



CEPOL ANNUAL EUROPEAN POLICE RESEARCH AND SCIENCE CONFERENCE

Lisbon, 5th – 8th October 2015

THURSDAY, 8TH OCTOBER

09:15-10:30 (Auditorium 1)

Evidence-based policing: a new perspective of cooperation between practice, education and police science?

What *really* matters in policing?

Professor Maurice Punch (London School of Economics and Political Science)





“If it works in New York it will work anywhere”
(Bill Bratton, former and current NYPD Commissioner)



Contents

1. Context
2. ‘Evidence’ and research styles
3. Key issues
4. Conclusion



1. Context

- Complex topic
- Centralization and other trends
- Professional status
- Random trials
- Valuable contribution
- Methodological issues
- Ideological fixation
- Willful blindness
- Growing susceptibility

2. 'Evidence' and research styles

- What is 'evidence'?
- Sociology of knowledge
- Learning from experience (officers)
- Sharing experiences (researchers)
- Multiple approaches advisable





3. Key issues

- Validity & reliability
- Complexity of police work
- Unanticipated consequences
- Doctoring of data

4. Conclusion

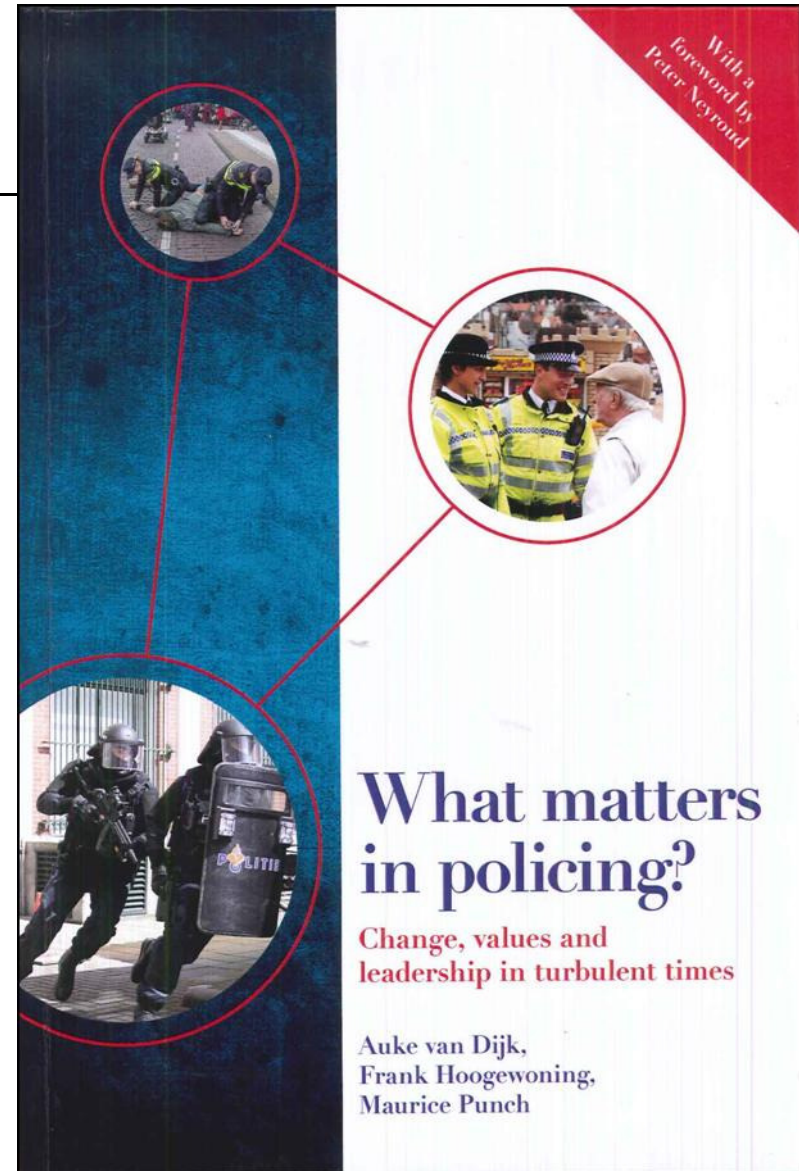
- All forms welcome
- No claims of scientific superiority
- 'Triangulation'
- Involvement of police officers
- Avoid 'McDonaldization' / quick fix
- '*What works*' superceded by '***what matters***'





