010).

Evaluation

The final key theme to be identified was evaluation. Evaluation can take many forms and may be associated with issues such as; performance management, the quality of service provided or the assessment of operational processes.

Performance management may be described as; 'the process by which decisions are taken in response to current performance, to make future performance better than it might otherwise be' (Home Office, 2006, p. 11). However, even with the introduction of neighbourhood policing, the central government focus was still on crime and crime detection rates, with intelligence-led policing, crime reduction and community safety being seen as a by-product of increased police proactivity.

Maguire and John (2006) also identified that too great an emphasis was being placed on crime detection rates to satisfy centralised performance indicators, which was contrary to the principles behind intelligence-led policing, problem-oriented policing and partnership crime reduction initiatives.

This emphasis on crime detection is also likely to impact on the quality of service provided to customers, as the performance management process is offender focused rather than citizen (customer) focused.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, pp. 45–46) advocate a conceptual model of service quality and propose four gaps in the perception of service quality by consumers, which may assist service providers to evaluate their performance in relation to the quality of service they provide:

> *Proposition 1: The gap between consumer expectations and management perceptions of those expectations will have an impact on the consumer's evaluation of service quality.*

> *Proposition 2: The gap between management perceptions of consumer expectations and the firm's service quality specifications will affect service quality from the consumer's viewpoint.*

> *Proposition 3: The gap between service quality specifications and actual service delivery will affect service quality from the consumer's standpoint.*

> *Proposition 4: The gap between actual service delivery and external communications about the service will affect service quality from a consumer's standpoint.*

Therefore, the evaluation process may provide sufficient evidence to assist in closing the quality of service gaps perceived by consumers and to identify any learning and development needs by service providers.

The assessment process, in for example; the Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) problem solving model, can also serve to provide evidence to local policing partnerships (such as CSPs), on what works, what doesn't and what looks promising (Sherman et al, 1997) and assist in the development of policing strategies, including communication and social marketing strategies.

Synthesis of the Key Emerging Themes

It is evident from the messages emanating from the academic literature and the UK official guidance on neighbourhood policing and community intelligence that the 12 key themes summarised above are interlinked, with one theme affecting the development of a number of others.

It is argued here that if these key emerging themes are synthesised (or combined), then the resulting relationships may be represented; firstly, as a perpetual cyclical progression commencing with the theme of Neighbourhood and secondly, in the form of an interconnected web, where all the themes are interlinked and to a greater or lesser extent are dependent on one another. It may also be argued that as a result of this synthesis, the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. See Figure 1 below.

Developed from a Review of the Academic Literature and UK Official Guidance on Neighbourhood Policing and Community Intelligence

Thus, by fully understanding and utilising the relationship between these key themes and continually refining the synthesis process, neighbourhood policing services to the public may become far more evidence-based and cohesive, in that they are inclusive of all members of our diverse communities, key individuals and partners.

Figure 1: Synthesis of the Key Themes Emerging from the Academic Literature and Official Guidance to Enhance the Development and Delivery of Evidence-Based and Cohesive Policing Services

Conclusion

Individually, some of the 12 key emerging themes identified above, i.e. citizen-focused neighbourhood policing, problem solving (problem-oriented policing), community intelligence (intelligence-led policing) and evaluation (performance management) represent a number of contentious and conflicting policing models. Each model has its own set of competing priorities, which have to be addressed within a police culture influenced by crime fighting and crime detection (Maguire and John, 2006; Scott, 1998).

The UK NIM was designed as a business model for policing and if utilised correctly has the capability and capacity to integrate and manage the various aspects of neighbourhood policing, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing and performance management (including efficiency, effectiveness and economy), and may help to reduce the competing priorities, tensions and contradictions in policing targets (Maguire and John, 2006).

When synthesised, the key emerging themes also support the three requirements of neighbourhood policing ('visibility, accessibility and familiarity', 'intelligence-led policing' and 'joint problem solving'), the four main themes of neighbourhood policing ('Access', 'Influence', 'Interventions' and 'Answers') and the ten key principles of neighbourhood policing (including effective engagement, a communication and feedback strategy, and rigorous performance management) (ACPO, 2006b, pp. 4 & 10), and principles two (policing by consent) and seven (the police are the public and the public are the police) of the nine principles of policing (Flanagan, 2007, pp. 4–5).

Thus, it is feasible that the synthesis of these key themes could also be managed (subject to cultural resistance) within the UK NIM (or any similar intelligence model), to enhance the development and delivery of effective evidence-based and cohesive policing services for diverse communities (Maguire and John, 2006). It is hoped that the concept of this synthesis and the principle of providing a better service to the public, may also be applicable and beneficial, not only to the police service, but to other service providers and in particular to the providers of public services.

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The Queensland Mobile Police Community Office project: Putting wheels in motion for procedurally just community policing

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the effectiveness of the Mobile Police Community Office (MPCO) as an approach to improve police-community relations and legitimacy in Queensland's North Brisbane District. One of the concepts underpinning the development and deployment of the MPCO was the targeting of hot spots whilst using procedural just policing. The MPCO is a fully functioning police counter on wheels—a highly visible police van equipped with all the resources so that officers can conduct most station duties and an interior 'office' where police can meet members of the public. This study explores survey responses from members of the public who visited the MPCO and officers assigned to the MPCO during a trial conducted between November 2014 and March 2015. MPCO visitors spent almost 8 minutes with officers and reported overwhelmingly that MPCO officers were approachable, helpful, respectful, professional and fair. Visitors also thought that the MPCO would decrease crime, fear of crime and acts of terrorism but not have as much impact on catching offenders. Police assigned to the MPCO similarly viewed the MPCO as having a potential crime deterrent. Interestingly, officers who considered procedural justice an important part of policing were significantly more likely to report that they used procedural justice in their encounters. Implications of the findings for future research on police legitimacy and policing crime hot spots are discussed.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The Mobile Police Community Office (MPCO) project is an alternative targeted policing approach led by the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The MPCO is a fully functioning police counter on wheels—a van equipped with all the technology and resources so that officers can conduct most station duties. Using procedural justice policing and targeting crime hot spots in Queensland's North Brisbane District, the QPS aim to use the MPCO as a 'vehicle' to increase police–community relations and police legitimacy whilst reducing crime. This paper provides results from surveys given to members of the public in MPCO deployed hot spots and also surveys given to police officers assigned to the MPCO during a trial conducted between November 2014 and March 2015.

