

INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING AND THE PROBLEMS OF TURNING RHETORIC INTO PRACTICE

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Policing strategies, and the terminology that accompanies them, can now be rapidly disseminated around the world. New tactics that are seen to apparently work elsewhere are often demanded of local police before any real evaluation has taken place. This paper looks at 'intelligence-led policing' – currently seen as one of the more positive contributions that policing can make to crime prevention and reduction. In the context of policing in Australia this paper suggests that local factors and recent history may hinder the adoption of some strategies and that arrogation of rhetoric may be easier than adopting the practices.

Keywords: Intelligence-led policing; Informants; Surveillance; Intelligence strategy; Australia

INTRODUCTION

Developments in policing and crime control were fairly rapid during the 1990s. Community orientated policing and problem orientated policing gained popularity rapidly in both North America (Goldstein, 1990; Kennedy and Veitch, 1997) and the UK (Leigh *et al.*, 1996, 1998). The vocabulary of policing was at the same time augmented with terms such as 'crime reduction', 'local initiatives' and 'partnership strategies'. The adoption to Australia of policing practices from North America and the UK has been simplified by the global communication revolution and a shared language. There are close links between many of the English-speaking police services and developments in northern hemisphere policing can appear within the rhetoric of Australian policing almost immediately. Police in Australia are now familiar with terms such as 'proactive', 'targeted response', 'crime management', 'problem orientated policing', and 'intelligence-led', though they may be less aware of their real meaning. Mike Maguire is right to point out that these policies are more than just catchy phrases but represent a rapid, significant and widespread change in the business of policing that could have a profound impact on criminal justice in the immediate and long term future (Maguire, 2000, p. 316). As in Europe, the rise in crime rates and the apparent

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ineffectiveness of the traditional policing paradigm to combat this growth may be contributing to the enthusiasm for the practices associated with the new terminology, but there are also local influences in Australia that have exerted a greater pressure for change than crime rates alone. These same local influences, while applying pressure to the police service to change, may act to hinder the wholesale adoption of some of the new tactics. It is also possible that local influence can act to transform generic ideals into either a new methodology or a hybrid mix of international and local strategies. 'Intelligence-led policing' – one of the more recent tactics and widely used additions to the vocabulary of policing – is currently seen as the most positive contribution that police can make to crime prevention and reduction.

Intelligence-driven strategies have their origins in the financial constraints that are a reality of modern policing. Growth in the demand for information from the *risk society* (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997) and the new public management of police services through financial audit (Crawford, 1997) have generated an abundance of statistical data that allows outside agencies to monitor police performance. Much of the transformation to an intelligence driven policing strategy within policing can be traced back to two influential UK reports that addressed financial management and value for money policing. 'Helping With Enquiries – Tackling Crime Effectively' (Audit Commission, 1993) was targeted at operational policing and has had a profound impact in the years since. The glossy, readable style of the publication (including a still image on the cover from the popular TV series 'The Bill') naturally caught the eye of many both within the police service, and beyond, as this 'landmark' (Heaton, 2000) report appeared to offer the first user-friendly guide to cost effective policing. It is not insignificant that the originating body is a financial institution and their call for 'value for money' policing may go some way to explaining the importance of *cost-effective* crime reduction in the corporate plans of many services, including in Australia the New South Wales (NSW) Police Service (SCRCSSP, 2000, p. 567). Within two years of the Audit Commission report a Police Research Group sponsored publication documented the steps that a number of police services had taken in the direction of an intelligence-led strategy (Maguire and John, 1995).

The second influential report, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, served to document the fundamental elements of intelligence-led law enforcement and crime reduction. 'Policing With Intelligence' (HMIC, 1997) identified a number of key factors considered crucial to the full implementation of intelligence-led policing, including an integrated intelligence structure, key performance indicators and collaboration with outside agencies. This report sought to indicate best practice to UK police services (and by osmosis the broader law enforcement community) by drawing on an examination of the current application within six police forces (a number of smaller groups were also visited).

