

# **EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY AND PRACTICE IN POLICING**

## **THE CHALLENGE OF HOW TO BRIDGE THE KNOWLEDGE GAP**

**David Bradley**

Victoria Police Research Fellow, Office of Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

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**Evidence-informed Policy and Practice in Policing: the Challenge of  
How to Bridge the Knowledge Gap**

**Delivering Crime Prevention: Making the Evidence Work**

**David Bradley  
Victoria Police Research Fellow  
Office of Chief Commissioner  
Victoria Police**

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## **Introduction**

“...making a reality of evidence-based policy and practice remains a major challenge.” (Nutley and Davies, in Davies et al: 2000)

I want to start by paying tribute to the late Professor Jim Fyfe, of Temple University, and Director of Training, New York City Police Department. Jim died last week, aged 63. He was a very helpful advisor to Victoria Police on a number of occasions in recent times. As cop and university professor, Jim successfully bridged the twin worlds of academia and policing and made significant, evidence-based contributions to the theory and practice of policing. When, in 1987, as Foundation Dean of Studies, I found myself responsible for the content of New South Wales Police Service's training curricula, one of the most significant challenges for me, with a United Kingdom policing background, was fire arms training. I found no formal, evidence-informed, evaluated research base to that training. I turned to the published literature. I did not find much. Fortunately, though, Jim had published his research into police decision-making in the use of firearms and we were able, with some confidence, to make significant changes to the curriculum, making the training more reality-based and addressing, not just the safe handling of guns and their accurate discharge, but also the complex case-based decision making that can lead officers into situations where they have to use their firearms because they have paid insufficient attention to first order containment and getting second order, organized back up.

How fortunate that a former very experienced New York Police Officer had been motivated and qualified to engage in academic, university-based and validated research into such a fraught area. The problem is that such research is not built-in as a routine part of policing. Indeed, even in-house testing and evaluation is sometimes resisted. For example, when I asked my head of field training, a senior sergeant half way through his doctoral study on police culture, to comparatively test the shooting skills of newly trained recruits, senior constables and senior sergeants, with results that showed serious and rapid attrition of such skills, the work was cut short by senior command, for fear that its results might become public.

Later, after two dawn raid police shootings I was asked by the New South Wales Police Board to review Special Operations Group (SOG) training. I requested the officer in command of SOG for the curriculum that underpinned their training. There was no formal, written training statement. I looked elsewhere in vain. I could not find any published work of an academic standard, no theoretically informed and empirically tested base, for police practice in such a complex, difficult and dangerous domain of policing. We had to draw up a formal curriculum statement that was very thin in terms of formal justification. Our critique of the status quo that prefaced it was removed when it was submitted to our Police Education Advisory Council, again, in case such a critique might reach the outside of the Police Service, gain wider circulation, and invite public opprobrium.

It wasn't until 1996 that the Australian police chiefs commissioned research by the then National Police Research Unit (now the Australasian Centre for Police Research) on incident management, conflict resolution and police use of various levels of force – from weapon less controls and hits through to baton, spray, tazer and firearms use. The impetus for this came from Victoria Police where a series of coronial inquiries and independent reviews had been commissioned in the wake of a significant rise

between 1988 and 1994 of fatal police shootings. Out of "Project Beacon", came a new five day training course eventually undertaken by all sworn officers, (over 8,500), a course that successfully achieved both cultural and technical skills changes in Victorian policing. A revised version of the Guidelines was published by the Australasian Centre for Police Research in September, 2004 (ACPR:2004).

Still, though, we still can look only in vain for authoritative, academically tested, evaluative research into the police use of force. The only contemporary academic research published on firearms use by the police are two texts debating the arming of United Kingdom police officers (Waddington: 1988; Jefferson:1990;). In Australia, Dr Jude McCulloch of Monash University, has recently published a critical text on the worrying growth of para-militarism in Australian policing (McCulloch:2001). Academic interest, then, has focused not upon "best practice" with regard to police dealing with conflict and violence but on the general (and important) issue of whether police should be armed or not, and to what level.

When the Metropolitan Police shot an innocent man shortly after the London underground bombings, there was a great deal of public criticism of its apparently secret "shoot to kill policy" and similar concern was raised here in Australia when reference to this policy in relation to terrorism was raised in the rush by the Federal government to add to its counter-terrorism legislation. At least here in Australia we have a published and well-researched set of guidelines.

But generally, there are problems. In Jim Fyfe's obituary in the New York Times, his wife quotes him as saying, when, post-September 11, he returned on secondment to head up the New York City Police Department's training portfolio, "I recognized the curriculum. It was the one I designed twenty five years ago!" It seems that for a quarter of a century the training establishment of one of the biggest police agencies in the English-speaking world had found little need to alter or improve its foundational education in any significant way.

