Addressing the paradox of policing research...

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Paradoxes, paradigms and pluralism: reflections on future directions for police science in Europe (CEPOL 2012)

- **Paradoxes** – police science as a ‘successful failure’
- **Paradigms** – reconnecting science and policing
- **Pluralism** – police science must maintain a diversity of interests and approaches
Addressing the paradox of policing research

• Four Questions and a Framework... to help understand the challenges of evidence-based practice in policing

• Questions of...
  • Types of knowledge;
  • Research utilisation;
  • Models of implementation;
  • Conceptual perspectives;

• A framework for evidence-based practice
I Types of knowledge about policing (or ‘what counts as evidence?’)

Evidence-Based Policing

“Police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best.”

Lawrence Sherman, 1998
Different types of knowledge needed for evidence-based practice…

- Know **what** works – what interventions are effective
- Know **about** problems – why they occur, who is most at risk of harm?
- Know **how** to put into practice – what are the risks of implementation failure?
- Know **who** to involve – what can partners contribute?
- Know **why** action is required – are the drivers social, political, economic?
Tacit versus Explicit Knowledge

- ‘Evidence-based practice is more than a matter of simply accessing, critically appraising, and implementing research findings. It also involves integrating knowledge with professional judgment and expertise’ (Davies, 1999)
- ‘Research alone cannot tell us what [the police] should do –we need the experience of practitioners as well as the experiments of science’ (Moore, 2010).
Hierarchies of evidence

- **Systematic Reviews** (Based on level 3-5 studies)
- **Randomised controlled trials**
- **Before/after measures**
  - Multiple site comparisons
- **Before/after measures**
  - Two site comparisons
- **Before/after measures**
  - No comparison site
- **One-off measure**
  - No comparison site
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Qualitative research</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Case-control studies</th>
<th>Cohort studies</th>
<th>RCTs</th>
<th>Quasi-experimental studies</th>
<th>Non-experimental studies</th>
<th>Systematic reviews</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does doing this work better than doing that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does it work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does it matter?</td>
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<td>Will it do more good than harm?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will service users be willing to or want to take up the service offered?</td>
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<td>Is it worth buying this service?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it the right service for these people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are users, providers, and other stakeholders satisfied with the service?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Petticrew and Roberts 2003, Table 1, p.528.
Question I

• What should count as ‘good enough’ evidence for evidence-based practice in policing?
II Types of Research Utilisation

Awareness  
Knowledge and understanding  
Attitudes, perceptions, ideas  
Practice and policy change

More conceptual uses  
More instrumental uses

Tackling gang violence  
Hot Spots Policing
Research as an instrument of persuasion?
Question II

• To what extent should we be concerned with the enlightenment as well as the instrumental uses of research in evidence-based policing?
III Processes of implementation

Research *into* practice
(evidence is external to world of practitioners)

*vs*

Research *in* practice
(evidence generation and professional practice inter-twined)
Research into practice: framing the knowledge exchange challenge as ‘two communities’

- **Divergent**
  - interests, priorities, incentives, language, dynamics
  - conceptions of knowledge and time-scales
  - status and power

- **Leading to**
  - communication difficulties
  - mismatch between supply and demand
  - rejection and implementation failure

(from Nutley, 2013)
Research into practice

$SI = f(E, C, F)$

SI = Successful Implementation

E = Evidence (research findings, professional experience, citizen preferences);

C = Context (culture, leadership, monitoring systems);

F = Facilitation (characteristics of facilitator, including skills, knowledge, approach)
Research in practice

• Challenges dualism of research and practice;
• Focus on co-production and locally situated practices;
• Engaging practitioners in change programmes.
Question III

• How can we move beyond linear models of research use and engage more closely with the complexities of evidence based practice?
IV Different perspectives that can inform evidence-based policing:

• **Individual Learning** – how do police officers learn?
• **Organisational Learning** – how do police organisations build up and use knowledge?
• **Change Management** – how do individual officers, groups and organisations hinder/facilitate change?
• **Institutional Theory** – what impact does the wider social and political environment have on use of knowledge in police organisations?
Question IV

• Which perspectives will help us develop a better understanding of the challenges around evidence-based practice in policing?
V A framework for thinking about different forms of evidence-based practice

• **Type of evidence**: evidence from research versus evidence from routine data;

• **Focus of attention** – individual practitioners vs. broader organisation/system
The Scottish Institute for Policing Research

Evidence from Research

System Re-design
Evidence-based Problem Solver
System Adjustment
Reflective Practitioner

Broader Organisational System

Individual Practitioner

Evidence from Routine Data
Concluding thoughts…

The challenge for all of us in the knowledge business…

“Yes, it’s quite a noise – but are we having any impact?”
Where does research really feature in policy makers hierarchy of evidence?

Box 6: One insider’s view of policymakers’ hierarchy of evidence

1. Expert evidence (including consultants and think tanks).
2. Opinion-based evidence (including lobbyists/pressure groups).
3. Ideological evidence (party think tanks, manifestos).
5. Internet evidence.
7. Street evidence (urban myths, conventional wisdom).

Source: Phil Davies, former Deputy Chief Social Researcher, 2007.
Thank You

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