Both of these reports focused on the information gathering and analysis facets of modern policing. Particular attention was paid to the use of surveillance devices and techniques, closed circuit television, financial tracking, the importance of undercover officers, and tasked or participating informers. They signalled to the forces the government's interest in seeing all possible resources brought to bear on the problem of high volume crimes such as burglary and vehicle theft. The reports also suggested the implicit acceptance of the use of covert tactics in the fight against crimes of lesser import, tactics that had previously been reserved for organised and serious crime. The Audit Commission recommended that this information gathering exercise could be utilised

in areas such as the targeting of prolific local offenders, an area suggested as ripe for a cost-effective crime reduction strategy.

The aim of this article is to comment on some key components of intelligence-led strategies and to suggest that embracing the terminology may be easier than adoption of the model itself. The article will focus on a number of issues including the use of computers to collate, analyse and disseminate intelligence, the relationship between the police and criminal informers, and the perceived effectiveness and evaluation of intelligence-driven strategies. The paper will examine the limitations of computer systems for intelligence management, the use of informants by police, the appropriateness of covert tactics against local crime problems and the issue of evaluating intelligence-based initiatives. We start with the use of information technology in the intelligence arena. While this article will emphasise the position in regard to policing within Australia and the state of New South Wales, there are many parallels with other police services on the continent and beyond.

COMPUTER AND THE DEMAND FOR INTELLIGENCE

With the introduction of intelligence-led policing, enhanced information technology was seen as the solution to managing the anticipating flood of information and intelligence expected as a result of a change to the new strategy. The importance of an effective intelligence computer system was recognised both by police services and the commercial companies who have grown to rapidly fill the new niche 'intelligence' market. The traditional collators' cards have been replaced by intelligence systems that can store and grade huge quantities of data, and the data requirements have subsequently grown. There are however a number of issues regarding police databases that should be considered.

It may be that policing will benefit from an intelligence-led, computer-driven approach, however a number of researchers have offered an alternative explanation for the bureaucratic enthusiasm for information gathering. These authors have suggested that major social changes during the end of the last century have contributed to the growing public need for information. The increasing fragmentation of the community, fear and insecurity and the growth of the *risk society* have generated a massive requirement for increased security and knowledge (Maguire, 2000). This market is now being filled by the private sector and is evident in the growth of private security organisations such as burglar alarm companies, shopping centre security guards, and insurance companies. The public sector also needs to fulfil its desire for more information, and the police are now seen as the gatekeepers to most crime-related knowledge. Indeed Ericson and Haggerty (1997) suggest that the driving force behind much of the data collated by the police are these external institutions:

Most of the crime-related knowledge produced by the police is disseminated to other institutions (for example, those concerned with health, insurance, public welfare, financial matters, and education) for their risk management needs, rather than used for criminal prosecution and punishment.

(Ericson and Haggerty, 1997, p. 5)

The exponential growth in the use of computers within policing is certainly a benefit to external organisations, given that the police are one of the major providers of risk-related information. Much of the impetus for computerisation of recorded crime

information in the UK came from the requirement for regular statistical returns however the systems are rarely designed to extract information for detailed crime prevention or reduction analysis (Ellingworth *et al.*, 1995; Ratcliffe and McCullagh, 1998). The ever-increasing reliance on computers has actually increased the demands on police time and expanded the range of information that is collected. It has been suggested that 'if an intelligence system has the capability for handling large amounts of data, there is a good case for using this capability, so long as it does not interfere with the primary purpose of intelligence gathering and analysis' (Maguire and John, 1995 p. 23). The same report recognised that some forces record everything about known offenders, including low grade information such as sighting reports, while others are more selective in recording potential intelligence. The absence of any real guidelines presents the police with the problem of not knowing what data to retain.

Becoming the central gatekeeper to risk knowledge has fuelled in the police a need to keep as much information as possible, irrespective of its perceived immediate value, in case the information becomes 'handy' (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997, p. 10).