### **Early Police Research**

This introductory reference to Jim Fyfe's work and the patchy intellectual basis for police firearm training illustrates the almost complete absence across the English-speaking police world of a steady, continuous and cumulative body of authoritative knowledge to inform police policy and practice on the use of force. But this goes for policing policy and practice as whole (even Ross Homel's ground-breaking work on the theory and practice of random breath-testing has not attracted further cumulative academic research (Homel:1990).

It is important and desirable for as much of policing policy and practice as possible to be critically and continuously informed and illuminated by good evidence, evidence about the impact of policing activities on all our lives. This does not happen now. Currently, the theory and practice of policing largely remains locked into the tacit knowledge base of unreflective practitioner groups, while being unevenly influenced from jurisdiction to jurisdiction through reaction to the occasional scandal, or through externally generated legislative changes prompted by, on the one hand, the desire to empower police to fight crime more successfully, and on the other, the need to minimize police misconduct.

Not, though, that there is an absence of police research these days compared with thirty years ago. The problem, from an evidence-informed police policy and practice perspective, is that it is insufficiently programmed and resourced to meet the public police's knowledge requirements.

I can remember being part of an academic team in the late nineteen seventies, teaching on a range of courses at the Scottish Police College. Not on courses for police recruits, novice police practitioners. No external university academics were seen as necessary or desirable as visiting teachers for police beginners. We taught on courses for police supervisors and managers. And we brought theories and knowledge generated by academic research into the management and organizational behaviour based on private industry and the public service. Initially, at any rate, this material was seen as remotely relevant or useful police students. Policing, they told us, was special and different. So, as good academics we did two things. First, we looked to the police research literature. That didn't take long. A few isolated examples of observational-based texts and ethnographies were around. In the United Kingdom, two sociologists (Banton: 1966; Cain led the way with accounts of constabulary work and police culture (Banton: 1966; Caine:1973). Banton had even started a series of research workshops that brought police managers and academics together. In the United States, Bordua, Bittner, Reiss, and Skolnick had published research into police work and police personality (Bordua: et al 1967; Bittner: 1970; Reiss: 1971; Skolnick: 1966). This early literature was of limited use. It wasn't informed by the desire to improve either policing or its management. This prompted us to do the second thing - begin our own initial observations of policing, in police stations and police cars, to visit our police students in what they called "the real world".

The lack of useful research, research that identified good policing practices, or that evaluated the outcomes and impact of policing interventions, or that demonstrated the impact of managerial and supervisory behaviour on the conduct of constables so concerned us that we brought it to the attention of government. This of course, was long before the evidenced-based policy and evidence-based practice era of the post-Thatcher "third way" of so-called non-ideological government and new public management (Davies et al:2000)

We visited the Scottish Office in Edinburgh and spoke with senior public servants – one of whom chaired the board of management of the Scottish Police College. Mystified by our views about the "need for police research" they referred us to their senior policy advisors, a small group of in-house administrative lawyers and criminologists. We argued with them for a well-staffed research centre to be located at the Scottish Police College. They were heartily amused. Even if the need for police research was desirable, which they questioned, what was wrong with it being conducted at the Ministry? If and when there a case could be made for such research, it was best done out of harm's way. The idea of locating it within a police training college they thought ridiculous.

Rebuffed, we then decided to set up our own Centre for Police Studies, located, not within a sociology or criminology department but within the Strathclyde University's Graduate Business School. We devoted all our efforts to research – research funded in part through the (very small) doctoral and post-doctoral ESSRC (Economic and Social Science Research Council) grants, but mainly through sworn officers engaging

in masters and doctoral research-based projects on a part-time basis. We succeeded in convincing the Scottish police that we were totally committed to research that directly addressed the improvement of policing and which directly involved the active participation of police of all ranks. Our first successful doctoral student was a chief constable. Our only mistake, if it can be called that, was to appoint John Alderson as visiting professor to the centre. Alderson had recently retired as chief constable of Devon and Cornwall. At that time we still hadn't learned enough about police culture. Alderson's appointment drew a boycott from any of the Centre's activities by the Scottish Police Service that directly involved Alderson's presence. We were later told the reason for the boycott by Strathclyde Police's chief constable: "You didn't realize that he spat upon the cloth!" Alderson, while in his last year as a chief constable had given public evidence to the Scarman inquiry into the Brixton riot that was critical of the Metropolitan (London) police's "Operation Swamp (Scarman: 1980)

Notwithstanding that hiccough, our centre engaged in a program of applied research into policing that placed sworn officers at the centre of its governance and in the design of its research program. We were interested in what they were interested in - how better to police football matches, large-scale strikes, domestic violence, pub violence, child safety, the first line supervision of constables, and how to put new information technology to use in better ways for policing. We invited senior police officers to advise us on our research program and involved sworn officers in the delivery of research outcomes. We were not then aware that we were deeply implicated in the pursuit of evidence-based, or informed, or illuminated police policy and practice, although, of course, that is what precisely in hindsight, we were about.