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1. CONTEXT

- **TOPIC OF SESSION IS COMPLEX: NEED TO ADDRESS HISTORY OF POLICING AND POLICE RESEARCH, DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICE RESEARCH (WHILE THIS VARIES PER COUNTRY)**
- **TRENDS: CENTRALIZATION , NARROWING OF MANDATE – ONLY “CUT CRIME”, EMPHASIS ON**

TERRORISM AND ORGANIZED CRIME, NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, AUSTERITY, CHANGES IN GOVERNANCE

- **ALONG WITH THAT A SEARCH FOR PROFESSIONAL STATUS WITH A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE (LIKE MEDICINE): e. g. ENGLAND & WALES – HOME OFFICE & COLLEGE OF POLICING DEMANDING ONLY “EVIDENCE BASED POLICING” / EBP WITH MANTRA “WHAT WORKS?”**
- **EBP AS “EXPERIMENTAL” RESEARCH, BASED IDEALLY ON “RANDOM CONTROLLED TRIALS” / RCTs - STRETCHING BACK TO US POLICE FOUNDATION PROJECTS IN THE 1970S (e. g. *KANSAS CITY RANDOM PATROL STUDY*)**
- **STREAM OF EBP WORK HAS ENRICHED POLICE RESEARCH & POLICING SINCE THEN IN VARIOUS FORMS INCLUDING SITUATIONAL CRIME CONTROL: WORK OF LARRY SHERMAN (CAMBRIDGE), GLORIA LAYCOK (UNIV. COLLEGE LONDON) AND DAVID WEISBRUD (GEORGE MASON UNIV.) - WITH OTHERS - HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY INFLUENTIAL**
- **THERE ARE METHODOLOGICAL & ETHICAL ISSUES AROUND EBP BUT ALSO PROFESSIONAL FRICTIONS WHEN IT CLAIMS PRIMACY AS “REAL SCIENCE” AND BECOMES CLOSELY TIED TO THE CRIME CONTROL LOBBY – ALSO RELATION TO FUNDING**
- **THERE IS EVEN A CONTRADICTION IN THAT THOSE SUPPORTING EBP IN GOVERNMENT SEEM TOTALLY**

DISINTERESTED IN MOST RESEARCH GIVEN THEIR IDEOLOGICAL FIXATION ON CRIME REDUCTION AS THE SOLE FUNCTION OF POLICING (e. g. HOME SECRETARY THERESA MAY)

- **FOR THERE`S A SOLID BODY OF “EVIDENCE” THAT POLICE CANNOT DO A GREAT DEAL ABOUT REDUCING CRIME BECAUSE THAT IS OUTSIDE OF THEIR POWER - e. g. REINER (2007 & 2010) & OVERVIEW BY SKOGAN & FRYDL (2004) – BUT THIS IS IGNORED WITH WILFUL BLINDNESS**
- **QUESTIONABLE IF THE POLICE ORGANIZATION & CULTURE IS OPEN TO EBP: POLICING IS HIGHLY CONTEXTUAL AND INCIDENT BASED WITH A TENDENCY TO IGNORE RESEARCH. YET THERE ARE NOW BETTER EDUCATED OFFICERS WITH DEGREES WHO UNDERSTAND RESEARCH**
- **e. g. HONEY`S [UNIV. PORTSMOUTH] THESIS ON “MET” IN LONDON WHERE EVEN IN-HOUSE RESEARCH IGNORED AND THE RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIC POLICY UNIT WAS MARGINAL**

2. “EVIDENCE” AND RESEARCH STYLES

- **IT ALSO ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT ONE MEANS BY “EVIDENCE”: MOST POLICE RESEARCH HAS NOT BEEN CONDUCTED ON EBP LINES BUT HAS BEEN PRODUCED USING DIVERSE METHODS AND OFTEN OF A *QUALITATIVE* NATURE**