The MPCO project draws on two bodies of policing research—hot spot policing and police legitimacy. Although hot spot policing has received widespread attention, and has generally been adopted as an effective targeted policing strategy, there exist gaps within research. Such gaps include the effect of hot spot policing tactics on community perceptions of police and specifically perceptions of police legitimacy (Kochel 2011; Weisburd & Telep 2014; Weisburd, Hinkle, Famega & Ready 2011a, b). Whilst hot spot research clearly identifies a crime reduction benefit when police target their resources (e.g. mostly in the form of visibly increasing police presence) to high crime areas, there is the risk that an increased police presence, if not applied legitimately, can degenerate police–community relations in the long-term. An alternative body of research—namely legitimacy research—suggests that when citizens view police as legitimate, the police elicit greater cooperation and compliance from the public, which translates into increased police capacity to prevent, detect, deter and control crime. In the sections which follow we provide a short summary of research literature on hot spot policing and police legitimacy and how they relate to the goals of the MPCO. We then present our study methods and results, followed by a discussion.

Background

Policing Crime Hot Spots

The evolution of policing has seen the introduction of a number of approaches to detect, prevent and respond to various types of crime. In particular, policing research consistently demonstrates that directed and focused policing strategies around a clearly defined crime problem have positive effects on crime and disorder (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995; Weisburd & Green, 1995). Hot spots policing is one such directed policing strategy, which involves police directing resources towards a specific physical area (e.g. city block, street segment, building or address) with a high and consistent concentration of crime (Telep, Mitchell & Weisburd, 2012). Such an approach, involving a substantial increase in police presence and preventative patrols, has been found to elicit a deterrent effect on potential criminality and a reduction in perceptions of fear and insecurity amongst members of the community (see Braga & Weisburd, 2010; Braga, 2001; Sherman, 1997; Telep, Mitchell & Weisburd, 2012). The Minneapolis Hot spots Patrol Experiment, for example, examined the impact of increased police patrols in 110 crime hot spots, with results showing a significant location-specific deterrent effect on crime (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995). Ratcliffe, Taniguchi, Groff and Wood (2011) explored a directed foot patrol response and its impact on crime reduction. Officers were directed to patrol specific problem areas or hot spots by foot, and with this direction, targeted foot patrols significantly reduced crime in the hot spots studied.

A principle concern about hot spots policing is that when police focus their attention on one high crime area, the crime will move/displace to a different area. Evidence suggests, however, that displacement does

not always occur (Guerette & Bowers, 2009), and that directed policing strategies can result in a diffusion of crime control benefits to nearby locations (Weisburd et al., 2006). Five studies specifically examined displacement and diffusion, finding no support for the displacement of crime, while four out of five studies suggested a diffusion of crime control benefits to surrounding locations. In a comprehensive systematic review of hot spots policing studies conducted before 2010, Braga, Papachristos and Hureau (2012) reported 'small but noteworthy crime reductions' with crime control benefits diffusing to areas immediately surrounding the target hot spot (p.633).

While not unanimous in eliciting overall prevention and deterrent effects, hot spot policing serves as arguably one of the most evidence based policing approaches to crime detection and reduction (Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Braga, 2002; Kochel, 2011). Moreover, increased police presence may have the added benefit of improving public perceptions of the police when police, in their increased numbers, actively engage with members of the public in a procedurally just way (Hawdon, Ryan & Griffin, 2003; Higginson & Mazerolle, 2014).

Legitimacy and Policing

Research clearly demonstrates that directed police strategies such as hot spots policing can prevent and respond to crime and disorder (see, for example Braga, 2007; Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Sherman, 1997; Kochel, 2011; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). However, the majority of these studies have not analysed the effect of police strategies on community perceptions of police. Upon examining a range of policing strategies, Weisburd and Eck (2004) emphasised the importance of strategies that facilitate a strong relationship between police and the public, and how these strategies are more likely to increase perceptions of police legitimacy. In order to be effective, police must garner the cooperation and support of the community, which is arguably a product of legitimate policing (Hinds & Murphy, 2007; Tyler, 2004).

Police and researchers are understandably interested in how to optimise police legitimacy. Tyler (1988, 2004) suggests that the manner in which police exercise their authority is essential to how the public view their legitimacy. In particular, when police engage with the public in a procedurally just manner—treat people with dignity and respect, demonstrate that their decisions are made neutrally and with trustworthy motives, and allow the public an opportunity for voice/participation during an encounter—members of the public view the police as more legitimate (Hinds & Murphy, 2007; Mazerolle et al., 2014; Murphy, Mazerolle & Bennett, 2014; Tyler, 1988, 2004; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). A systematic literature search (Bennett, 2009) followed by a meta-analytic review of policing research by Mazerolle and colleagues (2013a, 2013b) found that when police are perceived as legitimate, there are a range of benefits for policing including public satisfaction, cooperation, compliance and reduced offending.

The Queensland Community Engagement Trial serves as the world first translation of the principles of procedural justice within standard police practice (Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus & Eggins 2012; Mazerolle, Antrobus, Bennett & Tyler, 2013). Using random breath testing as the targeted policing approach, QPS officers engaged in either a scripted procedural justice dialogue (experimental condition) with drivers or conducted the standard breath test procedure. Results showed that police in the experimental condition who interacted with drivers in a procedurally just way were seen as more legitimate and effective during the breath test procedure than officers who interacted with drivers in the standard way. Furthermore, drivers who had experienced procedurally just policing also thought police were generally more legitimate—the specific short encounter had impacted drivers overall perception of police legitimacy. Interestingly, the trial also surveyed the experimental and control officers, finding that officers perceived that procedurally just behaviours were less important and thought the public were (generally) less willing to cooperate with police than the drivers themselves reported (Bates, Antrobus, Bennett & Martin, 2015). This experimental trial demonstrates the value in incorporating elements of procedural justice and legitimacy to standard policing

practices in order to enhance police–community relations as well as more positive attitudes and resultant cooperation amongst citizens. It also suggests that police may need greater awareness (e.g. through training) of how procedurally just policing can optimise positive encounters with the public.