### **Growth in Academic Scholarly Police Research**

In the meantime, associated with a rapid expansion of the social sciences in general and criminology in particular within the university system, and with the increasingly visible, politically controversial, and, (occasionally), scandalous role of the public police during the seventies, eighties, and nineties (Reiner:2000; Newburn:2003), a strong academic scholarly research tradition began to emerge. This was a sociology of the police, conducted apart from the police, and largely devoted to examination of two major deficits said to exist within policing in the United Kingdom – a democratic deficit and a integrity deficit (Reiner). I contributed to that research stream in a book on policing called "Managing The Police: Law, Organisation and Democracy (Bradley et al:1986).

It is important to understand the political and normative nature of the scholarly, academic police research tradition. It is a research tradition governed through networks, agendas and resources involving universities, academic communities (mainly criminology), and government research funding bodies. It is a research tradition that was and still is managed by a governance network that excludes any active, participating official role by the public police. The police are consigned to the role of co-operative subject, sometimes allowing academic researchers access to police sites and information systems. The research published quite reasonably feeds the primary outcomes of universities and their academic communities – (anonymous) quantities of peer-reviewed publications of books and learned articles about the police. Further dissemination of academic research takes place through teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The scholarly police research is quite self-sufficient and un-needful of any active co-operation and involvement of the public

police. It places critique of the public police into the public arena, although not in a very accessible way.

This is very proper and good. It is one of the goods we expect from the academic community in our free liberal and democratic societies. Powerful institutions, including the police, are the proper subjects of critical, value-informed research by independent scholars free from any inhibitory influence of such institutions.

What is far less excusable, though, (indeed I would say that they are morally indefensible) are some of the attitudes towards the police that help shape much of this research tradition. This is best illustrated by the very influential and anti-managerialist work of Robert Reiner (Reiner:1985; Reiner:Reiner:2000; Reiner:1992). Mapping the changing agenda of academic police research over the last thirty years, Reiner has consistently (and wrongly) asserted, first, that theory and practice in policing are two separate and mutually exclusive preserves. Because policing is inherently conflictful (in its use or threatened use of coercion) it cannot benefit from the application of impartial, academically sound but useful, pragmatic, “dirty”, applied research efforts. According to Reiner, there can be no morally defensible research-based accounts of police policy and practice that might inform their reform. Worse, he claims that it is highly likely that such research would be used by police to provide their activities with an undeserving legitimacy:

He writes: “What can the role of policing research be in the future?...Will it be to legitimate policing trends; to look on without influence; or to act in a leadership role? The worst case scenario is that the greater readiness of police organizations to be associated with research will merely serve to cloak their activities with an aura of legitimacy derived from presenting policy as rational and research-based. Alternatively, research may be irrelevant to practice...Alternatively, a concern with effectiveness and long-term legitimacy could make police policy actually lead research – to spread ‘good’ practices; and modify innovations which monitoring shows to be ineffective. On past experiences this is the least likely of outcomes – apart from anything else because of the political conflict which attends all policing developments ... It is arguable that deepening the understanding of policing now requires theoretical synthesis rather than more empirical data (although this too is bedevilled by the inherently political character of policing). Perhaps we need further research to monitor the progress and impact of policing research!” (Reiner:1989)

This echoes Weatheritt’s scathing comments about research undertaken by the police themselves. First, she remarks that “one striking feature of most of the research which I have summarized so far is how little of it has been initiated or carried out by the police themselves” (Weatheritt:1986:17). She asserts that “the reputations of several well-known policing initiatives rest less on any carefully considered evaluation of their effectiveness than on a fudging of ambiguous or inadequate data and on good publicity.” (Weatheritt:1986:19).

Consequently, “...academic researchers have been left to plough a lonely furrow. Those interested in doing research have found it difficult to gain access or a receptive audience for what they have to say amongst those who often stand most to gain from it; the police themselves.” (Weatheritt:1986:11)

There is very little reflexivity shown in Reiner's and Weatheritt's appreciation of the relationship between police and academic research. They claim that the police simply evince non-rational or irrational attitudes towards academic research, but provide no explanations for why this should be. Again, let's look at a book review written by Dick Hobbs (Hobbs: 1991) of a text written by an ex-police officer working out of Exeter University's centre for police research. The book, stated Hobbs, was a typical example of something he calls "police studies"

"a practitioner-based atheoretical pseudo-discipline, whose epistemological roots are deliberately obscured and whose raison d'être is the production of police policy. Pragmatism must dominate such an enterprise and while the worlds of academe and policing have much to learn from each other, the colonization of either by the other is bound to end in tears." (Hobbs:1991:143-145)

Academic research, it appears, when directed at the police, must not attempt to be useful, and beware of the police becoming part of the university, or academics joining the police. Note again, pragmatic research ends must necessarily be "atheoretical" and be based upon dubious methodology.