- **NEED FOR SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE OVERVIEW OF POLICE FIELD: IT'S RELATIVELY YOUNG AND CAN BE TRACED TO THE PIONEERS IN THE US AND UK IN THE 1960s (e. g. BITTNER, SKOLNICK, BANTON): THEIR FIELD WORK WAS BASED PRIMARILY ON *OBSERVATION* AND WAS *QUALITATIVE* - IN STYLE OF 1930`s CHICAGO SCHOOL - THAN QUANTITATIVE**

- **KEY INSIGHT WAS THAT POLICE OFFICERS LEARNED THEIR *CRAFT* FROM EXPERIENCE ON THE BEAT AND FROM THE TACIT KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE : THE PATROLMAN (THEN ALWAYS A "HE") KEPT A HIGHLY SPECIFIC LOCAL ORDER - "KEEPING THE PEACE" - BY KNOWING HIS PATCH AND ITS CHARACTERS AND THROUGH A PALETTE OF DISCRETIONARY OPTIONS**

- **THIS IS (OR WAS) THE BASIS OF PATROL POLICING AND THE RESEARCHER WAS MEANT TO *EXPERIENCE* THE PRIMARY PROCESSES BY SHARING THAT WORLD IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE ESSENCE OF THE PROFESSION**

- **THERE ARE, MOREOVER, MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO POLICE RESEARCH INCLUDING:**
 - ***HISTORICAL RESEARCH***

 - ***SURVEYS***

 - ***PSYCHOLGOCAL TESTING***

- ***INTERVIEWS (INDIVIDUAL & GROUP)***
- ***COMPARATIVE (WITHIN A SOCIETY AND CROSS-NATIONAL)***
- ***MEDIA STUDIES***
- ***COVERT RESEARCH***
- ***FIELD WORK / PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION***
- ***CASE STUDIES***
- ***EXPERIMENTAL AND QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL***
- ***MIXED METHODS***

3. KEY ISSUES

- **AS WITH ALL SOCIAL SCIENCE ISSUES OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY: WE DON'T HAVE "LAWS" AND "THEORIES" AS IN NATURAL SCIENCES**
- **AND DIFFICULTIES WITH EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH GIVEN SHIFTING COMPLEXITY OF SOME POLICE WORK: NOT ALWAYS A STABLE ENVIRONMENT THAT CAN BE "FROZEN" AND KEPT CONFINED TO SIMPLE VARIABLES OVER TIME**
- **e. g. HISTORICAL POLICE INVESTIGATION IN BRITAIN OF POSSIBLE SEXUAL ABUSE OF YOUNG CHILDREN OVER SEVERAL DECADES WITH SOME 260 SUSPECTS INCLUDING MEDIA CELEBRITIES (e. g.**

JIMMY SAVILLE – SERIAL ABUSER) AND ESTABLISHMENT FIGURES (e. g. A FORMER PRIME MINISTER)

- **IT`S COMPLEX, WIDE RANGING, TIME CONSUMING, REQUIRING CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES, HIGHLY SENSITIVE POLITICALLY, PROBLEMS WITH GARNERING EVIDENCE AND ITS CREDIBILITY IN COURT, INTENSE MEDIA SCUTINY, PROBLEMS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT (SHIFTS IN PERSONNEL AND LOSS OF EXPERTISE) AND RAISING ISSUES OF INSTITUTIONAL BIAS, INCOMPETENCE AND BENDING TO POLITICAL PRESSURE**

- **SIMILARLY THE DUTCH CASE OF A PAEDOPHILE WHO ABUSED VERY YOUNG CHILDREN IN THREE DAY-CARE CENTRES AND PUT PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL HE HAD TAKEN OF THAT ABUSE ON THE INTERNET: MASSIVE OPERATION WAS MOUNTED WHICH INVOLVED INTERVIEWING SOME 500 PARENTS FOR VICTIM IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES, CLOSE COOPERATION WITH MULTIPLE AGENCIES (CITY HALL, HEALTH SERVICE, CHILD PROTECTION, PROSECUTOR`S OFFICE) AND ASSISTING INVESTIGATIONS GLOBALLY LEADING TO 43 ARRESTS ABROAD**