The manner in which police engage with the public is clearly important to how the public perceive police and willingly comply with the law. When reviewing the hot spot literature, there is also compelling research which demonstrates the viability of reducing crime in concentrated high crime areas by strategically increasing the visible presence of police (see Braga, 2001). The increased presence of police in areas is not in itself problematic, however the strategic concentration of police resources in pre-determined high crime locations can on the surface appear to target particular places and people (Kochel, 2011). Consequently, the manner in which police engage with the public, particularly with increased presence and in high crime areas, is important to both short and long term crime reduction/prevention goals.

The Present Study

A key objective for police is to foster strong police–community relations premised on high quality client service, innovative and adaptive ideas and responses. In November 2014, the QPS commenced an experimental trial of its Mobile Police Community Office (MPCO). The MPCO is a purpose built high visibility police vehicle from which police can conduct most regular policing activities. The advantage of the MPCO is that it can be directed to areas where people have limited access to a police station (e.g. remote communities) and because it is mobile, it can also be directed to areas requiring additional police resources or presence (e.g. a crime hot spot) for a limited period of time.

Unlike enforcement focused police vehicles, the MPCO is considered a 'vehicle' to engage the public. It has been carefully designed so that police systems are hidden and the interior is accessible to members of the public who wish to enter the 'office' and discuss matters with the MPCO officers. The interior is equipped with a table, seating, coffee/tea making facilities, air conditioning and a television for the display of community policing messages. Crime Prevention, service information and material to commence a proceeding against a person is readily available to officers when needed. The insignia on the vehicle includes the phrase *'In Partnership with'* alongside the logos of businesses which sponsored the development of the MPCO (see acknowledgements) as well as an artistic variation of the QPS crest made up of hundreds of photos of police in the community. Figure 1 provides a picture of the MPCO and standard QPS enforcement van. The phrase *'Working Toward a Safer Community'* is conspicuously displayed on the driver and passenger front doors of the MPCO whilst on the standard QPS Mobile Police Facility (MPF)/enforcement van, the word 'Police' takes visual priority.

Figure 1: MPCO vs MPF

The MPCO trial explores the impact of the MPCO in crime hot spots within the North Brisbane District of Queensland and specifically, whether a highly visible policing response delivered in a procedurally just way is seen legitimately by members of the public. The hypothesis is that when the MPCO is placed in problem areas within North Brisbane District and officers from the MPCO engage with the public using procedurally just policing, the public will perceive the police as legitimate, the police will elicit greater cooperation and compliance from the public, and crime rates will be reduced.

Whilst a forthcoming paper[1] will report on whether the MPCO had an impact on official crime counts, the present study concentrates on the survey results from members of the public who engaged with MPCO officers who had received procedural justice training. We asked these 'MPCO Visitors' questions including how effective they thought the MPCO would be on a range of enforcement activities (e.g. crime, terrorism) and how procedurally just the MPCO officer was during their encounter. This paper also reports on a survey given to police who staffed the MPCO. We asked these MPCO officers to describe how effective they thought the MPCO would be on the same list of enforcement activities and how they rated their own use of procedural justice. Our hypothesis here is that when police believe that using procedural justice is important they will be more likely to report *using* procedural justice in their encounters with the public.

Thus, the current study seeks to understand community and police perceptions of the MPCO, a directed hot spot policing strategy, and increase our understanding of procedurally just policing.

Methods

Identifying and matching hot spots

The quasi-experimental evaluation of the MPCO took place between November 2014 and March 2015. The QPS identified 24 locations in Queensland's North Brisbane District that over a 12 month period (July 2013 to July 2014) consistently contained a high proportion of reported crime[2]. The hot spots were matched into 12 test pairs based on crime statistics (counts, offence type(s), offence times, offence location) and location characteristics (e.g. the number and type of businesses, residences, transport facilities, population density etc.) after a physical audit of each location. Two identified hot spot possessed unique characteristics that could not be matched with any other hot spots in the North Brisbane District. Two alternative sites, one in South Brisbane District and one in the Gold Coast District, were identified as suitable matches for these hot spots. Therefore, 24 North Brisbane, 1 South Brisbane and 1 Gold Coast District hot spots were matched based on the above mentioned characteristics into 13 matched pairs with a minimum one block 'buffer' between sites as is consistent with hot spot research (Telep et al, 2012; Weisburd & Green, 1995a; Weisburd et al., 2006). Within each pair, the hot spots were randomly allocated to either an experimental or control condition resulting in 13 experimental and 13 control conditions. The MPCO was placed within the 13 experimental hot spots for a period of two to three days at a time of day/night when peak offending had occurred based on the review of historical crime data[3]. The MPCO was not deployed to any of the control hot spots. Policing occurred as normal in all hot spot locations. As the current study relates to perceptions of people using the MPCO and officers deployed to the MPCO, further discussion of the control group is not provided in this paper.

MPCO management and procedural justice training

A key concern for the project was differentiating the MPCO, a 'vehicle' for engagement, from other police vans/vehicles used primarily for law enforcement. The QPS Media Unit utilised the QPS Facebook site and developed a 'Blue's Clues' marketing strategy to let people know where the MPCO would be located next. The first person arriving at the MPCO in a new location who mentioned the 'Blue's Clues' page received a police Lego set.

One designated Sergeant was assigned to manage the MPCO for the duration of the trial who was in turn supported at each deployment by an officer(s) from the local patrol group for the hot spot. Prior to assignment and deployment as a MPCO officer, the Sergeant as well as all supporting staff took part in a 15 minute online procedural justice training segment developed by the QPS[4]. This training segment included a background to hot spot policing with the key ingredients of procedural justice and how they facilitate legitimacy. The segment also described the MPCO trial and asked officers to use the ingredients of procedural justice when engaging with members of the public.