In Australia, the New South Wales Police Service rely on a computer system called COPS (Computerised Operational Policing System) to handle most of their operational policing computer support. This monolithic system handles a wide variety of material including calls for service from the public, recorded crime, traffic accidents and intelligence reports. It would probably not be unreasonable to suggest that it suffers from a problem common to many police computer systems, that of obsolescence. The system is slow and cumbersome and to record one burglary can require an officer to navigate through dozens of screens of information, in a text based, non-mouse, and non-Windows environment. According to one IT instructor at the New South Wales Police College it can take probationary constables unfamiliar with the system over an hour to record the details of one break and enter incident. Under these conditions it seems inevitable that some 'cutting of corners' takes place. This in turn reduced the quality of the information on the system and the value of any subsequent intelligence. New South Wales is not alone in having a computer system that is not suited to intelligence handling. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) use a system called PROMIS (also in use by the police in the Northern Territory and the National Crime Authority). Data entry is easier than COPS due to the Windows environment but unfortunately it is not an intelligence system but a case management system. While it is easy getting information into PROMIS, extraction of useful intelligence is an altogether different situation often requiring data cleaning and the removal of duplicate entries. In many police services, new technologies take a long time to implement, and by the time they are in place a brief tour of the policing and commercial sites on the Internet show that they have been invariably superseded by something better somewhere else. The adoption of statistical or case management systems as *ad hoc* intelligence systems without recognising the flexible demands of modern law enforcement intelligence will often create a significant restriction on criminal intelligence capability.

Collating the details of incidents is only one aspect of the intelligence cycle (Figure 1). Once this information has been collated, it must be analysed in relation to other pertinent information before useful and applicable intelligence may result. There has been a growth of information retained on police databases as well as an increase in the number of databases that intelligence officers can access. In recent times few police intelligence courses have made much mention of the digital revolution, but now there has been a boom in complex analytical tools. The list includes generic data-handling programs

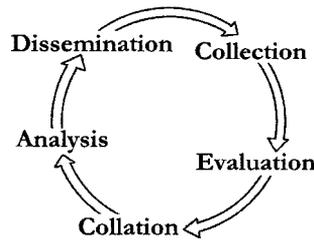


FIGURE 1 The intelligence cycle. Within law enforcement intelligence there are many variations on the intelligence cycle and the NSW version is shown here merely as an example of one variant. (Source: NSW Police Service, 1999, *The Intelligence – Based Policing Development Program*, p. 3.9).

such as Excel and Access that can be used to sort crime and incident databases to specialist software packages such as “Watson” from Xanalis and i2’s “Analyst’s Notebook” that are geared towards criminal investigation. The list can also include Geographical Information Systems (GIS) such as MapInfo (used in some fashion by most Australian police services) that can map crime and incidents and contribute a spatial analysis perspective to the intelligence officer’s work. This last product is used alongside other tools with some sophistication by the NSW Police in their Operations and Crime Review (OCR). The OCR is a forum for the executive to assess the performance of a Local Area Command’s (LAC) attempts to reduce crime that is augmented by cartographic and analytical support that maps crime distributions and patterns over time (Dixon, 1999b; Ratcliffe, 2000).

Although this wealth of computing power can improve the analysis and dissemination (Fig. 1) of high volume crime by reducing processing times and generating more comprehensible graphical outputs, the move to computerisation does constitute a considerable adjustment to the role of the intelligence officer. This change also creates a myriad of difficulties for police management. The role of the intelligence officer has not in the past attracted the best internal candidates, given that many police do not recognise the need for an analytical researcher in the post but see the job as retaining many of the virtues of the traditional collator’s role, one that has been described as only for the ‘lame and the walking dead’ (Maguire and John, 1995, p. 19). In Europe a posting to the intelligence office is now more desired and there is some indication that this is also becoming the case across Australia. Intelligence officers now need to be trained in a variety of software packages, programs that are often expensive and incompatible with the older legacy mainframe systems on which much of the information is stored. The training problems are compounded by the wealth of software choices and, as will be suggested in a later section of this article, the lack of a clear evidence-based methodology based on evaluated good practice. To be effective, intelligence analysis has to sit on a solid theoretical framework.

