Improving Impact: Evidence-Based Policing or Fostering Community Participation through Action Research and Communities of Practice?

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Improving impact

The turn to evidence-based practice has also been very attractive in crime prevention, perhaps owing to the influence that scientific management has had on the functioning of police. It is clear that the approach has worked for a range of crime problems, and in particular for evaluation of crime interventions, as exemplified in the work of the Campbell Collaboration. We thus have no quarrel with turning to research, but do take issue with the universal applicability of the scientific model and the capacities of those without a background in science in general, and research in particular, to conduct the necessary appraisals, particularly given that reactive work and high workloads predominate in those areas with the most significant crime problems.

Sherman interprets the paradigm as referring to whole-of-agency activity, not individual practice, and links it with Deming’s management approach. He summarizes the relevance of the scientific model of evidence-based practice, saying that...

...just doing research is not enough and (that) proactive efforts are required to push accumulated evidence into practice through national and community guidelines. These guidelines can then focus in-house evaluations of what works best across agencies, units, victims, and officers. Statistical adjustments for the risk factors shaping crime can provide fair comparisons across police units, including national rankings of police agencies by their crime prevention effectiveness (Sherman 1998: 1).

This suggests that evidence-based policing offers techniques that can be applied across the board, and that communities have no role in the process; it is a top-down activity. This perspective is used in U.K. Home Office research, which is mostly aimed at police managers.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

The evidence-based approach is an example par excellence of reflexivity; information drawn from social life is analyzed and fed back to us as participants in social life, modifying our actions. It is a process typical of late modern societies, where the risks of daily living, now affected by events and people far beyond those immediately experienced by us, need to be managed. It is interesting that the validity of the approach is asserted through references to the scientific method against a host of unmentioned dissent about the value of positivist assumptions about the social world. Evidence-based practice is a late-modern strategy for practice in a post-modern world where such strategies are questioned.

The focus of evidence-based practice is fundamentally managerial, about establishing the most effective strategies for intervening in the social world for the least possible cost. Given the required scale of the research underpinning evidence-based practice and the scientific standards applied to establish the most useful evidence (see Sherman), the model is also research-centered, rather than practitioner-centered. Practitioners are expected to provide the studies upon which researchers will build, and are expected to draw on the principles established through the researchers'
activities in conducting their practice. This does occasionally happen, but the most common use of research is tactical. Sherman notes that, even in medical practice, doctors rarely turn to research in the desired manner, and special supports and processes are needed for evidence-based approaches to become embedded in practice.

The failure to turn to research in medical practice is likely to be an even greater issue in policing, which has historically been very suspicious of outsider views on policing, including researchers' perceptions. Even though there are, indeed, areas of police work that have been affected by research findings, there is little to suggest that a turn to research has become embedded in either managerial practice, through its concern with outcomes rather than outputs (arrest rates), or at the coalface.

A further problem lies in the appeal to science and to the scientific method as the means of social progress. It is intuitively appealing but ignores the conceptual presuppositions that generate the processes of inquiry in the first place (which are inevitably skewed), the ways in which the narrowing of any study for practical or for other purposes mean that there will always be the possibility of conflicting evidence, that data always requires interpretation, and that, in many instances, progress is made when mistakes are identified, rather than when things run as expected. Although the tendency is to blame the managers, or to blame the people at the coalface, for their failure to adopt an improved approach to their work, the reasons for nonadoption may lie elsewhere altogether. It is possible that the reasons have far more to do with the nature of practice in a complex social world than ignorance, suspicion, conservatism, or recalcitrance.

The problem may lie in the action choices as they unfold for people in specific, unpredictable situations, and the relationship between knowledge and action. The issue lies in what it is to be a human being—far more than in cognition and reason. Facing constantly with new situations—similar to but never exactly the same as, those one has encountered before; people have to improvise, trying to “guessimate” the responses of others and their interpretation of their actions or remarks. The practitioners have to take account the affordances of the context as they understand them at that moment.

Novices will turn to the rules, and maybe even theory, although there is plenty of evidence that novice practitioners actually focus on the strategies that will help them save face, such as checking whether or not those in the immediate environment are doing and leaving those they are in contact with to deal with their own survival. Expertise brings with it the capacity to “reflect-in-practice,” a process that is likely to draw in emotional, as well as rational, cues as to which improvisations are most likely to have the desired effect.

Thus, when a group of local people come together to deal with a crime problem, the context is one of multiple uncertainties and improvisations. The way in which these are worked out has been characterized as a process of group “forming, storming, norming, and performing.” These phases are about relationships more than they are about product. Ignoring them, and assuming the problem itself or research are sufficient to guide action and outcomes has the potential to deny the importance of community commitment to, and involvement in, addressing a problem.

Also ignored is the role of chance conjunctions in determining the outcome of a particular project. Becker illustrates the important role that chance plays in people's lives and actions, and finds it curious that academics, whose lives, like anyone else’s, are so much affected by chance, place such faith in science and rational order. When people get together to address a crime problem, if the process is to be collaborative one rather than a consultative process with minimal impact on an already established direction, much will inevitably depend on who likes whom, what shared interests and values there are, the resources to which people happen to have access and so on.

Given these premises, then, where does the evidence drawn from an evidence-based approach to policing come into action? It will potentially come in to the problem-solving processes used, be this SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment), PROCTOR (PProblem, Cause, Tactic/Treatment, Output, Result), or through action research. The difficulty with SARA and PROCTOR is that they are fundamentally rational approaches to problem solving, which can be undertaken without drawing on communities as equal participants in the action. Only action research recognizes that the participants in the research have a vital role to play in the processes of problem-solving, as well as the outcomes.

**EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME PREVENTION**

Let us now look at how this might relate to crime prevention practice. Crime prevention is a relatively new term which is applied to a wide range of activities, and it has subtle and ambiguous meanings. Moreover, as with criminality generally, it draws on a wide range of conflicting disciplines to try to address a wide spectrum of crimes and a wide variety of ways. Nor should we forget Crawford’s reminder that crime prevention is somewhat problematic for practitioners, in that it is an activity which results in noncrime. However, distinguishing whether a reduction in crime is actually a consequence of a particular intervention is inherently extremely complex and elusive. Sherman’s view of crime prevention as being defined by consequences (the number of criminal events and the number of offenders) shows a far more narrow focus than the several suggested by Hughes. Hughes discusses reform, deterrence, or protection, and prevention of social harms or the promotion of social goods, such as community building.