Measures

MPCO Visitor Survey

The MPCO 'Visitors' were member of the public who visited the MPCO during deployments for any reason including general interest/curiosity, to request information, to report a crime, or following an offence (e.g. where either MPCO officers or local officers used the MPCO to process an offender). A key objective of the trial was to gauge the public's reaction to the vehicle (which they were invited to come in and look at) and the procedurally just trained officers, therefore, all members of the public who visited the MPCO for any reason were given an opportunity to complete a short 'customer satisfaction' style survey. Survey questions were drawn from a range of reliable and validated legitimacy questions and scales developed in consultation with national and international experts[5]. The survey included general questions about locating the MPCO (how and why), if it looked different to other enforcement vehicles and to what degree (ten point scale) the MPCO would increase or decrease crime rates, catch or deter offenders, reporting of crime, fear of crime and acts of terrorism. The survey asked respondents to rate (five point scale) their specific encounter with the MPCO officer on the key indicators of procedural justice (e.g. how fair, respectful, approachable officers were and how satisfied they were with the encounter). Whilst demographic data were collected, no readily identifiable data (e.g. name, address) were collected on the survey form. However, respondents could provide their name and contact details on a separate form/online link to go into a draw for one of twenty $50 gift cards.

MPCO officers invited people to complete the survey in paper form or on an MPCO iPad with a link to a Qualtrics survey. Completed paper surveys were put directly in a ballot style box and all surveys completed (paper and online) were only accessible to the project researchers at The University of Queensland. People could also take their survey and return them via a postage paid envelope sent directly to the university.

MPCO Officer Survey

All officers were invited to complete a short survey via Qualtrics at the end of each deployment. Each deployment had the Sergeant and supporting patrol group officer(s)—normally one to two officers. One officer was deployed to two hot spots and completed the survey on each occasion[6]. The survey asked officers about the aims of the MPCO and to what degree (on a ten point scale) the MPCO would increase or decrease crime rates, catching or deterring offenders, reporting of crime, fear of crime and acts of terrorism. Additional questions asked officers on a five point scale to rate *generally* how important it was for officers to police in a procedurally just way (e.g. how important is it for police to treat people with dignity and respect), *specifically* how QPS officers police (e.g. [QPS] police are always polite when dealing with people) and rate their own contact with members of the public (e.g. did you provide community members with an opportunity to express their views) to explore whether police perceive *their own* interactions with members of the public as procedurally just.

Results

MPCO Visitors

Paper and online surveys were completed by people visiting the MPCO between November 26, 2014 and February 24, 2015. The response rate was estimated by the MPCO managing Sergeant who kept a rough count of people who declined to complete a survey whilst visiting the MPCO[7]. A total of 1630 MPCO visitor surveys were returned representing an estimated response rate of 83.92%. Respondents were able to skip/miss questions they did not want to answer; statistics presented are based on the respondents who answered the question (e.g. excluding missing data).

MPCO Visitor Demographics

As represented in Table 1, 51.12% of respondents were males and 48.88% were females between the ages of 9 and 94 with an average age of 35 years. Of the 230 visitors aged between 9 and 20, 39.13% of these were minors (16 or under). The majority (64.57%) of respondents were born in Australia and a minority (3.32%) of respondents identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Slightly more respondents (52.20%) reported that they were currently single[8] than married (47.80%). Almost half of the respondents (49%) had completed a university or postgraduate degree and 67.06% reported that they were working. The demographic characteristics of the MPCO visitor appears to be close to the 'average' Australian (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013) on gender (national population is just over half female), age (average Australian is 37) and percentage of population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (3%).

Table 1: MCPO visitors' demographics

Average Age	35 Missing	N Respondents 1594 40	% 97.55 2.45
Age Range 0–20 21–40 41–60 61–80 81–100		230 730 420 155 7	14.92 47.34 27.24 10.05 0.45
Gender	Male Female Missing	801 766 67	51.12 48.88
Marital Status	Married Single Missing	717 783 134	47.80 52.20
Education Level	Postgraduate University degree Certificate or Diploma Year 12 Year 10 Primary School No School Missing	255 507 311 294 156 31 3 77	16.42 32.58 19.96 18.80 10.05 2.00 0.19
Employment Status	Working Studying Home Duties Retired None	1093 369 94 115 92	67.06 [9] 22.64 5.77 7.06 5.64
Indigenous	Yes No Missing	51 1483 100	3.32 96.68
Country of Birth	Australia Other Missing	1008 553 69	64.57 35.43

Locating the MPCO and visitors' perceptions of the approachability

The survey asked MPCO visitors how they had found out about the MPCO and whether they thought it looked different to other enforcement vehicles. The vast majority of respondents (92.60%) reported that they found out about the MPCO because they were already in the area for another purpose (e.g. to go to a local business). Only 3.50% indicated that they noticed or heard about the MPCO from the QPS media Facebook 'Blues Clues' posts. These results suggest that whilst the use of the QPS media posts was innovative, people did not specifically seek out the MPCO as a result of the posts.

Visitors' perceptions of the look and approachability of the MPCO

MPCO visitors were also asked about the general appearance of the vehicle. As the MPCO key focus was on engagement rather than enforcement, understanding initial perceptions of the vehicle was

important. Whilst 53.45% of respondents agreed[10] that the MPCO did look like other police vehicles, 82.79% agreed that it was more approachable than other enforcement vehicles. The survey did not ask respondents why they thought the MPCO was more approachable so it is unclear whether this was due to the vehicle itself or because the officers were more inviting. However, 41.23% of MPCO visitors responded that they were 'visiting the area to attend a local business (e.g. shop, restaurant, pub etc.)', 23.74% reported that they lived in the area, and 17.35% were working in the area and their reason for attending the MPCO was predominantly 'for information on the MPCO' (40.71%), 'other' (38.52%) or 'to make a general enquiry' (17.39%). Respondents were able to write in comments about their reason for visiting the MPCO. Of the 664 comments recorded, over half (51.65%) of respondents suggested that the MPCO officer initiated contact: 'walked by and was asked to complete a survey', 'they introduced themselves' and 'invited to have a look'. Others appeared to self-initiate contact with comments such as visiting the MPCO out of 'curiosity', 'to provide info', as a 'witness to a ticketable offence', to 'show their child' and to 'congratulate police officers for the great work they do'.

