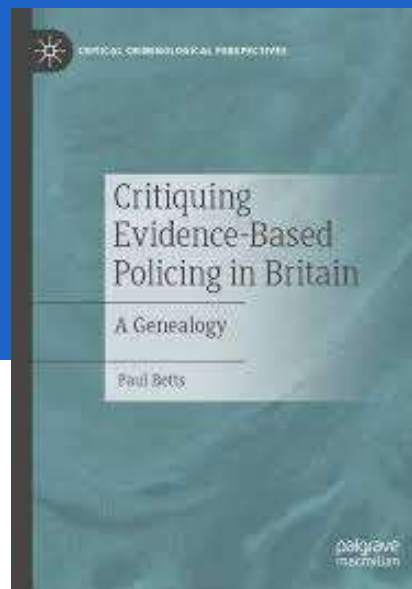


Can academic research improve policing practices and policies?

A conversation

Marleen Easton



Paul Betts, PhD and
Honorary Professor of
Criminal Justice

What is currently going on in the UK in relation to research on, for, by and with the police?

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PRESENT

- Up to 1980s strong diversity of crimino-sociological research about policing
- Evidence-based Policing (EBP) dominates current thinking in England and Wales – focus on the police
- Police and crime science underpin police education
- Research funding is ring fenced to EBP partnerships and research agendas
- This has become institutionalised - College of Policing



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What is 'Evidence' based policing in the UK?

EVIDENCE BASED POLICING IN ENGLAND & WALES

- **Not police evidence!** Based on evidence-based medicine / experimental criminology
- Purist and **realist** versions of EBP
- Believe that robust, scientific knowledge can:
 - Discover **facts and truths** about policing;
 - Prove **‘what works’** for policing;
 - **Implementing** this knowledge in strategic and operational decisions as a matter of policy can ‘improve policing’.



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What makes EBP so strong in Anglo-saxon countries?

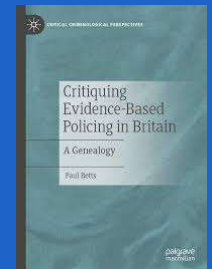
EBP GLOBAL STORYLINES EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING (EBP) IS THE ANSWER...

- **Simplified narratives** for cops, politicians, policy makers, researchers, (prac)ademics
- **Sold** by authoritative voices - professors at University of Cambridge and senior police officers
- EBP offers **simple answers to wicked problems** – backed by science and evidence!
- **Supported** by growing global army of practitioners – Societies of EBP
- EBP has become **institutionalised and industrialised** - in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, NZ
- **EBP aligns with political story-lines**



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What can we learn from your critical analysis?



CAN EBP BE HARMFUL?

- **Do we need EBP?** Problematises 'improved' and 'more professional' policing?
- **Hierarchy of knowledge** – but what is evidence and whose counts?
- Not the neutral science-based improvement project – EBP supports particular **statist political ideas** about 'improved policing'
- Focuses on **managerial interests** – efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism - conservative 'asks' of policing
- How and **for whom** does EBP envisage 'improving policing'?
- **Policing as its own academic discipline** or a rendezvous point for various approaches?
- Institutionalising EBP **controls** access to funding, data and governing research agendas and questions – squeezes other (critical) voices



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How might a more pluralistic vision of policing knowledge aimed at policing improvement be achieved?

Is there a way forward?

REFLEXIVE POLICING AS A FRAMEWORK... SOME PRINCIPLES

1. Bold and **shared** public vision
2. **Respect** for wider-ranging epistemologies
3. **Independent** development of research agendas
4. **Separate** policing and academia
5. Equalised and democratised **access** to police data



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REFLEXIVE POLICING AS A FRAMEWORK... SOME PRINCIPLES

6. A **revised** model of research funding
7. Make knowledge on policing **more accessible**
8. Developing policing knowledge **change champions**
9. **Dissemination** of a non-judgemental, diverse knowledge base
10. **Alternative** police education programmes



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