Eck points out that many interventions are small scale and tailored to individual contexts, and goes on to delineate an evaluation process, within the context of problem-oriented policing, that shares many characteristics with the action research process. He sees the problems as being practitioners’ lack of relevant theories (a difficult hurdle to leap, given the historical preference for the practical over the theoretical in policing), low quality analyses, and a failure to look at what others are doing (the aim of evidence-based policing). We would also add that policing style may be as important as substance, as Sherman and Eck remark that a striking recent finding is the extent to which police bad manners create a risk factor for crime.

However, the advantages of problem-oriented policing that Eck identifies include the fact that theory and practice can be integrated. Practitioners will generate solutions that will work better than off-the-shelf solutions. Problem-oriented policing is a practical tool, not requiring an academically rigorous approach; it increases accountability, and it is suited to changing circumstances—circumstances that will change as a consequence of the intervention. He concludes, in relation to small-scale projects, that “aberrance to rigorous evaluation criteria is misguided.”
PARTNERSHIPS IN CRIME PREVENTION

Alongside the impetus for evidence-based policing has been an increasing reliance on the use of partnerships to develop and implement crime prevention initiatives. This focus on partnerships extends and deepens early concerns about the distance between police and the community\(^4\) and goes beyond processes such as Neighborhood Watch to require real, active partnerships in which power is shared.\(^5\) Crime, like any other social problem, is increasingly recognized as having multiple causes that cannot be addressed in a piecemeal fashion. Indeed, partnerships between agencies are currently seen as the most effective way to develop and implement effective crime prevention initiatives, so the fostering of participation is an inherent requirement of the crime prevention officer’s job. Bright\(^6\) outlined the issues relating to multiagency partnerships as being a means to overcome the vertical silos of public agency objectives and services, a means of reducing the costs associated with reactive rather than proactive approaches to crime, and an uncertain process, given that the responsibility for multiagency partnerships is dispersed. Consequently, it is not always easy to show that multiagency partnerships really add value.

It is in the processes of partnerships that the issues lie. Community policing, and problem-oriented policing, both of which imply relationships with people outside of policing, have had uneven implementation and evidence-based policing may yet follow suit. This is related to the lack of attention to process and to the particular demands of partnerships. Contact with police, for communities, is generally characterized by the lecture/guest-speaker model, where groups listen to an expert and have the opportunity to ask questions.

This model of contact with communities is just one form of participation on a “ladder” of participation.\(^7\) We have not included all of Arnstein’s\(^8\) eight categories here because some of her distinctions are too fine to be useful. The categories of participation that we consider to be useful are manipulating/providing, informing, consulting, partnering, delegating, and community control.

The most tokenistic and least participative approach is that of providing for others’ needs without asking them what they need, and manipulating which include hand-picking “würdies” who will toe a particular line. Bull and Strauβ’s research on consultative committees\(^9\) indicates that the latter is the case, and that it is also a matter of drawing solely on established organizations. Informing people (that is, the lecturer/guest-speaker model) is the first step to legitimate participation, although it is a one-way street. Consulting with people (through conducting surveys and certain types of neighborhood and public meetings, and so on) is one step higher, but the ultimate decision still rests with those who have the power. Partnering involves negotiations about power, and developing an appropriate balance between partners. It is in this situation that crime prevention workers need to be particularly clear about what they can legitimately offer, and when, how, and to whom they should be listening. So, too, with delegating, in which individuals or subgroups have decision-making power and are accountable for their decisions and actions. The highest degree of participation comes with community control.

The more participative the process, the more the crime prevention worker needs to pay attention to networks and stakeholder participation. Networks involve the development and maintenance of positive relationships with diverse players who have the potential to contribute something of mutual value, and who are drawn from both inside and outside of policing. The good relationships upon which networks depend are characterized by information exchange, trust, and confidence (which are underpinned by treating people with respect and empathy, adhering to organizational values and standards, competent performance, and a capacity to adapt to differing social and cultural environments—matters of style). Networking also involves being a conduit linking people in the network to each other (with due regard to potential conflicts of interest or values), as well as conscious attention being paid to the establishment and maintenance of the network. Particular attention may well need to be paid to those who might not routinely have the opportunity to contribute to the prevention or reduction of crime, but whose contributions are likely to inform actions in ways that would not otherwise be possible, that is, stakeholders. Stakeholders generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Those whose interests are affected by a problem, plans or strategies, as well as those whose activities contribute to it
- Those who control or influence the management of the problem
- Those who possess important information or expertise in addressing the problem\(^10\)

ACTION RESEARCH

It seems to us that action research provides a methodology that enables the crime prevention officer to focus on both collecting evidence and the process by which it is collected, and how social change interventions are planned, implemented, and evaluated. It helps us escape the limitations of separatist models of the relationship between research and practice, which demand intermediaries to ensure each can influence the other.\(^11\) In contrast, it allows for the development of crime prevention workers as what Leigh\(^12\) has termed “practitioners-researchers” (see also Jemett et al.,\(^13\) for application to the policing context).

There are many varieties of action research, some invoking the scientific method and some the interpretive method in order to justify the validity of their approach. Two types of action research which are appropriate for police officers to address crime prevention issues are (1) organizational action research (as outlined by Coghlan and Brannick\(^14\)) and (2) community-based action research (as depicted by Stringer\(^15\) and Dick\(^16\)).

Action researchers are change agents. Traditional academic researchers work to create knowledge but action researchers work to produce both action and knowledge outcomes. According to Coghlan and Brannick\(^14\):

- Action research works through a cyclical process of consciously and deliberately: (a) planning; (b) taking action; (c) evaluating the action, leading to further action and so on; (Coghlan and Brannick 2001: xi, emphasis added).

Action research is appropriate when the research topic is an unfolding series of actions over time in a given group, community, or organization, and the members wish
to study their own action in order to change or improve the working of some aspects of the system—and study the process in order to learn from it. Hence, action research is akin to experiential learning (Kolb 1984) and reflective practice (Schön 1983).