Perceptions of MPCO Officers

The time that visitors spent with MPCO officers ranged from under one minute to 65 minutes with an average encounter length of 7.58 minutes. Respondents were asked to think about their 'contact with the Mobile Police Community Officer(s)' and use a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree (scored as 1) to strongly agree (scored as 5) to rate the officer on a range of procedural justice measures. As illustrated in Figure 2, respondents overwhelmingly 'agreed' police officers staffing the MPCO were approachable (M=4.73, SD=0.54), helpful (M=4.62, SD=0.60), respectful (M=4.74, SD=0.53), professional (M=4.72, SD=0.54), fair (M=4.61, SD=0.66) and clear in their explanations (M=4.64, SD=0.64).

Figure 2: Visitors' perceptions of MPCO officers


Average time of encounter 7.58 minutes
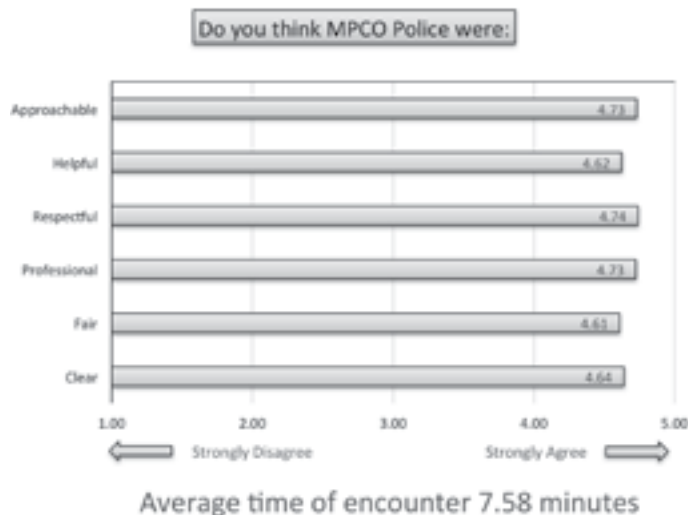
Visitors' Perceptions of the effectiveness of the MPCO on community crime

We asked MPCO visitors to what degree they thought the MPCO would be effective on overall crime rates as well as a range of enforcement outcomes. A ten point scale was used for this measure ranging from greatly decrease (-5) to greatly increase crime (+5) with zero meaning no effect at all. Figure 3 illustrates the respondents' perceptions with an indication of the mean/average score for each question. Overall 76.69% of the visitors to the MPCO believed it would reduce crime rates (M=-1.86, SD=2.66), 68.09% agreed it would decrease the fear of crime (M=-1.49, SD=2.94) and 74.94% agreed it would decrease people choosing to commit an offence (M=-1.98, SD=2.71).

Respondents appear to view the MPCO as a promising general crime deterrent—perhaps because of the large visible presence of the vehicle in the trial hot spots—but did not consider it as effective at catching specific offenders (M=.20, SD=3.11).

Figure 3: Visitors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the MPCO on community crime
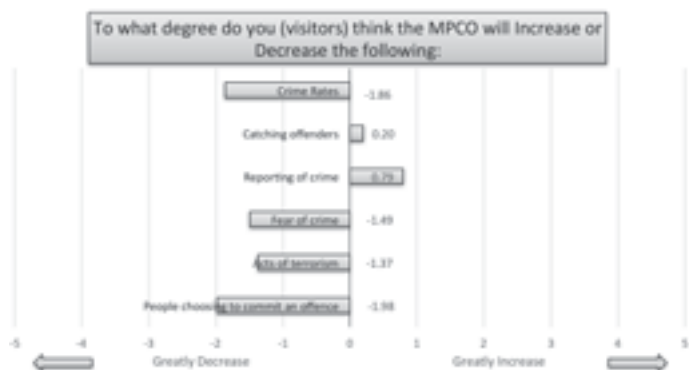
MPCO Officers

Officers completed an online survey whilst assigned to the MPCO. Respondents were able to skip/miss questions they did not want to answer; as with the visitor results, statistics are based on the respondents who answered the question. Even though the survey was voluntary, all 47 officers who completed a shift with the MPCO completed the survey. The average age of the officers was 32 years with a range of 23–59. The officers were predominantly male (80%), born in Australia (84.10%) and had completed a university or post-graduate degree (45.50%). Two officers indicated an Indigenous background (4.50%). The majority of MPCO assigned officers were constables or senior constables (88%) and length of service ranged from 4 months to over 36 years.

Table 2: MPCO officers' demographics

Average Age	32.74 Missing	N Respondents 45 2	% 95.74 4.26
Age Range 21–40 41–60	23–59	45 36 9	95.74 80.00 20.00
Gender	Male Female Missing	36 9 2	80.00 20.00
Education Level	Postgraduate University degree Certificate or Diploma Year 12 Year 10 No School Missing	4 16 15 5 3 1 3	9.09 36.36 34.09 11.36 6.82 2.27
Indigenous	Yes No Missing	2 42 3	4.55 95.45
Country of Birth	Australia Other Missing	37 7 3	84.09 15.91
Avg. Years worked for QPS Range of Years worked for QPS	6.35 yrs 0.33–36.67		

Police perceptions of the aims of the MPCO

The survey asked officers 'what do you think are the top 3 aims of the Mobile Police Community Office'. Figure 4 provides the list of options provided and the percentage of respondents who selected each option. The results suggest that officers saw the MPCO as a valuable community engagement tool with the majority selecting that they thought the MPCO would improve communication with police (97.62%), improve perceptions of safety (94.59%), improve perceptions of police (95.24%) and improve cooperation with police (95%). Fewer police (58.70%) thought that the MPCO would be a realistic approach to policing high crime areas or an effective approach to crime control and 57.14% of police respondents thought the MPCO would increase catching of offenders.