POLICE, INFORMERS¹ AND CORRUPTION

According to both the Audit Commission and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, the enhanced use of criminal informers is a central tenet of an

¹The terms ‘informer’ and ‘informant’ are used interchangeably in this article.

intelligence-driven policing strategy. In fact Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary could not have been more glowing about the use of informers:

The effective use of informants is one area that has received much attention, with forces encouraged to concentrate on recruiting and tasking them in greater numbers. Used with discretion and proper supervision, they represent a very cost-effective means of developing operations against crime, compared for example with the costs of deploying a full surveillance team to gather the same information.

(HMIC, 1997, p. 17)

The limited financial evaluation by both HMIC and the Audit Commission that concurred in their enthusiasm for the use of criminal informers has been criticised by researchers in the UK. It has been argued that the full costs of running informers should include all of the operational and organisational costs associated with recruiting and running informers, and goes on to question the potential damage to police legitimacy given the ethical difficulties associated with the police/informer relationship (Dunnighan and Norris, 1999).

Dunnighan and Norris' contention no doubt strikes a chord with those who have observed the NSW Police Service over the last few years. The recent history of the Service with regards to its relationship with criminal informers (and other matters) is not an illustrious one. Examples include the laboriously investigated affairs of Arthur Smith, a known member of the Sydney criminal underworld, that resulted in the investigation of more than one police officer who claimed he was their informant (ICAC, 1994), and that of Detective Sergeant Robert Irwin who was found by the Police Integrity Commission to have an apparently corrupt relationship with a known drug dealer and whose activities included accepting bribes in return for sensitive police information (Dixon, 1999b). The situation was so bad that the Wood Royal Commission was left to conclude "a state of systemic and entrenched corruption existed within the Service" (Wood, 1997, p. 67). The problem of corruption is not restricted to NSW. The Queensland police have been required to respond to the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and similar scandals have emerged in London, New York and Los Angeles. These various investigations are part of a shift in accountability around the world, and in some part are due to the increasing speed in the movement of ideas globally (Dupont, 2001).

The response of the NSW Police Service to the Royal Commission has been significant in many areas, including a thorough rearrangement of the command structure, new education and training programmes, and a change in many of the senior positions. The political lack of trust in any local candidates resulted in the appointment to Commissioner of Peter Ryan, a senior police officer brought from England. Ryan immediately initiated a reform process in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission and at many levels throughout the force there appears to be a real commitment to reform. However the corruption problem ran deep within the Service and could not be explained away as individual cases or opportunistic corruption, but was a feature of the organisational structure and culture (Dixon, 1999b). Resolving this type of systematic problem and adjusting police culture cannot occur overnight and is beyond the relatively simple matter of sacking a few corrupt officers. As Janet Chan has pointed out, there are no 'foolproof blueprints' for the process of cultural change within policing (Chan, 1999, p. 129).

Given the current climate and past criticism of police/criminal relationships it is only reasonable that the NSW Police Service should be cautious in their adoption of the same enthusiasm as the UK for an increased use of informers in criminal investigation and

intelligence gathering. One of the main difficulties when dealing with informers is the often invidious situation in which the police officer is placed. The officer has to juggle various official responsibilities that may be vaguely defined in legal terms, their occupational obligations to prevent and detect crime, and their moral duty to remain incorruptible. All of this in the face of pressures and temptations from a criminal underworld that would both benefit from their fall from grace and often has the financial and material means to provide the required push. Settle, in his study of Melbourne police informers noted this gulf between the legal position and the reality of police/informer contact:

Police are expected to be accountable to the law for their methods while at the same time they are under pressure to maintain order pragmatically. This means that they must justify their actions in legalistic terms – terms which sit awkwardly with many of the informal practices used in crime control and order maintenance.