Action research involves all stakeholders (not their representatives) in defining the problem to be researched, planning the research, reviewing the findings, and planning an intervention to address the problem, evaluating its success and subsequent cycles as necessary. It provides stakeholders with the experience of ownership of the project and, hence, they will be committed to it, but this will only happen if all stakeholders respect each other’s interests and points of view, and negotiate a way forward rather than impose a plan with which some stakeholders are not happy. Stringer says that participation is most effective when it achieves the following:

- Enables significant levels of active involvement.
- Enables people to perform significant tasks.
- Provides support for people as they learn to act for themselves.
- Deals personally with people rather than with their representatives or agents.

Community-based action research relies upon the “type, nature, and quality of relationships.” Therefore, the establishment and maintenance of “positive working relationships” is crucial. Stringer characterizes the necessary relationships for community-based action research as ones which:

- Promote feelings of equality for all people involved.
- Maintain harmony.
- Avoid conflicts, where possible.
- Resolve conflicts that arise, openly and dialogically.
- Accept people as they are, not as some people think they ought to be.
- Encourage personal, cooperative relationships, rather than impersonal, competitive, conditional, or authoritarian relationships.
- Be sensitive to people’s feelings.

In order for relationships to have these characteristics, they require effective communication. Stringer cites Habermas’ four fundamental conditions that need to be met in order to facilitate effective communication:

Understanding: The receiver can understand what is being communicated.
Truth: The information is accurate and is not a fabrication.
Sincerity: The communicator is sincere in his or her attempts to communicate and has no hidden agendas.
Appropriateness: The manner, type, and form of communication are appropriate to the people, the setting, and the activity.

Writers about action research set out a series of stages through which a research project must go in order to be a transparent, collaborative and, therefore, democratic process of inquiry and evaluation. Stringer’s urging for researchers to “look, act, and think” is the most simply articulated version of it. Coghlan and Brannick present an action research cycle that involves a pre-step—context and purpose—and four basic steps: diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action.

It should be noted that action research is political by its very nature, and Coghlan and Brannick remark that:

Political forces can undermine research endeavors and block planned change. Gaining access, using data, and disseminating publishing reports are intensely political acts.

Action research can threaten people because it is rigorous, examining everything, questioning everything, listening to everyone, advocating reflection on what is found, then taking action, which involves everybody who will be affected by the action (social change). Its strength is the sense of commitment to and ownership of the proposed change that its collaborative approach engenders. Its weakness is that if the processes are not handled well there can be backlashes and blocking behavior on the part of those who feel that the proposed action will not be in their interests. Coghlan and Brannick argue that:

...you need to be politically astute in deciding to engage in action research, becoming what Buchanan and Badham (1999) call a “political entrepreneur.” In their view, this role implies a behavior repertoire of political strategies and tactics, and a reflective self-critical perspective on how these political behaviors may be deployed. Buchanan and Boddy (1993) describe the management of the political role in terms of two activities, performing and backstaging. Performing involves you in the public performance role of being active in the change process, building participation for change, pursuing the change agenda rationally and logically, while backstaging involves recruitment and maintenance of support and the reduction of resistance. Backstaging comprises skills at intervening in the political and cultural systems, through justifying, influencing and negotiating, detesting opposition and so on.

Importantly, because action research in community contexts involves ongoing monitoring of projects and processes, and allows for adjustments to both, as issues, information, and even blockages emerge, chance factors may play a far more significant role than would be the case for less participative and organic approaches.

ACTION RESEARCH FOR CRIME PREVENTION STUDENTS

Dick argues that the “action” part of “action research” involves change, which requires flexibility and participation, and the “research” part depends upon high quality data and accurate interpretations (whether or not this data is derived from positivist research). The goal is achieving change, and, as such, there are various interpersonal processes to be managed (preplanning, which is where relationships are negotiated and built; planning, where what is to be done is decided; and action and ongoing monitoring), all of which may need revisiting as a project progresses.

Dick’s formulation of the action research process, with its focus on building and sustaining relationships productive of change has been used for several years in a subject, “Partnerships in Crime Prevention,” in the M.A. degree course in crime
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The three students upon whose work I will focus are Ken, a police manager in the Victoria police, in a rural area covering 4,600 square kilometers; Mariessa, who works as a community safety officer in local government; and Tony, a NSW police crime prevention officer. The other three students in the subject were all police in various jurisdictions and roles, including one spending 2 years in a developing country. Their forum entries illustrate the dynamic and interactive nature of the developments which occur within the action research process. Only a few key aspects of the process are addressed here: the importance of climate setting (which was designed to take up 4 weeks) and the motivation to learn and assist others as equal partners in learning (which is evident across the sample forum entries provided below); the projects that ensued; and students’ reflections on their learning.

The Importance of Climate Setting, and Motivation to Learn and Assist Others as Equal Partners in Learning

The three students’ first entries, in which they were asked to provide their initial reactions to receiving the package of learning materials, and what they hoped to get from their studies, included the following statements:

When I opened the package for this subject, my response was “I hope I’m not biting off more than I can chew.” … What I would like to get from this Forum partnership is the ability to be able to communicate with others from varying work locations and backgrounds and discuss issues and problems. My contribution to the Forum partnership will be to participate and hopefully be able to have a worthwhile input. I would be able to think that my ideas and experiences may be able to assist someone else. [Ken]

My first response when I opened the package was similar to many others—oh, my God, what a lot of reading! On closer examination the thought of only one essay was great and the weekly activities will force me to keep up to date (normally I’m a “get things done at the last minute” type).

My personal goals for this subject are in two broad areas: the first is to learn the pros and cons of various types of partnerships as I am so used to the traditional government bureaucratic committee structure—in fact, it is such a committee that provides the direction for my job. I hope I will be able to implement some different and possibly improved methods of partnerships. After reading the materials in more depth I also found that the subject may help me with some particular projects I am currently working on.