No wonder that Sir Ian Blair, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolitan (London) Police, when delivering the prestigious BBC Dimpleby lecture last week, complained that most middle class people he met were utterly perplexed as to why any well-educated person like himself should want to become a police officer (Blair:2005)

This claim of opposition between theory and practice, and of critical thinking as inevitably compromised by pragmatism or the pursuit of useful knowledge is a product of a lazy and mistaken academicism within the social sciences.

Interestingly, when commissioned (along with several other academics constituting membership of the scholarly police research tradition but no police officers whatsoever) to write a chapter in an edited text on "How to Recognize Good Policing (Brodeur:2000), Reiner found himself surprised by what he called an almost research-free "virgin territory" (Reiner). Apart from one or two ethnographies illuminating the difference between "good" and "not-so-good" policing such as Ker Muir's "Police: Street Corner Politicians" (Muir:) he noted that there are hardly any research-based accounts of good or exemplary policing practices (I assume he simply does not read the work of American applied police scholars such as Sherman). He refers in reverential terms to the rich, morally complex empirical accounts of the good police work carried out by members of the police shift Muir (a political scientist) had spent many months observing and bemoaned the fact that this was a "neglected text". In fact the text informed the curriculum framework of the Police Recruit Education Program of the New South Wales Police Service between 1988 and 1996) and W. Ker Muir's name and central ideas about good policing became very familiar with the more than 8000 recruits who learned about it in their classroom and simulated patrol (NSW Police Service: 1988). Reiner laments that rich ethnographic research into policing practices is too expensive and long term to be undertaken within the scholarly police research tradition. Anyway, he concludes, all that is needed is rough

and ready ways of identifying good and bad policing simply for the purpose of disciplining and/or promoting police officers so identified. The idea that such research might identify the rich, complex textures and decision-making hierarchies of good policing practices, and that such research might then usefully inform police training and education programs is simply outside his frame of thinking.

### **The Policy Police Research Tradition**

In no small way due to the pioneering work at the British Home Office of criminologist and crime prevention expert Ron Clarke, another police research tradition has grown significantly in some police jurisdictions (particularly in the United States through governmental funding from the National Institute of Justice and in the United Kingdom through the Home Office). (What is happening in Australia I will talk about later). This is what we might call the police policy research tradition. In contrast to the scholarly police research tradition, it might be thought that this kind of research, part of a sociology *for* the police, might much more closely engage with and support the policies and practices of the public police, that it would encourage a more congenial and mutually supportive set of partnerships between researcher and police? Again, because of the nature of the governance networks that support it, the linkage between this research tradition and the public police is far from close. Indeed, it is often adversarial and has achieved much less than one might have supposed in the way of having a sustained improving impact upon policing.

In the United States there is a long standing positive and traditional connection between the social sciences and public policy. No surprise, then, to learn, as Manning recently reminds us, that through the National Institute of Justice some \$6 billion has been spent on police related crime control research and knowledge dissemination (Manning: 2005).

Perhaps one of the most influential ever single pieces of “useful” police research was persuasive enough in its evidence base to precipitate significant change in policing policy and practice on the police mode of response to domestic violence, coming as it did within the context of a powerful feminist movement (Sherman: 1980). On the basis of what was at the time a one-off case study, most, if not all, large American police agencies adopted a mandatory arrest policy, effectively attempting to “criminalize” what had hitherto been seen as “private” behaviour not properly the subject of police work. Sherman’s case study appeared to demonstrate that of the only three “things” the police could do when attending domestic violence incidents (counsel, remove the abuser from the premises, or arrest), arrest when randomly selected with the other two options led to significant reduction in recidivism.

The work was later replicated in some other American cities. The results led to Sherman to significantly qualify his conclusions about effective police interventions (Sherman:1992). Where the abuser was poor, unemployed and (mainly) black, arrest increased recidivism. This was explained as a product of “defiance theory”. Later still, in one of the few examples of cumulative knowledge generation in policing, Sherman, working with other colleagues, discovered that “arrest” was not a homogeneous “thing” but a more or less complex action that could vary, not least in the degree to which it was carried out in a procedurally just way (Paternoster et al: 1997). Defiance was not triggered in unemployed disadvantaged males when police

acted fairly and politely when they arrested them. (This is consistent with David Thacher's critique of an evidence-based approach to police crime reduction which (wrongly) borrows (one version) of the medical model of research: Thacher:2001).