(Settle, 1995 p. 3)

Changes to the handling of informers were necessary in New South Wales in an effort to govern the ‘informal practices’ surrounding the use of informers, to add some structure to the fundamental dichotomy between the need to gather information from informers and the legislative framework that rarely permits contact between the police and criminals (Findlay, 1987), and in response to a number of recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC, 1993, 1994). The NSW Police Service produced in 1997 an Informant Management Manual (NSWPS, 1997). As they have (hopefully) entered the latter half of the corruption–reform cycle (Dixon, 1999a) it would seem that the Service has taken a prudent line of regulating (albeit internally) with regard to the use of informers by their officers, though without expressing much enthusiasm for their use. There is no specific law in Australia that governs the use of informants to gather intelligence or evidence, unlike other aspects of intelligence gathering such as telephone interception and electronic surveillance. There is legislation (Section 130 of the Evidence Act 1995) that protects the identity of informants, but only to a point. In the event that an officer does negotiate a successful recruitment, the Informant Management Manual requires the prospective informer to sign a document that states they understand the police will do their best to keep the informers identity confidential, but that a court can in certain circumstances reveal their identity. Although the legislation that permits under exceptional circumstances the revelation of a source’s identity has never (to the author’s knowledge) been invoked, the requirement to sign a document that recognises the possibility is both fair and principled on the part of the manual’s authors, but a significant disincentive to any prospective informers.

Given the climate since the Royal Commission and the ICAC investigations it is unsurprising that there has been a reduction in the number of informers recruited or handled by the police. According to one senior police officer reported in the Bulletin, the number of informants in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney dropped in 1998 from over 100 down to just 2 (Martin, 1998). The same article made the following observations:

Today’s NSW policeman is too frightened to make a criminal contact, legitimate or otherwise. There are virtually no informant networks...

The resignation of senior, experienced officers, including many detectives, has meant a serious loss of knowledge about the Sydney crime scene. Police criminal intelligence has become so haphazard that, in some cases, interstate police are contacting retired NSW officers for briefings.

(Martin, 1998, pp. 37–8)

If the claims made in the UK as to the effectiveness and efficiency of informant-driven policing are true (and the evidence is still either inconclusive or non-existent), then this leaves the NSW Police Service management in an invidious position. They either remain reticent about encouraging increased use of informers and run the risk of criticism for failing to act as effectively as possible on crime, or push increased informant handling as a significant crime investigation technique and risk jeopardising the progress made since the Royal Commission. The lack of a systematic appraisal of the 'value versus consequences' of informant use does not help (Norris and Dunnighan, 2001). Innes (2000) has suggested that informants can be cost-effective but that long-term over-reliance may prove detrimental to public perception of a police service formalising contact with the criminal fraternity. If the NSW Police Service Intelligence-based Policing Development Program (a distance education package for police intelligence officers) can be used as a guide, with the *caveat* that this course is still being developed at the time of writing this article, then it would appear that the Service has erred on the side of caution. Little reference is made to informant handling or management with the course focussing on less contentious aspects of the intelligence-led policing doctrine. The effectiveness of an intelligence-led strategy with little focus on criminal informants will therefore be of future interest.

APPROPRIATENESS AND THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONALITY

The appropriateness of the police response in relation to the severity of the offences investigated is an issue for all police services. This impacts on a number of areas of the intelligence cycle (Figure 1) not just in the policy implications that are derived from the intelligence but also in the allocation of resources to gather information. Few people would consider it appropriate to deploy a full surveillance team supported with telephone interception warrants, to curtail the activities of some anti-social youths at the local shopping centre. Many would find this police response not only inappropriate but oppressive. However the police now have a role to provide information to the wider community on matters of general concern. Ericson and Haggerty (1997) claim that this role of being the continual 'communicators of risk knowledge' has expanded the scope of surveillance carried out on individuals and public areas, fuelled by the ever increasing need for information. This has resulted in the extension of surveillance techniques and information gathering into the investigation of lower level crimes such as recidivist petty offenders, low level drug dealing and public disorder (Maguire, 2000).