My contribution to the forum will be to share my experiences, and I think I should be able to help others in the group understand the “Council perspective,” which I am sure many of you have worked with/fought against in the past. I also hope to understand more of the police perspective on these issues. [Mariessa]

I have enrolled in Azrol, and until it starts I have no idea what it is about or what is required of me. As far as making contact with other Azrol participants, that will depend on time commitments and whether I can get involved in the discussions or not.
When I opened the package for this subject, my initial response was “Good, only one assignment.” But then, I thought, that means a lot of work somewhere else. Time management will be extremely important for this subject, not only to keep up with Areol, but weekly input onto the forum is mandatory. Therefore, you cannot read ahead or fall behind and play catch up.

My personal goals for this subject are to gain further knowledge on partnerships and learn how they can assist me to work smarter.

I would like to get from this Forum partnership is to work as a team and get other opinions on how partnerships should work and look at crime prevention from different angles and my contribution will be to hopefully call on some of my experiences to share with the group. (Tony)

They show the extent to which inquiry about personal responses and reactions acts as an important icebreaker in the on-line context, setting a positive climate for participation. Participants are able to judge where they sit in this unfamiliar context.

Projects Developed in this Subject

As mentioned earlier, the students focused on two projects. The robbery project proved difficult to work with (because each student was focused on a slightly different type of stakeholder in their work context, and therefore the group of students did not necessarily benefit from each others’ inquiries), whereas the youth project was producing significant outcomes within the fourteen-week semester. Ken introduced “his” youth project in this way:

Although this is a problem that I have encountered throughout my career it has become a growing concern since moving to the country. The last time I was a uniformed member (of police) I was dealing with this problem at a street level. I must admit I didn’t give much thought on how to reduce the situation, other than charging offenders and moving people on. Now that I am in a managerial position I suppose I look at things in a different perspective. I now find myself looking for reasons why this is happening and what can be done to prevent it.

I am hoping that the partnership will mirror a sentence from Stokes-White (2006:113). A successful partnership is that it has been created from determination and will of the partner organizations themselves and has been created to tackle issues that they have identified and in which they are highly committed. If this is the case it is certainly a step in the right direction.

The organizational culture in the Victoria Police Force, although still very strong in many areas, has undergone dramatic changes over the last five years or so, particularly in the management area. We now have a totally different style of management in our hierarchy and have moved away from the autocratic method of leadership. I believe that we are now an organization that is far more conducive to the partnership style of policing. (Ken, Week 3 forum entry)

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In Week 4, the students were still considering how best to go about their partnership, and negotiating roles. Marissa’s lengthy entry exemplifies the extent to which students felt free to discuss ideas and challenge assumptions:

I think S. is right and we should focus on a specific aspect of the issue, and I am happy to go with Ken’s suggestion of underage and binge drinking in a particular park. I think this is a great project to involve a number of partners from outside the law enforcement area. On this issue, I mentioned recently that the friendly youth worker in the next cubicle to me at work would be great to get involved. Well, I have now actually asked him, and he is happy to provide input as we go.

This one is a bit different from the previous submissions so let me explain. Both Ken and S. have objectives around the leadership/co-ordination of the stakeholders with different styles (committee versus coordinator). I think this is a decision best left to the stakeholders themselves after a discussion of who will commit to what (see Part 3 to this submission). I also disagree with aspects of both options. S. mentions the need to have the leadership group comprised of those with knowledge and commitment to action. Although this is most often the case, sometimes someone or some agency is left out of the equation if they don’t have enough resources to commit to implementing a solution—even though they may have excellent knowledge about the problem. At this early stage you may also see the value in having a particular person involved but they may be unwilling to commit until more details are known, until they understand the auspicious better, or until you basically force them into it through some other means. As an example, I had a brief chat with our Parks and Waterways manager about this project. There was absolutely no interest at this stage; however, I can guess that at some stage we may need to involve the people who would be implementing some of our suggestions, which possibly may include a redesign/upgrade or increased maintenance of the park in question. To do this effectively they would need a good understanding of the project including the problem and the reasons for our suggested solutions. So, assuming that this is real, my next action would be to invite him to a meeting and present the issues we know now and the benefits of his involvement. Refusal at this stage could indicate I need to find someone with a similar role or decision-making ability and get them involved (e.g., the supervisor of the actual crew that cares for the park). Further apathy would result in the need for me to go over his head and seek his supervisor to direct an appropriate staff member to be involved. Although this sounds harsh (and slightly underhand), it has often provided excellent crime prevention outcomes for two reasons: (1) the direction to be involved is often perceived as a direction to be supportive and (2) involvement often results in increased knowledge and understanding of the project and its benefits, leading to support.

What I am trying to explain, really, is the need to keep it as flexible and open as possible at the start so we can start the evolution to an improved, targeted project.

This means we have to be flexible about the coordinator, also. S. recommends that a police officer be the leader, and there are some good reasons for this. My bias, however, would lean the other way, and I would suggest that a stakeholder with good project management and coordination skills be chosen. My additional suggestion would be that, if possible, this person not be either a police officer or a youth worker. My experience shows that the ideologies (and often the core business of their job) of these people are often in
direct conflict, and it is difficult to be both coordinate diverse opinions and present your own opinion without actual or perceived bias. [Mariissa, Week 4 Forum Entry]

This question of self-positioning was explicitly addressed in the learning materials, with reference to forming, storming, norming, and performing stages of group development.20 It proved a helpful vehicle for critical self-assessment:

Although S., Mariissa, and I have been agreeing on a majority of issues so far, I believe a couple of areas need to be clarified between us. (I suppose we are at the storming stage.)