On the impact of American policy police research generally, Manning (2005), and Bayley before him (Bayley: 1997) agree that the uptake of research findings generally has been minimal, and has acted more generally to illuminate the policing landscape rather than shape significant changes and innovations in policing practices. Laycock and Clarke (2001) comparing the United States with the United Kingdom contrast the United Kingdom's policy research tradition on crime prevention as strongly based upon situational crime prevention. In the United States the research focus has been more broadly about force-wide "policy" usually associated with "community based policing"). Manning cites the large number of highly localized and small in size police agencies as resulting in poor take-up of research-based evidence (Manning: 2005). Indeed, as I shall argue, this is a key factor, but that is best understood in the context of the institutional separateness and isolation of police practitioners, a point stressed by Sir Ian Blair last week: He said

"We have been in a service which has always been separate and silent, which successive governments – until recently- and all of you, your parents and your grandparents have broadly left alone to get on with the job you have given it. For health, there is the King's Fund and endless university departments for research, a National Institute of Clinical Excellence, an Agenda for Change. For education, there have been impassioned debates...since Tony Blair said 'education, education, education'...Transport and the environment are subject to think tanks and policy 'wonks'...But not policing. There is little dispassionate, thought-through, public examination of just what it is we are here to do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – to fight crime or to fight its causes, to help build stronger communities or to undertake zero tolerance, nor of how these things should be done or what priority each should have or what we should stop doing." (Blair:2005)

Note that Sir Ian stresses that governmental reformative neglect of the public police in the United Kingdom stopped abruptly with the advent of the New Labour government in 1997. By 1999, the British government were spending very large amounts on crime prevention generally and on police crime prevention programs in particular (Bullock and Tilley (eds) 2003).

Ron Clarke's ideas about crime prevention and effective policing took an early critical tone with regard to the way the public police appeared to ignore research findings. Like Mollie Weatheritt later, (Weatheritt:1986) in the collection he edited with Hough on policing effectiveness, he criticized police chiefs for wilfully ignoring the policy research findings that "proactive and focused" as against conventional reactive policing would reap large crime preventive benefits (Clarke and Hough: 1980:p 9) The police appeared almost irrationally perverse in the way they failed to take up ideas that would render them more effective.

What caused this? Why is knowledge dissemination and use, let alone knowledge generation and validation, such an apparent problem in policing?

MacDonald, in an unpublished paper commissioned by the England and Wales Police Foundation, had talked about the “dialogue of the deaf” occurring between police and academic voices (MacDonald:1987) “The translation of research by some into action by others is experienced, in relatively pluralist, relatively non-authoritarian societies, as a general and yet unresolved problem.” (MacDonald:1987: 1) His solution was to call for action research partnerships, with academics dropping their own disciplinary language, frameworks and aims, working with the police and within policing discourse and aims to use research in crime control problem solving.

In pursuit of the “what works” policy reformative intent of New Labour the UK 1999 – 2001 Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) spent some four hundred million pounds sterling (Bullock and Tilley:2003). Of that, some thirty million pounds were spent on the Targeted Policing Initiative (TPI). Evaluations of the results of many of the police agency-based projects have been published (Bullock and Tilley:2003) Reading the book you will find a catalogue of disasters, a sorry set of tales about “implementation failure”. (In another Home Office publication, Homely et al attempt to put a far more positive spin on what happened and make the fair and reasonable claim that a great deal was learned from the programs).

Laycock, in her foreword to collection warns of what to expect when large sums of money are hastily thrown at poorly equipped practitioners: “...opportunistic bidding, poor project design, hasty and inconsistent implementation, weak record keeping and disappointing results.”  
(pp.xv-xvi)

It is worth looking at summaries of the reports published in the collection:

In chapter 1 Bullock and Tilley provide an overview of TPI and its outcomes. They stress the difficulty of “working on the ground” (p.17) and hint at background arguments within criminology

“Armchair critics have it easy ... Where (POP) was implemented imperfectly or ineffectively, this is a cause . . .for learning not for sneering, jeering or castigating (p.17).” TPI, while constituting a cornucopia of research funding opportunities, was a bruising experience for many evaluators.

As we read on, it is evident that for such a large investment, the outcomes are acutely disappointing. In chapter 2 Townsley and Pease tell why their attempt to mainstream POP throughout a “basic operational command unit” failed even to get started. One factor was that the police refused to change their “irrational” way of measuring performance, an instance “...where a relatively minor change of practice would place the force in which we invested so much of our time in a better position to know when its efforts make a difference.” (p.27). Attempts were made to apply POP to repeat burglaries and to the identification of significant offenders through “self-selection”, a process by which such offenders draw attention upon themselves by committing minor public offences. The results for the burglary initiative were small but promising. The self-selection experiment failed, its theory simply rejected by the police.

In chapter 3 John and Maguire describe the top-down implementation of a standardised system of intelligence-based policing. In their description of the roll out they reveal problems and challenges similar to those found in TPI.

