

Theory or not Theory? ... Reducing the Evidence-Practice Gap

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The Use of Theory?

There is a growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based policing (EBP) (Neyroud, Ferreira & Vera, 2015)

But it is argued that a fundamental disconnect still exists between science and policing organisations (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011)

Recognition that achieving strong collaborative relationships between researchers and police practitioners is not straightforward (Fyfe & Wilson, 2012)

The Use of *Social Science* Theory?

Furthermore despite the identification of the need for the advancement of science in policing as being essential for legitimacy in the face of recessionary budget pressures, the social sciences have been largely neglected (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011)

To date EBP research has focused mainly on crime control
(Punch, 2015)

The Challenges Facing Policing

Police organisations are continuing to face high levels of challenge due to the reduction in resources available to them

Across the country the police forces have had to restructure and reduce their number of employees

Within the police profession there is growing concern at some of the possible consequences, such as increased levels of absence and *burnout* in police officers, and *changes in police officer attitudes*

The Challenges Facing Policing

Some early indicators of increasing levels of incivility towards the public and of concerns about reduced empathy with victims of crime

An *overstretched* workforce that increasingly “complies” with policing initiatives rather than being committed to these initiatives and fully engaging with practices?

“Too often, victim contact is viewed by officers as just another *bureaucratic* (our emphasis) requirement” (HMIC, 2014: 50-52)¹

¹HMIC (2014). State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2013/2014. London: Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary. Published 31st March 2014.

The Challenges Facing Policing

At the same time as reduced resources, the police profession is coming under increasing pressure to ensure that all officers and staff act with integrity

While the HMIC acknowledged that most Chief Officers have provided visible leadership and communication on ethical behaviour, they also concluded that “Chief Officers have more to do in creating an ethical culture in their forces,” (HMIC, 2014: 87)¹

¹ HMIC (2014b). Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge. London: Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary. Published 22nd July 2014.

The Use of Theory

Suggestion is that adoption of an evidence-based management (EBM) model will reduce “research-practice gaps” (Rousseau, 2006)

Evidence-based management (EBM) means managerial decisions and organisational practices informed by the best available scientific evidence (Rousseau & McCathy, 2007)

Given the powerful impact policing leaders’ decisions and behaviours have on their organisations, individuals and the public, competence in decision-making is a critical factor for organisational success

Some of the Measures Used

- ✓ Ethical Leadership
- ✓ Public Service Motivation
- ✓ Commitment to the Public
- ✓ Vision Clarity
- ✓ Importance of Force Mission
- ✓ Pride (Organisation)
- ✓ Perceptions of Organisational Support
- ✓ Individual-Code of Ethics Values Alignment
- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Engagement
- ✓ Emotional Energy
- ✓ Job Satisfaction
- ✓ Discretionary Effort
- ✓ Decision Making
- ✓ Voice Behaviour

Research Aims

To develop reliable key measures in each force that can be tracked over time

To develop predictive models to identify factors having the largest impact on focal measures and be able to recommend priorities for action

To establish a selection of measures that allow interested forces to compare themselves with each other

Questions and Discussion

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