The participation of local police in maintaining surveillance on lower levels of criminal activity has been described as essential in the prevention of more organised crime, given that most intelligence is generated by officers carrying out routine police activities at a local level (Stelfox, 1998, p. 405). In theory a full implementation of the Audit Commission recommendations might change the emphasis. Intelligence from routine uniform patrolling could take second stage to data from informants, telephone intercepts and monitoring of e-mail traffic. In the UK the police have adopted ethical standards and codes of practice based on the principle of proportionality and where the level of intrusion must be justified by the severity of the offence (Neville, 2000). Similar guidelines do not exist in Australia. As the focus of an intelligence led strategy is directed more towards high volume crime and those 'crime categories most affecting the quality of life' (SCRCSSP, 2000, p. 539) this issue will expand in

significance in the eyes of the public and the media, and the use of codes and guidelines in place of more substantial and legalistic safeguards is likely to be questioned at some point. This is an important issue in New South Wales where the majority of the state is blessed with relatively low crime rates, but are policed by a results-driven organisation. To what extent will local police in a quiet corner of the state, in the absence of any guidelines, use disproportionate practices in an attempt to reduce already rare acts of criminality? Minor infringements can easily increase in importance under such circumstances resulting in a potentially inappropriate police response.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EVALUATION

Traditional policies are being questioned, often as a result of research, and police managers must be able to obtain valid information to make rational decisions – information that the public and their elected officials will accept. Decisions based solely on experience and tradition are no longer acceptable.

(Eck and LaVigne, 1994, p. 164)

Intelligence led policing is one of the new law enforcement buzzwords and has been implemented in many parts of the UK with the same driving enthusiasm that new approaches often attract. The two influential reports mentioned earlier in this paper both entreated policing to adopt a new investigative paradigm that amounted to a considerable change in organisation and process. A number of forces flocked to the pennant and rapid reorganisation followed in a number of areas (Amey *et al.*, 1996; Barton and Evans, 1999; Maguire and John, 1995; Ratcliffe, 2000). What was unclear was what evidence was produced by either the Audit Commission or the Inspectorate as to the effectiveness of the new standard. Significant reorganization of police forces is not an easy process and police organisational resistance to change has been well documented (for example see Chan, 1997; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Leigh *et al.*, 1998). Internal changes have included the establishment of crime management units, provision of specialist evidence gathering or proactive teams, and increased demands made on uniform units of produce information reports. Difficulties have been reported by a number of researchers. Morale problems have been reported in some areas with the creation of new internal units or jobs (Maguire and John, 1995, p. 45) or the development of new evidence teams (Amey *et al.*, 1996, p. 28). Problems with implementation and adherence to force standards for intelligence management also exist in areas that were not focused on as pilot sites (Barton and Evans, 1999). As the NSW Police Service has discovered, the emplacement of systems such as Crime Management Units is not on its own sufficient to drive the processes of change (Seddon and Ritchie, 2000).

When the Audit Commission made their recommendations aimed to extract greater ‘value for money’ from strategic police operations, little reliable evidence was cited to support these recommendations and some of the specific claims made in the report have been directly questioned (Dunnighan and Norris, 1999), as mentioned earlier. This is another difficulty faced by police services wishing to move ahead with intelligence-led policing. There is a lack of substance in most evaluations of the new crime management models or intelligence-led initiatives and the implementations have been so rapid that the occasional short term achievement may not be a good indicator of long term success. The results may be susceptible to the effects of chance or the efficacy of extraneous variables. Peter Amey and his colleagues, in their examination of the new crime management model in Kent Constabulary, were left to summarise “that

the only possible conclusion on crime reduction at this point must be ‘not proven’” (Amey *et al.*, 1996, p. 33). The point is echoed by other researchers: “To sum up, evaluation of the effectiveness of proactive forms of criminal investigation is as yet in its infancy” (Maguire and John, 1995, p. 53). The situation is possibly even worse in Australia. David Dixon, while talking about culture and processes lamented the ‘paucity of academic research on Australian policing’ (Dixon, 1999b, p. 146) but he could just as easily have been talking about evaluating the strategies of intelligence-led policing.