Jones in chapter 4 describes efforts to apply POP in a low crime rural area spanning three police forces. An intelligence-driven policing exercise resulted in the arrest of ten suspects (p.80). An attempt to apply POP to repeat burglary victims “received only token implementation” (p.83). Burglaries went up.

Bicycle theft in Cambridge and gang-related shootings in Manchester are the two projects examined by Bullock and Tilley in chapter 5. Bicycle theft fell but mainly because a prolific bicycle thief was arrested just before the project began. The gang-related shootings project, initially conceived as a “co-ordinated, gang-focused multi-agency crackdown, was not implemented as envisaged” (p.109) captured instead by social workers. “There was no fall in the number of shootings.” (p.111).

Chapter 6 is an account by Maguire and Hopkins of the importance of data and analysis in POP in three projects focused upon alcohol-related crime reduction. They found problems throughout each stage of the POP process of scanning, analysis, response and assessment (SARA). The remedy? Without more thoughtful and conscientious police they suggest the appointment of dedicated data analysts.

In chapter 7 Harris, Hale and Uglow evaluate attempts to reduce property crime by identifying and arresting the receivers of stolen goods. Despite the “compelling logic of the idea” (p.154) they end up disappointed, discovering a large, difficult to bridge gap between theory and practice

In chapter 8 Matassa and Newburn provide a detailed exploration of the multiple and often conflicting roles of the evaluator. They suggest evaluation need not be compromised, and project implementation improved, if evaluators more often participated in all the POP stages, working collaboratively with practitioners.

Stockdale and Whitehead in chapter 9 explore the role of economics in the evaluation of crime reduction practices. Are projects that work worth the money they cost? Their review pessimistically ends with the observation that, without more knowledgeable and understanding practitioners, “... the uncritical transfer of responses will continue to occur, the potential benefits of taking a targeted approach to problems will not be realised and money will continue to be wasted.” (p.250).

In chapter 10 Hanmer explains the failure of an attempt to mainstream a successful POP response to domestic violence from a successful local pilot to a complete force. In response to unrelenting external pressure, a centralised and determined police hierarchy can achieve “discontinuous’ or ‘frame breaking’ change. This project failed because the project team read the organisational context wrongly. The management of the host organisation was not sufficiently willing to provide the necessary authority, focus, direction and resources. A different change strategy was needed.

As the Homel et al evaluation of the programme’s delivery stresses, TPI also suffered from significant failure at governmental level. In chapter 11, Laycock and Webb identify the role of the centre, and what they see with hindsight, as “avoidable

weaknesses in the central management of the programme.” (p.285) TPI was based on eleven questionable assumptions. Seven stem from serious deficits in the knowledge and skills of the police, particularly their inability to grasp POP principles. Three others relate to failings in leadership and planning at the centre. The eleventh wrong assumption was that there was sufficient capacity available to carry out evaluation and do it in a consistent way. What followed was an expensive learning exercise that a careful reading of earlier research and inspection reports about POP might have rendered unnecessary. Worse, although Laycock and Webb do not mention the possibility, perhaps TPI imposed a wholly negative experience upon many of the police involved and so provided a serious set-back for POP.

The Bullock and Tilley deserves to be read along side another edited collection of papers also published in 2003 written by an eminent group of POP academic theorists from both sides of the Atlantic, including Herman Goldstein (Knutsson:2004). Collectively they ponder upon why POP retains the status of a marginal innovation rather than a mainstream way of doing police business. They arrive at more or less the same answers proffered by the authors of Bullock and Tilley’s volume. More enlightened long-term police leadership and slow, well-planned, academically-led POP projects, better training, and the distribution of academically-produced crime reduction kits to police.

But what strikes me as eloquent and informative about the whole UK exercise in trying to put evidence to good use in police crime control is its managerialism, its theory of knowledge dissemination and use. Here we have some very bright, highly qualified experts in crime prevention who appear blind to the institutional context within which their research-based knowledge and expertise is to be planted and used. The collection represents academic attention to what might be appropriately called the police knowledge deficit. But all along this is diagnosed as a deficit to be filled, not by police, but by external academics and internal analysts. The police are to remain in their present organisational, cultural and structural condition, encompassed in that silent and separate condition described by Sir Ian Blair.

They are to remain as the bearers of better practices, receptive to guidance and direction from knowledge workers who know what their policies and practices should be to be rationally defensible. The stuff of the police is seen as sinew and muscle, plastic enough may be, but only to be morphed into some other unreflective but more effective capability.

What is insufficiently realised is that the public police are an inherently unreflective institution. They are funded, structured and managed to deal with incident and crisis, keen to embrace change only when it promises to improve their efficiency as reactors and controllers. No matter the number of intelligent, well-educated, thoughtful people they recruit, this institutionally-grounded un-reflective state remains. A great deal more than short term, pilot project criminological attention will be required for the police to evolve into a reflective institution.