Has any consideration been given to my idea of forming a steering committee as I suggested in Weeks 4 and 6 Activities? [Ken, Week 7 Forum Activities]

It was in Week 7 that the students first ran a session with people in their communities. Mariissa worked with 5 council workers and a 16-year-old youth:

It was interesting that when I initially outlined the focus of the project every member immediately nodded, almost unconsciously understanding that we had a problem, but they disagreed totally on how the problem was. It took a fair bit of work to move the focus away from the issues and consequence of the problem (e.g., lack of attractive alternate activities and damage to the park) to the actual behavior we were looking at (misuse of alcohol in a public location). [Mariissa, Week 7 Forum Entry]

In Week 8, Ken reflected on the extent of the problem in the light of the readings on collecting and analyzing the data:

I believe that our problem so far is that we may have actually underestimated the problem—not that it is an exaggeration. This is due to the fact that our statistics rely on crime being reported to the police. It is obvious by the phone calls I receive after the newspaper reports and the Neighborhood Watch meeting that there was more going on than the police knew about. Hopefully, the community has become more aware of the importance of reporting crime, and with the intelligence gained from these reports our efforts can be more focused on the true problem areas. [Ken, Week 8 Forum Entry]

The use of the Delphi technique was the focus in Week 9:

I selected three people from the stakeholder group for this exercise. I anticipated that they may show more enthusiasm and come up with some constructive answers due to having a personal interest in the project topic. I endeavored to give them a question that covered their own area of expertise as well as entail a reply that may be in an area from outside their "comfort zone" that they needed to think about. I not only chose people who had an interest in the project, I tried to select ones who came from very different backgrounds. I was hoping to obtain some different points of view, initiatives and ideas from their respective viewpoints. I predicted that I may be able to glean some potential strategies towards resolving the problem. [Ken, Week 8 Forum Entry]

The first responses from the participants were amazingly close to the most stereotypical, cliched views from the type of person/position and the impacts they experience....

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The final result was that while participants didn't necessarily disagree with each other, they placed varying levels of importance on particular aspects. For example, direct parental neglect versus lack of influence in choosing friends. So the end result was a general consensus on the following:

- Young people acting in an antisocial manner in public parks is not good
- Many strategies, by various agencies, need to come together to have an impact on the issue
- Some progress can be made by involving parents in some way—flexibility to individual situations being the key response.

All this, to me, at least, reflects what the research says and what we have been doing already. Does this mean the participants came to a natural agreement or that the facilitator managed to shut down opposing opinions? My opinion is that two things happened: The first is that the three people in the group are used to this method of working and are happy to rely on a partnership approach (which is sometimes an easy answer when everyone is blaming everyone else) and, also, the participants are the type of people who generally accept all viewpoints as valid and were simply trying to be accommodating. [Mariissa, Week 9 Forum Entry]

There were two other participation strategies tried by the students: focus groups and convergent interviewing. Extracts from Ken and Mariissa's work follow:

I decided to try my hand at a focus group. The reason for this is twofold. Prior to transferring to my present position, like many operational police, I conducted interviews on a large range of topics on a regular basis. I would like to think that my interview techniques were fairly well "honed" by now. Since my arrival here I have taken on a different role. I am required to work much closer with the community and have found myself being constantly approached regarding local issues and concerns. Although I have been a participant in numerous meetings, I would not classify them as focus groups....

I was able to acquire the conference room at the township's Country Fire Authority office at no cost for our meeting. The Divisional Superintendent also agreed to allow a petty cash payment for light refreshments as he felt that the project could be beneficial to the community....

Once the "ice had been broken" and the participants were freely sharing their ideas I narrowed the topic by steering the conversation to the specific problems at Memorial Park. A white board was then used to jot down ideas and build further discussion....

The forum lasted for two-and-a-half hours, with a ten-minute break in the middle. There were a few areas of disagreement, but these were talked through and a general consensus was gained.... At the end of our forum, Mariissa came out to organize the next meeting? [Ken, Week 10 Forum Entry]

Mariissa's use of convergent interviewing spanned two weeks, and the lengthy extract provided is from her second week's entry, showing the extent to which those
outside of the immediate partnership context were prepared to contribute. Excluded are the detailed plans for each strategy.

... I provided me with a detailed project plan—I thought of summarizing it, but thought it may be useful for Ken who seems to be going ahead with the project which is fantastic. ...

Proposed strategies:
- Peer-based outreach approach to 17- to 20-year-olds
- Peer-based outreach approach to 13- to 16-year-olds
- Focus groups for general youth populations

General comments:

Peer-based outreach is effective. Be mindful of the perceptions: young people recruited to outreach may have of young people in the park. Is there a town "stigma" regarding these young people? Are they seen as the "no hoper"? Conversely, what would the perception of young people in the park be toward young people recruited for outreach?

Outreach is most effective when there is unconditional (no, or little [hidden] agenda—i.e., religion, "clear off," etc.) clear, open, and transparent communication. Young people need to have a level of confidence that they can relate "safely" to outreach workers.

In short, is it a situation where the school prefect and Student Representative Council (SRC) chair is approaching a young person expelled and not engaged in education employment, etc.?

The context of this is within a small town/regional center—the smaller the town, the more familiar people can be (small town mentality). This links directly into recruitment for peer outreach. Obviously schools and youth committees are a source of civic-minded and motivated young people. Use them. Cater to any potential perception/values/concerns in the training provided to young people. Also consider youth centers and sports clubs.

Youth centers may have an image problem, and it may be the case that only "young people with problems go there," which reinforces the fact that this is the case (if a youth center is chosen). If the youth center caters to a wide/diverse range of young people, it may be a source of recruitment that may assist in the credibility of peer outreach. Young people in the park may know them already and have a more positive image of them.

Sports clubs: some, or many, of the young people in the park may have connections to football and other clubs. Similar to young people from the youth center—young people in the park may be familiar with them and have a more positive perception of them and common interests.

Strength based approach:

It is important that the whole strategy is a strength-based approach. It may be the case that young people pick up on overt or tacit scapegoating from the community, that they are seen as a problem. Outreach would be ineffective if from the start they perceive that the perception of reality is being re-enforced. An element of fun needs to be involved, and especially if it is a short term, brief intervention—interaction needs to "go somewhere." I hope this will be shown in the plan I put forward.

Media:

It may be tempting to seek some media "feel-good" coverage to promote this positive thing. Particularly in a smaller town I would suggest that no approaches be made to the media till after. There could be little control over the way the story is covered and an ill-written article about peer educators working toward cleaning up the park would undermine the project.

The plan is based on the assumptions that funding/resources are limited. I have suggested a brief intervention, with some sustainable elements so as not to leave a post-intervention void. [Marianna, Week 11 Forum Entry]

These are the developments that had occurred by Week 13:

Well, a few things have been happening down my way this last week. It appears that the news of our forum has spread around the town and I have suddenly had numerous offers of support.

