

30 POLICE AND POLICING MODELS

A plethora of structural and institutional factors influence individual and group behaviour, but the primary agents of social control are groups of people, sanctioned by the State according to its laws, to safeguard citizens and to arrest lawbreakers. It is to those bodies that the label 'police' ordinarily attaches. Britain's first public police force, London's Metropolitan Police, was established in 1829.

This chapter explores a pillar of policing in the United Kingdom (UK), namely the institution's commitment to the principle of consent, and to the traditional, community-centred policing model it inspires. The chapter also explores other policing models that emerged in the modern era and assesses whether they are intellectually coherent and conceptually cogent. Can these models offer alternative practically relevant models for policing?

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the UK policing model. Unlike the militarised, state-controlled, model of 'policing by law' that developed in continental Europe, UK policing is founded on the principle of consent, enshrined in the 'Peelian Principles' (named after Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel, 1788-1850, the principal architect of UK's police service; their authorship is usually attributed to the force's first commissioners). Rather than *gens d'armes* (later *gendarmes*), armed representatives of the state who control by force, the UK's police officers are civilians in uniform. They are members of the public, paid to give attention to duties which, in the interests of security, welfare, and community cohesion, are the responsibility of every citizen.

The principle underpins policing but its inherent contradictions have never been resolved. These contradictions include the fact that police work often is undertaken during conflict; that police officers alone are entitled to exercise force; and that there is often a lack of consent from those being policed to police action. Such contradictions are by-products of the service's genesis; the executive's promotion of democratic, reflexive policing was intended to overcome massive and widespread hostility to the new institution. In that sense, this plan was successful. Opposition to the police was overcome slowly but progressively. Public support peaked in the 1950s, which

scholars consider to be the 'golden era' of policing (Reiner, 2010). Although support for the institution has never reached that level since then, the UK's police are trusted by the majority of citizens.

Nevertheless, the world is not in stasis. Society is changing rapidly and fundamentally because of, among other factors, social fragmentation, an ageing and more diverse population, artificial intelligence, and – as the COVID pandemic has shown - globalisation. Policing has had to change, to meet challenges such as the growth of organised transnational crime; increasing legislative and administrative burdens on the institution and its officers; and the widespread availability of sophisticated information technologies that offer communities new ways to hold the police to account, but also present criminals with many new ways to exploit the vulnerable.

The chapter will now consider other approaches. The police have always recognised that they need communities' help to control crime and to keep them safe. Help will not be forthcoming if the institution's legitimacy is in doubt. In large part, maintaining legitimacy relies on convincing people that their police are effective, efficient, procedurally fair, and at their service, regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, or social status. Alternative or complementary models, that promise greater effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility and fairness, have emerged in the modern era.

Since the 1990s, the term intelligence-led policing (ILP) has been applied to 'crime-fighting' processes that rely on the efforts of specialists to collect and analyse data to produce narratives that inform patrol patterns and operational deployments. The term is also applied to the work of teams of specialists who use covert methods to target groups or individuals suspected of involvement in crime, usually serious organised crime. It is in this field that ILP methods are used most extensively.

Policymakers' enthusiasm for ILP was founded on its business-focused principles, and on its promise to do more with less by employing a more targeted, coordinated, and focused approach to policing problems. Police managers seem to value ILP for its rigour in analysing problems and in documenting solutions, in the form

of knowledge products such as strategic and tactical assessments, and problem and subject profiles (see James, 2013).

Evidence-based practice is the dominant policy-making paradigm around much of the world. Evidence-based tactics and methods, backed by rigorous empirical evidence, are increasingly seen as the trademark of true professions. They have a firm foothold in the policing sphere. The College of Policing is the professional body for policing in the UK. Evidence of the College's commitment to EBP (the acronym in this sense is commonly used for Evidence Based Policing rather than Practice) can be found in its establishment of a 'what works' research centre; in its burgeoning relationship with higher education institutions following the introduction of the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF), which mandates degree-level qualifications for new joiners, and will eventually deliver programmes of training for all officers; and its embedding of EBP principles in the teaching and learning of new recruits.

Economically, EBP promises sustainability for the police service. Politically, it is central to the governance, accountability and legitimacy of policing. Socially, it stands for true police professionalism and is key to policing's professionalisation, a long held desire of the institution. EBP's claim to deliver a transition from tacit, intuitive, personally-meaningful, and situationally-articulated direction to explicit, rational, and organisation-anchored control has validity. Certainly, in harnessing itself to the College of Policing (in terms of the PEQF, which is delivered in partnership with universities, and its commitment to underpin practice with scholarly research), policing has opened itself up to scrutiny at every level.

Knowledge-based policing (KBP) lacks the distinctiveness of EBP and ILP, which are formulated as models and discussed more widely in the research literature. Arguably, what appears a conceptual weakness of KBP is its greatest strength. Building on knowledge, policing could develop organically through a process of continuous learning and understanding, which is actively promoted and valued. KBP does not rely on customised, ready-made, actionable knowledge products, but on tacit and explicit knowledge. History is important; tacit knowledge, often gained from many years of experience, can provide context for assessing problems and delivering

policing services effectively. Explicit knowledge is captured from extant scholarly research.