- **THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF COMPLEX CASES WITH MANY ACTORS AND MULTIPLE AGENCIES, SOME COVERING YEARS IF NOT DECADES (LOCKERBIE, SCOTLAND, PLANE BOMBING AND TRIALS) WHICH ARE NOT AMENABLE TO AN EBP**

APPROACH (AND PEOPLE IN THIS HALL MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED SUCH A CASE)

- **ANOTHER LIMITING FACTOR IS THE UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL AND POLICY CHANGE: THE CLASSICAL EXAMPLE IS THE *MINNEAPOLIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIMENT* (SHERMAN & BERK: 1982): THE STUDY CONCLUDED ON THE BASIS OF RESEARCH THAT THERE SHOULD BE THE ROUTINE ARREST OF THE OFFENDER (USUALLY MALE) TO BRING DOWN PARTNER VICTIMIZATION: INDEED THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY LED TO WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF THIS MANDATORY ARREST POLICY ABROAD**

- **APART FROM LATER CRITICISM OF THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, THERE WAS THE UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCE THAT THE POLICY LED TO *MORE* PARTNER VICTIMIZATION AND NOT LESS: AND SHERMAN HAS SINCE STATED THAT THE ORIGINAL POLICY IMPLICATION IS NOT SOUND AND MANDATORY LAWS ARE “UNWISE AND SHOULD BE REPEALED” (BOWLING: 2006)**

- **ANOTHER FACTOR IS THAT POLICE OFFICERS (NOT UNLIKE OTHER WORKERS BUT PERHAPS MORE SO) CAN BE MANIPULATIVE AND EVEN DEVIOS AND MAY PLAY SUITABLE ROLES FOR OUTSIDERS, COLLUDE ON ACCEPTABLE ANSWERS TO SURVEYS AND CYNICALLY DOCTOR DATA**

- **e. g. THE FALL IN REPORTED CRIME IN NEW YORK DURING THE “ZERO TOLERANCE / BROKEN**

WINDOWS” ERA FROM THE MID-1990s ONWARDS - WHICH BROUGHT WORLD WIDE ATTENTION AND MUCH COPYING - WAS PARTLY GENERATED BY INTIMIDATION FROM ABOVE, NON-REPORTING OF OR DOWNGRADING OF CRIMES AND MASSIVELY MANIPULATING DATA (ETERNO AND SILVERMAN: 2012). THIS SORT OF CONTRUCTION OF REALITY AND FABRICATION OF DATA DOES NOT FIT WELL WITH THE VALIDITY OF EBP RESEARCH

4. CONCLUSION

- **FINALLY, I WOULD ARGUE THAT WE SHOULD WELCOME ALL FORMS OF RESEARCH AND NOT FALL INTO SOME KIND OF DIVISIVE SCHISM AROUND HOW “SCIENTIC” A CERTAIN RESEARCH METHOD CLAIMS TO BE**

- **INDEED I WOULD STRONGLY ECHO THE SUB-TITLE OF THIS SESSION AND SUPPORT COOPERATION BETWEEN PRACTICE, EDUCATION AND POLICE SCIENCE: THAT SHOULD BE THE PATH AHEAD BUT THEN WITH MIXED METHODS WHICH SHOULD PRODUCE BETTER DATA WITH “TRIANGULATION”**

- **ANOTHER INSIGHT IS THAT THE ACCEPTANCE OF RESEARCH WOULD BE ENHANCED IF OFFICERS ARE INVOLVED THROUGHOUT IN SETTING UP A PROJECT AND DISSEMINATING ITS FINDINGS**

- **e. g. THE REPEAT BURGLARY RESEARCH IN GB (ANDERSON, CHENERY & PEASE:1995) WAS BASED**

ON INTERVIEWS WITH IMPRISONED BURGLARS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH DETECTIVES ON HOW BURGLARS SET ABOUT THEIR TRADE: THE RESULTS LED TO A FALL IN BUGLARY AND MORE ARRESTS: IT WAS NOT A CLASSICAL RCT BUT IT USED CRIMINOLOGICAL METHODS TO PRODUCE GUIDELINES ALONG WITH OFFICERS` INPUT THAT BROUGHT ABOUT POSITIVE RESULTS