The CEO of the shire [managing governmental body] has offered the services of the parks manager to our group. She has also assured me that the shire will look favorably at financing any changes to the landscape and design of Memorial Park which our focus group believes will assist with reducing our problem.

The PCC (Police and Community Consultative Committee) and the local Rotary Club have both contacted me regarding our project and have shown a keen interest in assisting with our local youth problems. Both of these organizations have pledged financial support if our university project develops into an actual stakeholder partnership.

There is a possibility of a vacant shop opposite Memorial Park being made available for a youth club. The cost factor of this has not yet been established, but at this stage it seems to be open to favorable negotiation as it has not been occupied since before I moved to the town. There would need to be some modifications done at the shop, but with the community interest already shown I am sure some local tradesmen would volunteer their services for this.

Even though all of this is in the "embryonic" stage, the local electrical store has already set aside a TV, DVD player, and computer for a donation to a new youth club. So far the community support has been astounding. It appears our little focus group has started something! [Ken, Week 13 Forum Entry]

STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

How did the students themselves view these developments? Let's start with "Tony," who was involved in the robbery project:
We were asked to identify a crime prevention project that could be used during the studies. At the time I was a little unsure exactly what was required and how important these projects were going to be. [...] I didn’t select a project I had any past dealings with, as I was happy to join a group and get involved in the discussions and learn along the way. In hindsight, I feel that we should have been involved with a project that had more angles, and would have involved more stakeholders, which is often the norm. I think robbery prevention was too narrow in its targets, and this limited our responses later on, which made our group responses into a single-minded approach and not working together in partnership. Maybe a small list of potential projects that would generate good group discussions could be added, and students asked to choose from the list a project they have had similar dealings with, which have broader responses, requiring the groups to work more as a team, like the youth group did so well. (Tony, Week 13 Forum Entry)

I have just read over my six responses to the Week 1 Forum Activity and I feel that I would still answer them in the same way. In saying this, though, I have learned a lot and enjoyed the interaction with the rest of the participants over the last 13 or so weeks. I found the Aroel exercises and the theory of action research to be very useful, and it is a theory that can be used daily. (Ken, Week 13 Forum Entry)

I just wanted to thank everyone involved in this subject. I found it very rewarding working with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and levels of experience. I found the subject to be very engaging—I was very excited to hear from Ken that the youth project is moving forward beyond our theoretical partnership to make some real-world impacts—please keep in touch, Ken, and let me know how it goes! (Marius, Week 13 Forum Entry)

ACTION RESEARCH AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

What is it about the educational context that allowed these developments to occur? An initial brainstorm identified the following factors:

- Students came from different occupations and areas of policing (a local government employee, general duties police, investigations) in different Australian states, as well as overseas.
- Students shared interests in working, and in which they had different perspectives.
- Resources (mostly people and ideas) were available to students, which broadened their understanding and allowed for different ways of interacting with key players in the problem location.
- Students were clearly concerned about supporting each other in their learning.

These are all principles underpinning action research—but is there a management style that takes account of these types of factors, and how might it work in policing?

We believe that the recent work of Etienne Wenger67 provides some useful notions, because he considers how participation generates, sustains, and modifies practice over time, within and across organizational boundaries. The fundamental process/entify through which this occurs is the community of practice. According to Wenger67 and Lesser and Storch,10 the community of practice is not a new kind of organizational unit, but pervasive and informal, a different cut on an organization’s structure, one which emphasizes the learning that occurs when people observe others’ work and make links about it to their own work. A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who voluntarily interact and learn from and with each other in unstructured ways over a period of time, without necessarily having a particular outcome other than the work itself, or their own interest, in mind. Social, rather than individual, behavior lies at the heart of the learning thus engendered.

The origins of the concept lie in anthropological studies of a range of occupations, looking at how newcomers in apprenticeship systems move from a peripheral role to, eventually, the expert practitioner role. Through participating in work, people acquire the skills, language, behaviors, attitudes, and, indeed, identities, that are part and parcel of being a tailor or, in this instance, a police officer or a crime prevention worker. According to Wenger, a practice is what people develop in order to be able to do the job and have a satisfying experience at work. The concept concerns doing in a social and historical context that gives structure and meaning to what people do. It includes the explicit and implicit, what is said and what is not; what is represented and what is assumed; the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, roles, criteria, procedures, regulations, but, also, the subtle cues, rules of thumb, sensitivities, and shared world views/cultural assumptions. The latter is what people take for granted and that which fades into the background. Thus, the concept of practice does not separate knowing and doing, manual and mental, concrete from abstract, for practice engages the whole person.

In sum, then, a community of practice is a negotiated enterprise, as complex as we are, involving instrumental, personal, and interpersonal aspects of people’s lives (the need to make money, be adult, efficient, have fun, do well, feel good, not be naive, be personable, deal with boredom, think of the future, and so on). It is not just doing the work (which is what the supervisor focuses on), but the juggling of all of these elements on a daily basis.68 It is also an indigenous enterprise, because, although larger contexts—historical, social, cultural, or institutional—shape them, the day-to-day reality is produced by participants using the resources, and within the constraints, of their situations. The inventiveness both reflects what the organization wants and what it does not want. Thirdly, it is a regime of mutual accountability, covering what matters and what does not, what is important and why, what to do and what not to, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what not, where to interfere, and what to do to make it happen, to carry out, and what to take for granted, what to do at a time and on a budget, when actions are good enough or need work. These systems play a central role in defining circumstances under which, as community and as individuals, members feel concerned or unconcerned, and is integral to the practice. As such, it may not readily be articulated. The last characteristic of practice as a source of meaning is that there are no boundaries; there is the development of a shared repertoire of resources for negotiating meaning (the only thing that is: the real work to do today, the social representing relationships and managerial reactions to those relationships). The word repertoire is used to emphasize its rehearsed character and its availability. It has two characteristics that make it a resource for negotiating meaning: its reflection of a history of
mutual engagement and its inherent ambiguity. This is an open-ended process, for forms of participation, perspectives and experiences of life change. Anyway, over time, in the process of sustaining a practice, we become invested in what we do, in each other, and in our shared history, and our identity anchors in each other and what we do together.