There is an absence of theoretically informed, empirical studies into the effectiveness of intelligence led policing strategies, not least of all due to a lack of theory informing the strategy itself. The importance of rigorous evaluation built into the Crime Reduction Programme in the UK is therefore a welcome initiative in this area. International comparisons of intelligence-led strategies are difficult due to the inconsistency of implementations and the variability of local programmes. In Australia some new intelligence-led strategies have changed the nature of local policing while some police have commented to the author that the new approach is basically “new name—business as usual”. There is a lack of Australian research in this area and given the distinct local conditions within the policing environment in Australia this is a cause for concern. If it existed, this is where the research could develop the theories and inform the practice. Criminological research has in the past driven initiatives within policing by providing a reliable, evidence-based body of knowledge that informed policing practice.

Evaluation is essential if policy is to be truly evidence-based. There are concerns when evaluations are conducted internally and this research is used to drive a wider force policy as questions can often be raised about the validity of internal (and sometimes external) evaluation. Policing is a competitive business with a relatively meritorious promotion system. Lack of success never looks good on a resume and innovation and drive tend to have more appeal. Under the pressure of an OCR it would be a brave Local Area Commander indeed who could admit the failure of a crime reduction initiative, and under the critical gaze of the Commissioner it would be understandable if they succumbed to the allure of a less rigorous, more flattering and potentially erroneous evaluation. New South Wales is not alone in having to manage evaluation of policing operations. In the annual Purchasing Agreement that co-ordinates the policing of Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) between the ACT Government and the Australian Federal Police, one stated target is that 100% of crime prevention programs are to be evaluated against set objectives (AFP, 2001). With the likelihood of every crime initiative being evaluated the pressure for measurable success will undoubtedly be substantial. In their report ‘Beating Crime’ the Inspectorate of Constabulary recognised both this problem and the gap between real and perceived success:

Whilst many people acknowledged that ‘technically’ they ought to conduct them [evaluations], they were often seen as too difficult with evaluation perceived as wasted effort looking backwards which could be better used on the next initiative.

(HMIC, 1998, p. 30)

One of the most concerning aspects of the information provided by many forces was the way in which success was interpreted. Based on their information, most of the initiatives described by them as successful did not achieve all or most of the initiative’s objectives. In many cases, a claim of success seemed to be based merely on the existence of the initiative rather than on what it achieved.

(HMIC, 1998, p. 29)

Informative and objective evaluation research is never effortless, and some authors have expressed concerns regarding the ability of the police to conduct this type of