Reflective institutions cultivate reflective practitioners. Such practitioners are well educated in the knowledge, skills and values necessary for effective practice. They are accustomed and receptive to new knowledge and improved practices. They take the

knowledge-based progress of their occupation for granted. They are organised and managed as responsible, autonomous and highly accountable professionals.

As Sir Ian Blair maintained last week, the police service in the United Kingdom and elsewhere has been isolated from the other major social institutions of society. He remarks that many of the middle people he meets who know of his Oxford University education find it difficult to understand why even became a police officer.

The police are not as receptive to evidence-based research as they might if they were organised differently. But currently, the public police are organised into a series of isolated silos, each employing recruits and training them into its constables. Each is funded and organised to teach recruits a minimalist, culturally closed, drilled and narrow body of technical skills and black letter law – a “disciplined” and subordinating rite of passage. Police academies are not postings essential to glittering police careers. When police budgets get tight, training is usually the first item to suffer. A recent HMIC thematic inspection (Home Office: 2002) revealed great variation across British police forces in terms of quality and funding of basic police training. Although the police themselves are beginning to do some research (Brown: 1996), public police agencies do not have the funds to set up large research departments. The usually small research units are not organized and required to deliver research to university peer-reviewed standards. Their research outcomes are not published for wider circulation. And, from within their silos, all too often, police agencies compete with each other for status and standing and this sometimes means inventing their own ways of doing things rather than acknowledging best practice from elsewhere.

In terms of their management and organization, while some “informalisation” in police forces is detectable (Loader and Mulcahy, A (2003) the rank system continues to shape an organizational culture that encourages trouble avoidance, lack of experimentation and challenge by evidence-testing.

All this represents the condition of the public police everywhere. The policy police research tradition will not make a significant impact upon the intellectual shape of policing until police’s present institutional and occupational contours are significantly changed. The direction of the required changes has been set in Australia, and the signs are that innovations here, small and fragile as they, may yet have a wider international influence. Australian policing has set itself a strategic direction that promises to make it far more involved in evidence generation and validation, and more receptive to the use of that research.

### **An Applied Discipline of Policing and the Separation of Police Employment from Policing Educational Standards and Licence to Practice**

Until the police are required to engage in the development of their own applied discipline of policing, “implementation failures” of the kind reported by Bullock and Tilley and by Knutsson will continue to be reported. The long term strategic answer calls for nothing less than the re-location of police education, including its teaching, learning and research, into the university system. Top-down managerialist reform, on a silo by silo basis, here and there, even when advanced by the most visionary and enlightened of police leaders, has very limited capacity for changing the occupation as

whole in terms of its intellectual formation. It will remain a kind of intellectual froth dashing vainly against the granite of police practitioner intransigence.

What changes are needed? More police involvement in policy research networks and their governance would be a good thing. Even though all that money was available in the United Kingdom, it did not effect institutional change. Indeed it could be that the failure associated with knowledge us put the cause of problem oriented policing back years. We need a police-university network of police reformative research – with university and police agency working together with program content shaped by police but standards of research but with the openness and ethical oversight guaranteed by university standards and practices. In Australia we are fortunate, I suppose, to have benefited from the research output of the Australasian Centre for Police Research. All the Australian and New Zealand police commissioners constitute its board of control and shape its agenda. But it is very modestly funded, through monies from each jurisdiction proportionate to the numbers of sworn police. And this year, in an unprecedented fashion, one of the bigger Australian forces unilaterally withdrew funding, with critical implications for its future and standing. The Australian Institute of Criminology is another jewel in the Australian crown, but again, it operates within a governance network which keeps the police at a distance.

We are fortunate, too, in Australia, to have the “Linkage Grant” research funding stream managed by the Australian Research Council (ARC) (in succession to the “SPIRT” scheme). The ARC allocates many millions of dollars to the scheme, which exists to encourage “useful” industrial research through partnerships between industry and university research groups. The joint applications for funding are subject to anonymous academic review and the scheme is very competitive. Starting in the New South Wales Police Service with a research project on “soft projects for soft systems, I, with the support of the current Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police, and with the increasingly enthusiastic support of Victoria Police senior managers, have over the last here years applied for some ten projects and won eight. The subjects and universities involved in this eclectic applied research program designed to use research-based evidence to inform and illuminate Victoria Police’s policies and practices include:

- Police competence in interviewing child victims of sexual assault (Deakin University)
- Quality Part Time Work in Victoria Police (RMIT University)
- Networked Policing (including projects on youth safety, serious sex offender recidivism, railway safety, policing domestic violence and private security) ANU
- Counter-terrorism and policing multi-faith communities (Monash University)
- Policing a Multicultural Society with a Multicultural Police Service (Monash University)
- Organisational Behaviour and Corporate Citizenship in Policing (Deakin University and Macquarie University)
- Integrity and High Performance Policing (Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics/Charles Sturt University, ANU, and University of Melbourne)
- Police Social Advocacy, Policy and Practice in Response to Adult Sexual Assault (Ballarat University and University of Melbourne)

Others in the pipeline are on police governance, policing and disabled people, policing's interface with victims, and policing road safety. All of the Linkage grants are substantial in terms of their resource base and length of time. The adult sexual assault project, for example has a resource base over five years of over \$2 million.