Figure 4: Police perceptions of the top three aims of the MPCO
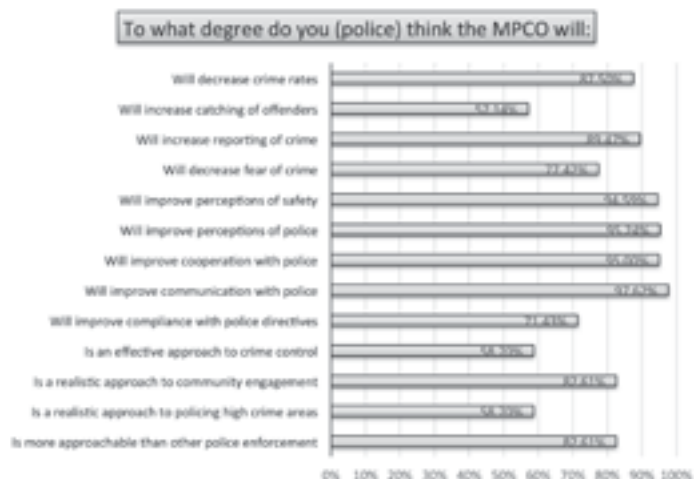
Officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the MPCO on community crime

The survey asked police to report to what degree they thought the MPCO would increase or decrease community crime measures. These items were the same as appeared on the visitors' survey. Figure 5 provides the mean/average results for each item which were on a scale from -5 (greatly decrease) to +5 (greatly increase). Overall, the mean scores reflect that police thought the MPCO would decrease crime rates (M=-1.56, SD=1.37), fear of crime (M=-1.26, SD=1.48) and people choosing to commit an offence (M=-1.21, SD=1.34). The officers thought that the visible presence of the MPCO would have a small degree of impact on catching offenders (M=.5, SD=1.26) and largest impact on reporting of crime (M=2.11, SD=1.66). Interestingly, officers thought that the MPCO could marginally increase acts of terrorism (M=.77, SD=1.72), but as the survey did not provide a space to comment, it is unclear why the officers thought this would be the case, perhaps because it represents a potential target for terrorists (e.g. like a police station).

Figure 5: Officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the MPCO on community crime
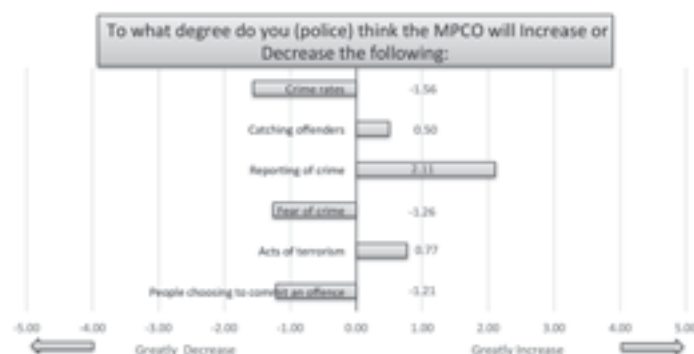
### MPCO officers' perceptions and perceived use of procedural justice

The police survey also explored the MPCO police officers' perceptions of legitimacy and procedural justice and their reported use of procedural justice using a five point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results, displayed in Figure 6, suggest that MPCO police overwhelmingly agree that it is important to abide by the law themselves (M=4.80, SD=0.62), be interested in the well-being of ordinary Australians (M=4.54, SD=0.72), share the goals of ordinary Australians (M=4.28, SD=0.78) and be accountable for their actions (M=4.78, SD=0.55). These police legitimacy measures are further complemented by the responses to procedural justice policing elements including the importance of treating people with respect (M=4.70, SD=0.66), being open and honest (M=4.57, SD=0.72) and keeping the public informed (M=4.37, SD=0.71).

We compared these results with a set of survey questions which asked officers to describe to what extent they had applied procedural justice in their encounter with community members in 'this area'. Figure 7 displays a significant correlation between an officer's perception of the importance of procedural justice and their use of procedural justice in their dealings with the community. Results indicate that the more an MPCO police officer agreed with procedural just policing the more likely they were to report using procedurally just elements during their own encounters with the public at crime hot spots. These results have important implications on how officer perceptions of procedural justice may influence their procedurally just policing behaviour.

Figure 6: MPCO officers' perception of legitimacy and procedural justice

Figure 7: Correlation of officers' reported perceptions and use of procedural justice
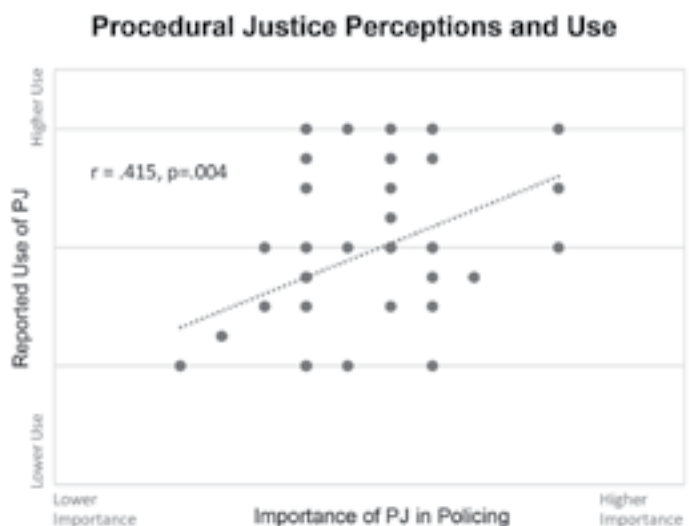
Discussion

The current study explored visitor and police perceptions of the MPCO as it was deployed to crime hot spots in the North Brisbane Region of Queensland between November 2014 and March 2015. The QPS built the MPCO with all of the technical equipment and resources to support regular police station activities and optimised police–community engagement through procedural just policing practices. Across 26 trial hot spots, the MPCO attracted approximately 1,943 visitors, with 1,630 willing to complete a survey.