- **HOWEVER, WHAT WE DO NOT WANT IS EBP CLAIMING THE STATUS OF “SCIENTIFIC” SUPERIORITY TO THE EXCLUSION OF OTHER STYLES OF RESEARCH AS IF ONLY “TRUE BELIEVERS” ARE WELCOME**

- **THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO BECAUSE GOVERNMENTS HAVE BECOME OBSESSED WITH GOALS OF EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS AND HAVE ADOPTED THE MANTRA “WHAT WORKS?”**

- **THIS IS UNDERSTANDABLE AT ONE LEVEL BUT AT ANOTHER LEVEL THERE IS THE DANGER OF SEEKING STANDARD SOLUTIONS AS IF THE COMPLEX REALITY OF POLICING CAN BE REDUCED TO INSTRUMENTAL CHECK-LISTS**

- **UNDERLYING THIS, WITH ROOTS IN SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT, IS A CRUDE PARADIGM OF ABSOLUTE CONTROL: SHERMAN (1998) WRITES OF INFORMATION EXPERTS IN THE POLICE STATION WITH ACCESS TO COMPUTERISED INFORMATION ON CRIME AND CRIME PATTERNS LEADING TO DISPATCHING INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS TO COVER**

CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED INCIDENTS - THIS IS A DIGITAL “BIG BROTHER” REDUCING COPS TO NEAR ROBOTS UNDER CONSTANT SCRUTINY

- **THIS IS A BELIEF IN TECHNOLOGY WITH A REDUCTION IN OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY THAT FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE ON THE HIGHLY CONTINGENT NATURE OF POLICING AND THE CRAFT BASED USE OF DISCRETION**
- **THE DANGER OF GOING DOWN THAT ROAD IS THE “MCDONALIZATION” OF POLICING – “ONE SIZE FITS ALL” AND “EVERYONE CAN DO IT” – AND THE INFANTILIZATION OF THE BASIC POLICING TASK THROUGH A NEGLECT OF THE COP’S CRAFT AND AN UNDERMINING OF HER IDENTITY AND MOTIVATION AS A FRONT-LINE PROFESSIONAL**
- **IN CONTRAST I AND MY CO-AUTHORS (VAN DIJK, HOOGEWONING AND PUNCH: 2015), MAINTAIN THAT WHILE “WHAT WORKS” IS IMPORTANT IT ALWAYS IS SUPERCEDED BY “WHAT MATTERS”**
- **FOR POLICING IS ABOUT THE CRUCIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE AND VITALLY ABOUT JUSTICE, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INTEGRITY, RIGHTS (ALSO FOR POLICE OFFICERS), ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE**
- **MOREOVER, THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON POLICE IN RECENT DECADES BUT MANY AREAS HAVE HARDLY BEEN**

TOUCHED ON: THIS IMPLIES THAT THERE SHOULD BE WIDER BASED RESEARCH WITH MULTIPLE METHODS AND NOT BASED PREDOMINANTLY ON ONE APPROACH

- **THERE WILL ALWAYS BE AN UNDERSTANDABLE DEMAND FOR “WHAT WORKS”: BUT WHAT OSTENSIBLY “WORKS” IN NEW YORK MAY NOT WORK IN HELSINKI, DUBLIN, LISBON OR MADISON WISCONSIN: AND WHAT WORKED YESTERDAY MAY NOT WORK TOMORROW: THIS MEANS LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY AND CONSTANT REAPPRAISAL**

- **THE DANGER IS OF GOING FOR THE QUICK FIX AND STANDARD “FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH” SOLUTIONS. YET THE LEGACY OF 70 YEARS RESEARCH TELLS US THAT POLICING IS COMPLEX, DEMANDING AND TOUCHES ON SOME OF THE MOST VITAL FEATURES OF HOW THE STATE TREATS ITS CITIZENS. THIS IMPLIES THAT VALUES, JUDGEMENT AND CONSTANT LEARNING BASED ON AN ETHIC OF SERVICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE OF THE ESSENCE**

- **THE IMPLICATION FOR THIS CEPOL CONFERENCE IS THAT POLICE RESEARCH – AT A TIME OF TURBULENCE IF NOT CRISIS IN POLICING – IS THAT RESEARCH ALWAYS HAS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT “WHAT MATTERS” .**

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