Each of the projects requires full collaborative research teams, with police senior managers and operational officers forming part of the governance and implementation of the research and findings. Each is designed to leave an evidence-based knowledge/evidence system built into Victoria Police so that the reformatory and improving aims of the research continue on long after the research itself finishes. Each is designed to provide for some degree of national and international dissemination.

Great, a lot of hard work has paid off. But each of these projects may not have happened. Some applications failed, one we thought to be particularly important. Finding alternative funding sources is difficult. Both the Australian Federal Police and Victoria Police earlier this year supported an ANU bid for an ARC-funded research centre for excellence in policing and security, but the bid failed at the last stage.

Victoria Police's success at getting research funding hasn't been so great as to put a strain on the overall police budget. But funding is a problem when put in the context of strong government pressure for efficiencies and savings. And each of the Victoria Police projects may not have happened. The funding is contingent and not in any way guaranteed. And we are finding that a lot of questions are being generated about how we can integrate the research projects into the way we do business. These projects are also testing conventional academic ways of engaging in research. This is not research being done to us, but research with us and for us. No doubt the academics involved will mine data and knowledge that will profitably (in academic terms) underpin their academic careers and standings but the objectives of the research are completely shared, including the need to put the outcomes in words and forms that are police user friendly.

But this is not enough to make the kind of difference to the institution of public policing that we believe is needed. In his public lecture Sir Ian Blair complained at how impoverished is the research evidence base of policing. He contrasted this with the funds spent on medical and teaching research. And, this brought him to wonder whether in fact the police needed to have "schools of policing" in universities? Of course they do. Unless we re-locate police education into the universities, we will never have an applied discipline of policing. Only undergraduate and postgraduate mainstream courses in the theory and practice of policing will generate the need for police faculties, with sworn and non-sworn experts working together to generate the research that will identify the good and bad practices, interventions and policies, that then will inform teaching and learning and so guarantee dissemination across the whole occupation.

Only an applied, university-based policing discipline will apply the pressure to create the space and resources within policing work sites for well designed and effective work-based learning and practicum (not the haphazard and impoverished apprenticeship system that exists at present). Only an applied discipline of policing will raise the profile of police education and research within police bureaucracies, adding an intellectual and innovative elite to the conventional hierarchy. Only an

applied discipline of policing will mean that would-be police officers have to go to university, mix with other students from other disciplines, and receive the knowledge and skills to practice in a testing, critical and intellectually demanding environment. Only having to go to university will overturn the unreasonable way in which the term “academic” is used as a pejorative term in too many policing contexts (why aren’t people worried when they see university degree parchments hanging in their doctors’ surgeries?). A university education will not automatically raise the status and profile of the police occupation in democratic societies, but it surely will not lower them. Only a university-based police occupation will enable practitioners to form collegiate associations (and not just industrial ones) that exist to raise the standing and strength of the occupation. Such a separation from the all-dominating single employer will allow for the formation of accrediting and registration boards licensed by the democratic state to monitor the standards of both police practitioners and the organisation and state of their place of work. Eventually, if we are concerned enough about the emergence of multi-lateral policing that go beyond the public police, only such an applied discipline will best resolve the dilemma of private policing, its standards, its democratic regulation and its interface with the (public good producing) public police.

In England they are beginning to articulate their in-house training programs with universities. Thames Valley has just commenced a Student Police Office Program that articulates its recruit training with policing degrees. Over there, it’s small beer yet, but when Sir Ian Blair is prepared to consider whether his police service needs to have “schools of policing” in all the universities, then there is cause for optimism. Finally, of course, we know it is possible because it happened eight years ago in New South Wales. There, through a fragile, lucky window of opportunity, the beginning of policing as an applied discipline taught at university standard has been sustained. Now we need a thousand more such programs here, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, before evidence-based policy and practice are to become routine features of the way policing is organised and delivered. Will criminology and the other established academic disciplines support and encourage such a strategic change or will they feel threatened by it?

Close down all the police academies. Send all the police recruits and all their trainers to universities. Turn police stations and cars into sites of good practicum and action based research projects. Then step back and see what happens.

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