



FROM THE EDITORS: EUROPEAN POLICE SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING

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As recently appointed new editors of the Bulletin we are pleased to introduce our first issue. In accordance with the Bulletin's aim of disseminating scientific research findings and good practices in the field of policing, this issue draws on articles from across Europe, including the first of a set of articles that draw on papers delivered at the CEPOL 2015 European Police Research and Science Conference in Lisbon, hosted by the Policia Judiciara of Portugal. The conference was not only a major event for European police research, but was also one of the best-attended police research conferences globally in 2015. It reflected the growth of interest in evidence-based policing (EBP) — the theme of the conference — in Europe, and an open call for papers brought scholars and practitioners not only from all over Europe but from all over the world.

EBP is an increasingly important movement within policing, but one that has, until recently, been predominantly Anglo-Saxon. The Lisbon conference was an opportunity to debate what could be distinctly European EBP.

The development of EBP has deep roots. Europe has had a long and distinguished history of applying science to policing, starting in the 19th century and even earlier. But neither in Europe nor the Anglo-Saxon countries had science in the universities translated into science more generally on the frontline of policing. On the other side of the Atlantic, Professor Lawrence

Sherman's 1998 Police Foundation lecture on 'Evidence-based policing' (Sherman, 1998) sounded a call to arms that provided a tipping point into action. Sherman's conception of EBP proposed an approach to policing for which he drew heavily on the experiences of evidence-based medicine. Even though there were clearly differences between medicine and policing, Sherman (1984) argued that one key similarity between policing and clinical medicine that could be observed was the need for both doctors and police officers to do 'something about a problem, even if the something is merely likely, but not certain, to be helpful' (p. 74). He suggested that police practices could be divided into three types: ignorance (no evidence), equity (the evidence supported neither one approach nor another) and differentiation (where there was a clear preferred approach supported by the evidence), depending on the extent of the knowledge base supporting action. The key task for EBP was, therefore, to increase the volume, availability and deployment of differentiated approaches.

Building on this typology, in 1998 Sherman defined EBP as 'the use of the best available research on the outcomes of police work to implement guidelines and evaluate agencies, units, and officers' (Sherman, 1998: p. 3). He contrasted evidence-based approaches with knowledge based on unsystematic experience and argued that experience should, instead, be used as the basis for hypotheses that could

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and should be tested in the field by methods including, but not exclusive to, randomised controlled trials (RCTs).

In the years since the 1998 lecture an EBP movement has developed. The Lisbon conference theme was an indication that the movement has spread well beyond the United States and is no longer a restricted Anglo-Saxon approach to policing. EBP should be seen as part of a broader movement for evidence-based approaches within criminal justice and social policy, within which there are some distinctive elements in policing. Some key features that deserve to be highlighted are the following.

- The growth of 'experimental criminology' as the spearhead of evidence-based crime prevention and policing (Sherman, 2013). The number of field experiments in policing has been growing significantly. There are now more than 110 (Neyroud, 2015). A new Global Policing Database of police research is aiming to give police and researchers access to more than 7 000 studies, RCTs and other controlled designs from the last half century.
- The development of a broad discipline of 'police science'. A major report from CEPOL scoped European police science and encouraged the development of the European Police Science and Research Conference and an expanded role for CEPOL (Jaschke et al., 2007); a new 'paradigm' of police science has been advocated, with 'ownership' from within the police as a mechanism to transform policing (Weisburd and Neyroud, 2011).
- The expanded use of systematic reviews of experimental and quasi-experimental studies in order to build our knowledge of what works in policing. The single most important development in this area has been the setting up of the Campbell Collaboration in 2000 and the Crime and Justice Group of Campbell (hosted in Norway), which has overseen the completion and publication of 25 policing-relevant systematic reviews ⁽¹⁾.
- The emergence of a new discipline of leadership and management centred around

evidence as, for example, set out in Sherman's 'triple-T' approach (Sherman, 2013) and advocated by the Center for Evidence-based Management ⁽²⁾.

- The development of ideas for a reformed 'profession' within policing. Manifestations of this: papers proposing a 'new professionalism' in policing (Stone and Travis, 2011); the emergence of the UK College of Policing and of several police universities in Europe (Neyroud, 2011); the creation and expansion of the Society of Evidence-Based Policing (SEBP) ⁽³⁾ in the United Kingdom, Australasia, Canada and the United States as an individual member-based organisation with membership from police officers and researchers. But there is as yet no European EBP society.
- Connected with this has been pressure for a better qualified and 'chartered' profession with evidence as a key underpinning factor (Neyroud, 2011; Council of Canadian Academies, 2014).
- The growth of police universities, in many cases replacing traditional police training centres, professional police officers carrying out field research and research partnerships dedicated to police research.

At the CEPOL 2015 European Police Research and Science Conference the debates embraced all these dimensions of EBP. The papers presented covered the nature and controversies around EBP, reported key recent studies and reflected on the development of police education and efforts to translate EBP into practice. The opening article of this issue, by Maurice Punch, builds around some of the most interesting challenges facing EBP and policing in general today. The debates showed the importance of the very different contexts for EBP across Europe. For some countries with a well-established infrastructure of police universities, a strong commitment to tertiary education for police officers and government commitment to improving policing, EBP has already been influential. Where the infrastructure, education and government support is more fragile, CEPOL in particular and

⁽¹⁾ http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/reviews_crime_justice/index.php

⁽²⁾ <http://www.cebma.org>

⁽³⁾ <http://www.sebp.police.uk>



the EU generally have a potentially vital role in supporting local developments.

One of the key debates at the conference was around whether EBP could really be seen as a 'movement' or even a programme, and whether instead it should be seen as a tactical approach, narrowly focused on questions of 'what works', which can be put alongside a long series of other innovations such as intelligence-led policing, zero-tolerance policing or problem-oriented policing.

The emerging institutional and professional changes that have been taking place over the last decade across a number of jurisdictions in Europe and internationally suggest that EBP is more a movement than a tactic. A more accurate

assessment is Sherman's conception of EBP as a broader reform movement underpinned by the 'belief that greater use of research could help transform policing into a more legitimate and respected profession' (Sherman, 2013: p. 5).

The next Bulletin issues will feature more articles from the Lisbon conference, and the articles will help readers explore the dimensions of and controversies around EBP and access up-to-date research that is being carried out across Europe. This, we feel, is the critical and unique contribution that this Bulletin can make to a European dimension of policing: publish the best science, respectful of different contexts, traditions and human rights and supported by a European network of policing agencies and institutions.

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