evaluation (Brown, 1996; Prunckun, 1996). As far back as the mid-1980s Weatheritt commented on the lack of research expertise within internal police research departments (Weatheritt, 1986). The time is probably ready for a review of this research, but the situation is unlikely to have improved substantially. Other researchers have advanced more realistic processes for evaluating police crime reduction initiatives that seek a more contextual scientific realist approach that understands the wider context of police operations (Pawson and Tilley, 1994). Indeed policing operations do not operate in a vacuum and some external validation that can examine the wider context from a more objective standpoint to inform both policing practice and theory may provide some much needed legitimisation of frontline policing tactics. But evaluation of crime prevention initiatives (as are most policing operations) is not easy and needs to test clearly articulated tactics in the right context (Pawson and Tilley, 1994). As Gloria Laycock (2001, p. 71) notes 'the measurement of police performance was, and still is, a sensitive matter'. The conundrum for police is the use of internal validation of policing strategies with an outcome that might be viewed externally as predictable and dubious, against the risk of outside evaluation that may be more rigorous but potentially inconclusive or unflattering.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This article has focused a number of key issues in relation to the implementation of intelligence-led policing and it might be easy to interpret the picture as a gloomy one, but some progress is being made in a number of areas and some problems are more temporary than others. For example, the NSW Police Service are introducing an enterprise data warehouse to integrate a number of its disparate databases and combat some of their data handling problems. The same approach has been employed by Greater Manchester Police who have integrated over fifty databases containing around ten million records (Neville, 2000, p. 416). Software upgrades in the area of GIS are enabling more sophisticated crime pattern analysis to take place as the LAC level and the growth of digital information handling databases within police intelligence organisations has grown substantially, though what is striking about these intelligence-related databases is their lack of commonality, a problem common to many police services. The establishment of common training standards is hampered by the variety of software and the way in which it is used across jurisdictions and even within the same police service. Intelligence output is more often related to the functionality of the software than the intelligence needs of the organisation.

A new initiative has seen the establishment of crime management units across the state of New South Wales and a new Crime Management Support Unit (CMSU). A word of caution is necessary at this point. These initiatives have yet to be thoroughly evaluated and their originality (at least locally) prevents any long-term assessment as yet. Although evaluation is a part of the new NSW Police policy in this area, it is unclear exactly who will be responsible for the evaluation, courting the possibility of unsystematic or bias evaluation as mentioned earlier.

What we may be seeing in New South Wales (and Australia generally) is not so much an intelligence-led police service, but more a service that is striving to be led intelligently: A service that is not only trying to work in a more evidence-based objective mode, but to address the contextual and cultural barriers that hinder progress.

Although the new plan is a recent one and a couple of small early achievements are no indicator of long-term success, the NSW Police Service has quickly adopted the plan at the corporate level. The rhetoric has moved away from mentioning intelligence-led policing to an evidence-based organisation employing pragmatic policing styles and discovering: 'What works'. This is a move away from the British emphasis on intelligence-led initiatives, with the accompanying pro active, information-dominated focus as described earlier in this paper, and towards an American style that is emphatically results-driven. Long term chance of success is impossible to estimate in the short term, and the jury is still out on this change in policing style.

A considerable part of the literature on intelligence led policing has focused on the risks related to increased informant handling. Modern policing needs the balances and checks provided by this external commentary and this is a significant and important area for research. Policing in turn may need to be more open to academic involvement and would appear to be in need of guidance to turn more tracts of the new paradigm's rhetoric into practice. This is especially the case when there is a need to develop theories and training in areas away from informant handling, an understandably sensitive domain in Australia. Given Weatheritt's argument in relation to policing that 'the incorporation of research findings into a new body of accepted wisdom is a slow and uneven process in which the intellectual persuasiveness of the research is a great deal less relevant than its political appeal' (1986, p. 16), any evidence-based practice that does not focus on criminal informants must have appeal to the police.

The difficulty for the police in NSW and Australia in the adoption of an overseas strategy is two-fold. Firstly there is the problem of trying to fit an alien process to the idiosyncratic nature of local policing – an environment with a different history and culture. The discussion surrounding the Australian adoption of 'New York style' zero-tolerance policing illustrates the point (for a discussion of the issues see Grabosky, 1999). A more pressing problem is the absence of a conceptual framework for intelligence-driven policing that is supported by an evidence-based theory. The dearth of any empirical and contextual research into the effectiveness of intelligence-led policing in either the academic or professional literature leaves the police with little option other than to experiment and do the best they can. This would appear to be an ideal area for criminological research and theories to influence policing operations and to set the conceptual framework for informed police practice into the new decade. A positive side to the lack of a clear idea as to exactly what 'intelligence-led policing' is and should be, may be the development of a local 'strain' of intelligent policing that modifies and improves an overseas concept into a workable local strategy that can enhance and inform international efforts.

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