The concept of the “community of practice” is increasingly being used and seen as a valuable asset in business, particularly in terms of people who are not co-located (as was the case with this subject). According to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, interestingly enough for work focused on crime prevention, use an analogy between urban design and people’s use of that space, and people’s interactions in communities of practice, to suggest the seven design principles as inviting the interactions that make communities of practice come alive. These seven design principles can be related to our observations of what evenmutated in our action research-based subject:

1. **Design for evolution:** Social, organizational, and physical structures (a crime prevention officer, a problem-solving meeting or electronic forum, or a community hall or park) precipitate the evolution of communities to which people bring their networks, and where new members or new problems pull the focus of the community in new directions.

2. **Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives:** As insiders appreciate the issues and relationships at the heart of the problem, but do not necessarily have the resources to address the problems they face in new ways, outsiders perspectives are required to assist them in seeing the possibilities.

3. **Involving different levels of participation:** Good design of public space invites many forms of activity (actors and observers), and different levels and types of participation are to be expected in communities of practice. There is usually a small core group (ten to sixteen percent) at the heart of things who take on leadership roles and consistently participate; there is an active group who are selective participants (again, some percentage; three of the six students formed the first and second groups); and there are those on the periphery, whether because they have only one aspect interests them, they have little time, or feel they no authority in this context (the remaining students). These peripheral members are not like “hangers-on” in a team; their observations, actions and comments may at any time be central to the genesis of a new direction.

4. **Develop both public and private community spaces:** For public community events to work, there need to be a lot of background discussions (for example, the youth worker and the parks manager through the local government employee), which then facilitate relationship building and addressing current issues.

5. **Focus on value:** People don’t actually know what the value of being in a community will be until they are part of it, and the problems and ideas emerge and get translated into ideas for action in this and other areas of life. The developments cannot be planned for, but are identifiable in hindsight.

6. **Combine familiarity and excitement:** Although familiar people, events, and patterns of communication foster candid discussions, if no problematic ideas or issues emerge naturally, the occasional injection of a challenging perspective is likely to generate valuable discussion and interesting replications.

7. **Create a rhythm for the community:** You need to ensure there is a balance between a breathless pace (which means people get tired and opt out) and sluggish inertia, perhaps through regular patterns of meetups (which means there are busy times and slack times), through rituals and milestones, etc.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICE MANAGEMENT**

The patterns of interaction among the students participating in JST481 Partnerships in Crime Prevention were developed and sustained in an educational context, and it does not necessarily follow that the same patterns will be easy to set in place in the context of policing. On the other hand, developing a partnership that engenders change in an on-line environment is an unusual occurrence, so police managers who wish to increase the impact of partnerships in building safer communities may well find ideas they can build on from this example.

Communities of practice can and do develop spontaneously as people address recurring problems of practice, as described in Figure 23.1, below, whether this be within the one police organization, in cross-functional teams (such as crime management units) or across organizational boundaries, such as in Interpol, in crime prevention partnerships.

There is a danger in adopting the view of their development proposed in a diagram that as it stands, it assumes that knowledgeable people coming together and talking about practice will become a community of practice, rather than the more subtle processes of acquiring knowledge in and through the work itself, which is

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**FIGURE 23.1** Stages of Development. (From Wenger, E., Communities of practice: Learning as a social system, 1998. [Published in the Systems Thinker, June 1998]. With permission.)
more subtle and therefore much more difficult to appreciate and build into organizational strategies. In crime prevention, because the notion of the "police family" is often foregrounded as a cultural phenomenon, it is the need for new communities of practice that incorporate communities and individuals outside of policing that must be recognized. Managers, along with crime prevention personnel, must consider what knowledge and practices a given strategy requires (and where in their communities this might be located), as well as paying attention to potential strategic directions identified by their crime-prevention focused communities of practice.

BEING ATTUNED TO HOW PEOPLE LEARN IN AND THROUGH PRACTICE

People largely learn at and through work, for example, through simply observing how others respond to the situations they face (the "buddy" system in policing) and learning how to negotiate others' preferences and idiosyncrasies. People start as different, but working together creates differences and similarities (they specialize, get reputations, etc.). Mutual engagement in work can create tight nodes of relationships, both of support and of conflict.

This being the case, it should be possible for managers to co-locate, or to network, people working in any area or function where knowledge is unevenly distributed or where a specific problem has been recognized. You can thus foster the potential for informal learning that exists in the current policing context, while recognizing that other factors will mediate the likelihood of a community of practice developing, such as personality, judgments of competence, and style.

FINE-TUNING THE ORGANIZATION

The sorts of elements that can foster or inhibit communities of practice include the level of management interest, reward systems, work processes, organizational culture, and company policies. In policing, this is likely to involve managing up as much as it involves managing down, and success may be limited—unless, we suppose, you can generate your own community of practice to address the issues.

Practice itself is a process that involves participation (which we have considered) and reification. Reification is the process through which aspects of human experience are captured in fixed forms (artifacts and actions such as laws, tools, or procedures) around which the negotiation of meanings becomes organized. For example, all of the players in an insurance claim, and their different interests and rules, are captured in an insurance claim form. Any action or artifact can be looked at in terms of how participation and reification are distributed. An incident report can be highly reified, interpretable by a machine with no idea of its meaning, whereas a victim impact statement requires participation by the reader or listener in interpreting the meaning. Organizations too reliant on participation will have problems of coordinating activities and uncovering diverging assumptions; those relying on reification may not allow sufficient overlaps to allow for sharing experiences and interactive negotiation.

Participation and reification offer two avenues for exercising influence through cultivating or promoting certain relationships or artifacts, each with distinct forms of politics. Participation involves influence, charisma, negotiation, discrimination, trust, friendship, and ambition; reification involves legislation,
BEING ATTUNED TO BOUNDARIES

Over time, the shared histories within communities of practice create discontinuities—boundaries—between those who are and those who have not been part of the community (the often mentioned "us" and "them" distinctions in police culture). Many boundary markers are explicit (titles, dress, degrees, initiation rites), but subtle nuances, such as policing jargon, or social class, can be just as powerful.