Advocates of KBP (see for example, Williamson, 2008) argue that the police operate in a dynamic environment, which changes as a response to police tactics. Thus, as valuable as knowledge may be in the short term, the lessons learned and knowledge acquired may have diminishing validity and value as offenders adapt to police tactics. Therefore, knowledge must be continuously updated and refreshed, and that places a huge burden on institutions. This is true particularly when, as in recent years, public finances are squeezed.

There is a case for change. The image of a golden era typified by community-focus and founded largely on the delivery of policing services by the 'bobby on the beat' endures. The policing institution retains that focus, operationalised through its neighbourhood policing programmes and a steadfast commitment to responding to calls for help from the public (even if that response sometimes is not as rapid as the public would like, or the police themselves would hope). Recognising that it needs to evolve, policing has experimented with other models that rely on the acquisition of intelligence and knowledge, and on evidence of 'what works' as bases for the delivery of policing services.

For a time, ILP was the great hope for policing's modernisation, but leaders now seem to understand that it can succeed only if policing fundamentally changes both its structure and culture to a degree that neither stakeholders nor communities want. Leaders recognise that ILP can send shockwaves through an organisation, challenging hierarchies of experience, status relations, and positional bases. Moreover, ILP's reliance on intrusive methods of data collection (in terms of the interception of communications and the tracking of suspect individuals and groups) is unpalatable to some. In many places, an 'ILP lite' version has developed, in which ILP practices have complemented rather than replaced traditional approaches. When ILP has been used successfully, it has addressed either a particular crime type or, over a strictly limited period, crime more broadly. In that way, the dislocation of ordinary policing services is not interrupted, intrusion is minimised, and traditional ways of working are not disrupted.

Essentially, KBP is more a philosophy than a policing model, an endless pursuit of better understanding of the social and professional worlds. With hindsight, KBP appears to be an innovation that could have flown, but never had enough momentum, and therefore failed to leave the ground. Knowledge is a much more fluid concept than evidence, and perhaps that is why EBP, with its commitment to methodological tools supported by rigorous empirical evidence, has largely superseded it in both policing and scholarly discourses.

EBP does not threaten traditional policing arrangements in the same way as ILP. It is a philosophy and a process that complements the consent model and its ways of working. Gathering evidence is nothing new to the police, who know from their experience and training what to look for in investigations, in order to build a case for a court or other tribunal. In that context, the clearest evidence often comes from properly isolating the crime scene. Scientific research also comes from conducting experiments in closed conditions where variables can be manipulated as researchers wish. In daily life, evidence tends to be much more ambiguous, and findings based upon it much less certain.

That potential for uncertainty is recognised in evidence-based medicine where scientific knowledge is just one of three sources used for the purposes of diagnosis and problem-solving. Medical practitioners also draw upon their clinical experience and their knowledge of the patient to make treatment decisions (Greene, 2019). The emphasis is on effective integration of the discrete elements, and not on establishing a hegemony for one of them. Fyfe (2017) agrees; he argues that research evidence is only one element in police decision-making, and that professional judgement and experience must also be considered.

To conclude, arguably one of the few constants in public policing has been change, but the institution's commitment to the principle of consent never has wavered. The police and their stakeholders recognise, and seem always to have recognised, that consent is a fundamental requirement for democratic policing. The continuing relevance of this model in an age of globalisation, social fragmentation; and technological change may be questioned, but its values, in the context of the rule of law and of police legitimacy, are eternal. Even if the rhetoric does not always match

the reality, it remains a powerful statement about British policing's philosophy and guiding principles.

This is not an argument against change per se. Policing needs to retain its core values, but it must evolve to meet its increasingly diverse communities' needs. Policing seems to have set aside ILP and KBP from mainstream policing and settled on EBP as a key means of delivering a professional policing service. Both have value. ILP's focus should remain on the investigation of serious organised crime, where intrusions into citizens' privacy, routinely associated with its methods, can more easily be justified. The pursuit of better understanding, the central feature of KBP, should be the aim of every profession.

Objectively, EBP certainly has merit. Policing could thrive on research-based evidence that helps it build on its alliance with the College of Policing to develop knowledge of what works - knowledge it can use in the interests of all its communities. However, policing must recognise and accept that evidence is invariably subjective; normatively, it reflects power, politics, and status. Learning from 'what works' in medical practice, the institution's commitment to EBP should embrace inside, situational, knowledge so that concerns over policing's impact on individual rights, freedoms, and diverse ways of life are better reflected, and police actions are adapted appropriately and proportionately. Arguably, that is what the British policing model has delivered successfully for the greater part of 200 years. To do otherwise risks offending people's senses of morality, reasonableness and fairness. Ultimately, unless communities trust the police, the police will not attract support for their efforts, no matter how much evidence the institution brings forward, or how well it feels it can argue its case for change.

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Relevant chapters: **Police Accountability and Legitimacy; Police Code of Conduct; Police Professionalisation; Policing, Past and Present; Policing – Future Directions**

Readings

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