A valuable discovery was that the majority of people visited the MPCO because they were already in the deployment area—rather than coming to the area specifically to visit the MPCO. In addition, whilst the QPS made significant efforts to modify the look of the van by using an artistic variation of the crest and including the community sponsors on the exterior, respondents did not readily distinguish the MPCO from other enforcement vehicles. These findings suggests that the QPS social media outlets, on their own, may not provide sufficient exposure for the MPCO to advise the community of its daily location and the QPS may need to consider significant advertising and exposure to increase people's awareness that they can treat the MPCO like a police beat or counter. However, whilst visitors reported that the MPCO looked like other enforcement vehicles, they also reported that MPCO was more 'approachable'. Their written comments suggest that the MPCO police may have facilitated this perception by 'inviting' members of the public to 'come and look' at the vehicle or complete the survey. It would be useful to compare these results with the public's attitudes towards other police contact points such as police beats or shop fronts, which are commonly located in areas of concern for police.

An important finding was the length of encounter visitors had with police during the trial. As reported, visitors spoke to officers (on average) for almost 8 minutes. The quality of these encounters was evident in the high ratings of officers' application of procedural justice (e.g. fair, respectful). As described in the literature review, when police engage with the public using the ingredients of procedural justice, the public perceive police as a legitimate authority and are consequently more likely to respect their authority and comply/cooperate with police directives. It was beyond the scope of this study to examine whether long term behavioural change occurred as a result of the MPCO encounter (another future opportunity for research) but we would suggest that these positive encounters provide a rich foundation for future engagement with police.

Another interesting component of the research was the perception of the MPCO as an effective response to a range of community crime issues. Both visitors and police respondents could see the potential of the MPCO as a general deterrent (e.g. decrease crime and people choosing to commit an offence) but were less optimistic as a specific crime prevention tool (e.g. to catch offenders). Visitors and police had completely different perceptions only in relation to the potential impact on 'acts of terrorism', with visitors suggesting the MPCO could decrease whilst police thought the MPCO would increase—perhaps as a potential terrorist target.

When exploring the police results it was noteworthy that when MPCO officers agreed that procedural justice was important, this translated (in their perception) to using procedural justice in their encounters with the public. Future research in this area would benefit from observing officers during their encounters with the public to more effectively measure this domain. These results suggest that further exposure and applied use of procedural justice, through training and leadership, may have a positive impact on policing and optimise encounters with the community.

End Notes

1. Forthcoming in the Journal of Experimental Criminology (JOEX).

2. To qualify as a hotspot in the North Brisbane District, each location had to have 100 or more reported occurrences (crimes) within the 12 month period.

3. An algorithm of peak offending periods for each hot spot was calculated by Dr Gentry White and Assistant Professor Mike Porter.

4. The procedural justice training presentation was developed by QPS Inspector Mike Newman and Assistant Commissioner Peter Martin.

5. See especially Mazerolle et al., 2012; Antrobus & Pilotto (forthcoming); Macqueen & Bradford, 2015.

6. The second survey was retained for this analysis to ensure each hot spot had valid police officer perceptions.

7. We estimate that 383 people declined to complete a survey or took a paper survey but did not return/post it back to the University.

8. Respondents were asked to report on their current marital status with a choice of 'Married (including de facto relationships)' and 'Single (including divorced, separated or widowed).'

9. These percentages are not cumulative as respondents, in some cases, selected multiple categories.

10. Agreed includes survey response option 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.

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Links to more information about the MPCO

http://www.couriermail.com.au/questnews/southeast/queensland-police-service-data-reveals-southside-suburbs-with-most-crime/news-story/9391dd3694b5ba4d3a51cbcdc 0f0b574

Evidence based policing: Science or art

Brian Blakemore, International Centre for Policing and Security, University of South Wales.

In his article 'Policing isn't a Science' in this journal, Chief Superintendent Alex Murray suggests that evidence based policing as a different process to the scientific approach. This is a slightly contentious position to take, and this article will briefly discuss this.

The word science is derived from Latin and its origin means 'to know'. So to know facts or understand mechanisms is a vital part of developing better ways of working but it is not the complete process of development and ultimately delivery.

Marketing, for example, which arguably is a combination of art and science, is concerned with understanding needs and distinguishing between features and benefits and leads on to a customer based service. However when it comes to Evidence Based Policing the aim is to frame the question as widely as possible, to use reliable and valid measurements or observations etc., to find out what is going on. This leads to objectively analysing the results and so hopefully developing a better understanding of related mechanisms that drive the outcomes under consideration.

This type of process follows the scientific method of investigation. The scientific method is what should be used in, for example, criminal investigations and failure to take a wide view of the situation and to remain objective about what evidence is available has caused the failure of many such criminal investigations.

Examples where investigators have formed narrow views and have therefore not used available information or have not looked for available forensic evidence include cases such as the Yorkshire Ripper case in the UK where the best description of an attacker (the Yorkshire Ripper) was not used as the police decided that it was a so called 'Black on Black' incident despite the victim stating it was a white attacker.

More recently a coroner's review of the highly publicised Deepcut Base British Army deaths in the UK revealed that the police investigation into the death of Cheryl James did not collect all available evidence as it was assumed from the start that it was a suicide.

The scientific method attempts to overcome such weaknesses in the human thought processes, where 'confirmation bias' is a long established failing whereby the brain decides the most likely reason (or suspect) and concentrates the effort on proving this false assumption.

The scientific method looks to have as wide a framework for investigation as possible and to eliminate where evidence is such that the elimination can be objectively made.

To build up a full understanding of how something works, the scientific method requires application of the acronym 'VAST'. VAST stands for:

- Make **Valid** measurements or observations which are *unbiased* and *accurate*.

- Make conclusions which take into account the work of **All** other scientists in the past. (This means one should be familiar with the *scientific literature* of the subject).

- Make conclusions which are based on a reasonable number of experiments (so that you *have* **Sufficient** *data*).

- Create theories from the conclusions over time and wherever possible, making predictions *which will allow the theory to be* **Tested**.

The link between scientific process and policing has been in front of us for many years in the work of Prof Hans Gross, a magistrate and the founder of scientific criminal investigation; whilst of course the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, whose thinking was based upon Conan Doyle's lecturer in medical college, regularly exhorted others to use the scientific method:

I never guess. It is a capital crime to theorise before one has data. Insensibly, one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to fit facts.

S Holmes in A Study in Scarlet (1887)

In conclusion, the scientific approach is a clear and sure method which should underpin policing activities, including the evidence based policing approach, and should complement, not exclude each other.
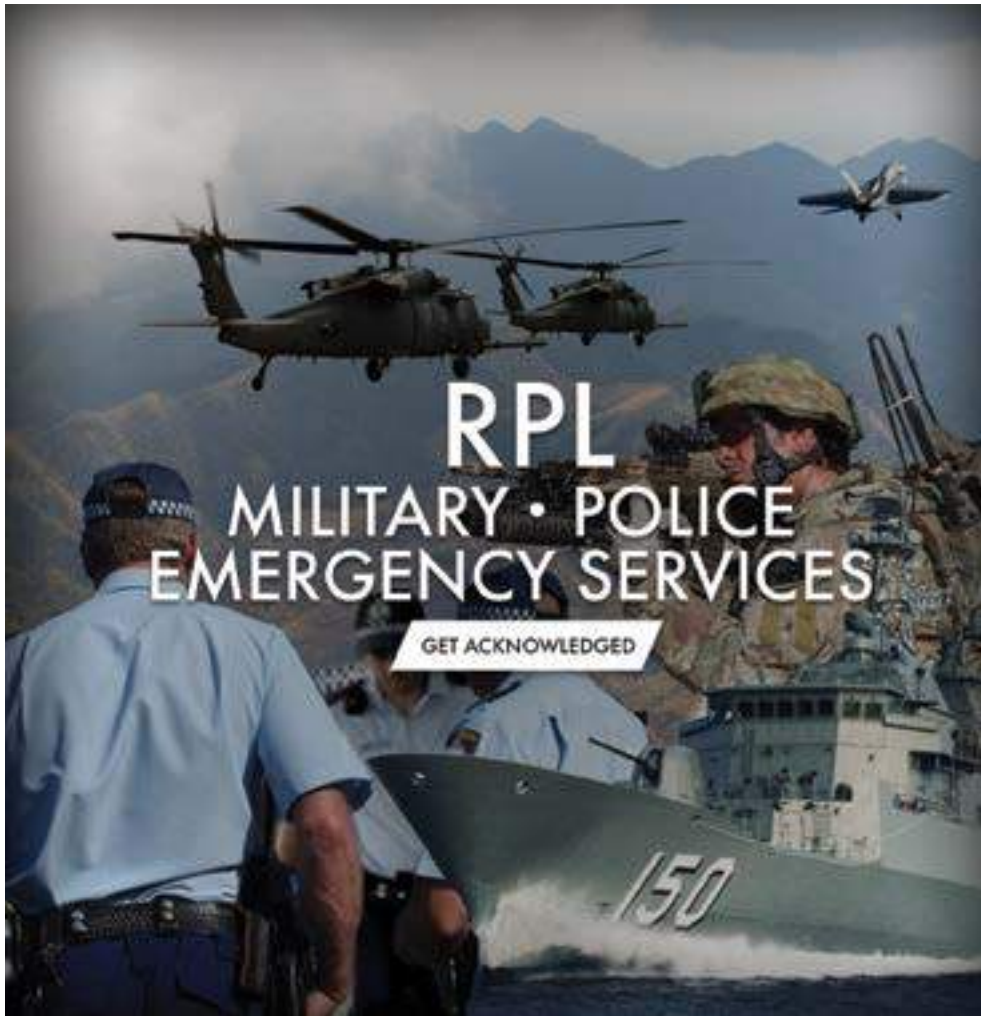
Medic Alert Foundation Launches
'Make Yourself Known' National Campaign

Australia Medic Alert Foundation has launched its *'Make Yourself Known'* education campaign as part of its efforts to encourage Australians who suffer from a range of potentially life-threatening medical conditions to be proactive and better protect themselves.

MedicAlert Foundation Chairperson, Ms Margaret Gehrig, said the education campaign is to be rolled out across the nation, and will draw on a mix of television advertising, online activity and use of social media to remind people of the life-saving membership benefits with the leading not-for-profit organisation.

"More than 160,000 people from across Australia have chosen to become a Medic Alert member as part of their own personal risk-management strategy, but it is estimated that as many as one in every three Australians have some type of medical condition or special needs where they could also benefit from being a member," Ms Gehrig said.

"We are regularly contacted by people who tell us that their Medic Alert membership helped them or a loved one when it was most needed, and other times it is someone with a serious medical issue that decides to join because a 'near-miss' has motivated them to better protect themselves," she said.

"There are varied reasons why someone chooses to become a Medic Alert member, such as having a heart condition, severe asthma, a life-threatening allergy to a commonly used drug or food, a medical condition such as haemophilia or a loved one that suffers from memory loss or dementia."

"Emergency services around the world are trained to look on the wrist or neck for our internationally recognised symbol, with the emblem designed so it does not have to be removed in an emergency to read the life-saving information engraved on the back."

Ms Gehrig said that being a Medic Alert member offered peace of mind and provided people with the freedom to live their lives to the fullest, knowing their important medical information is readily available if they can't speak for themselves during an emergency.

About Medic Alert Foundation

For over 40 years, Australia Medic Alert Foundation has been the Nation's only not-for-profit organisation providing a 24/7 personal medical emergency information and identification service, with close to 300,000 members joining since 1971.

MedicAlert members wear a bracelet or necklace with a genuine MedicAlert emblem custom engraved with their vital medical information, membership number and hotline number.

The 24/7 hotline allows emergency service personnel and healthcare professionals to access important additional medical and other details quickly and efficiently in a time of need.