Helpfully, reification and participation can cross boundaries, through boundary objects (artifacts, or places, used in different ways by several groups of people) and brokering (people introducing elements of one practice into another). Thus, in terms of boundary objects, an incident report or a charge sheet is not a self-contained object, but a relation between communities of practice. The design of documents, systems, and tools is the design of boundary objects, and this needs taking into account. In terms of brokering, this involves individuals with memberships of many communities in interpreting one community of practice for another. This often entails ambivalent relations for the individual in question, as spanning the boundaries is not always comfortable: He or she belongs to both practices and to neither. Sensitivity to the complexity of balancing competing perspectives for those doing the brokering is required.

BEING ATTUNED TO TRAJECTORIES

Any community of practice provides a set of potential "career" trajectories, as well as examples of actual people who have risen to prominence, and these are likely to be the most influential shapers of learning for newcomers. No matter what is said, taught, prescribed, recommended, or tested, newcomers are no fools: Once they have actual access to the practice, they soon find out what counts. What they enter is a field of pasts and possible futures, a history collapsed into the present where newcomers can engage with their own future as embedded by old timers—and vice versa. Different forms of engaging in practice may reflect different forms of individuality or of accountability and different responses to the same circumstances; elements of one repertoire may be inappropriate, incomprehensible, or even offensive in another community. Reconciling these diverse factors involves much more than learning the rules. This reconciliation may be the most significant challenge faced by learners when they move from one community to another. These are processes which take time, and Sharp's points out that frequent reassignments and promotions can inhibit or destroy the development of communities of practice. Managers need to ensure that those allocated to roles that involve partnership work have the interest and commitment to stay in the role long enough to develop and sustain a community of practice that will survive their departure.

Improving Impact

Processes for Capturing Lessons Learned

Given that the value of communities of practice only emerges over time, and the directions the learning will take are interactive, problem-centered and unpredictable, it is highly likely that any learning, and changed actions, remain part of informal rather than formal knowledge. Identifying some means of capturing and disseminating the learning is worthwhile.

Providing Support

Merely dedicating a position to crime prevention work, even at a significant rank, is insufficient to generate a climate that will support and extend the capacities of the role, and allow for learning. This does not mean that managers have to be engaged in the practice, rather it means they need to be capable of imagining what the work is like (which, perhaps, is what this research allows, but it also involves sharing stories and discussions), and using their power to align their own and others' energy and activities to contribute to this broader enterprise. This alignment with the activities of those working in crime prevention involves identifying with their colleagues but, more importantly, negotiation of meanings is the other half.

Negotiability refers to the ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration.

There is, according to Wenger, an economy of meanings (some meanings have more value than others, and some currencies cannot be used across groups). Calling the social configurations "economies of meaning" emphasizes that they involve a social system of relative values which are negotiated. Negotiating, persuading, inspiring trust, and delegating all involve shared ownership of meaning, whereas literal compliance, proceduralization, violence, conformity, and submission do not involve negotiability. Thus, the way in which the police manager negotiates the value of the crime prevention enterprise, and of the contribution made to it by communities of practice, is critical to its success.

Possible Problems with Communities of Practice

It must be acknowledged that the recognition of the potential contribution of communities of practice to crime prevention work does not create an unproblematic path forward. Communities of practice have different relationships with the official organization, which generate different types of challenges, as shown in Table 23.2 below.

At the present time, the likelihood is that most communities of practice connected with policing go unrecognized or are bootlegged. The question is how to recognize them without stifling them. These challenges are likely to be compounded by some of the factors that have already been identified as inhibiting change in police organizations, even though, as Ken's comments have indicated, changes are occurring. Harrison points out that some American police departments have realized that to move into community policing, they need their managers to develop skills such as strategic planning, group problem solving, and dealing with group dynamics.
**TABLE 23.2**

**Relationships to Official Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Challenges Typical of the Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underrecognized</td>
<td>Invisible to the organization and sometimes even to members themselves</td>
<td>Lack of reliability, awareness of value and of limitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routelagged</td>
<td>Only visible informally to a circle of people in the know</td>
<td>Getting resources, having an impact, keeping hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimated</td>
<td>Officially sanctioned as a valuable entity</td>
<td>Scrutiny, over-management, new demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Widely recognized as central to the organization’s success</td>
<td>Short-term pressures, blindness of success, arrogance, elitism, exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative</td>
<td>Capable of redefining its environment and the direction of the organization</td>
<td>Relating to the rest of the organization, acceptance, managing boundaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Action learning has been suggested as potentially viable and of strategic value to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P) in their aim of developing leadership capabilities. However, Geoff Mead, a chief superintendent in the Hertfordshire Constabulary, not only points to the value of action research in policing (and thus, communities of practice), but notes the difficulties inherent in collaborative inquiry in a hierarchical organization and suggests it needs careful crafting to suit the particular circumstances and context. He concludes that much is possible with a little courage and a lot of determination.

**CONCLUSION**

Throughout this chapter we have argued that evidence-based practice is a limited approach to social research and that it requires articulation with other approaches that foreground the processes by which information is gathered, analyzed, used to implement social change policies and programs, and then to evaluate them. Problem-oriented policing and action research share some common features, but action research is a rigorous method by which social problems can be researched and addressed by stakeholders upon whom the change will have an impact. Only by using such an approach are practitioners likely to achieve the stakeholder buy-in to social change which affects them. In addition to action research’s other strengths, it is, as Dick says, a flexible approach, one which can absorb chance occurrences and coincidences, as emphasized by Becker, even one which completely turns the project around. Action research is a democratic research method which is suitable for the development, implementation, and evaluation of local crime prevention projects.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**REFERENCES**

Improving Impact


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58. The learning resources for this subject include a Study Guide and readings [on CD-ROM] and a printed Subject Outline delineating assessment and other requirements.

59. Action Research and Evaluation on Line (Arrol) is a 14 week on-line course offered as a public service by Southern Cross University and the Southern Cross Institute of Action Research.


24 Conflict of Interest and Police: An Unavoidable Problem

Stephen Coleman

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts of interest can arise for police in a number of different ways, such as through a relationship that a police officer has with someone involved in a police matter, through the financial interests of a police officer, or through other employment that an officer holds outside of the police service. Conflicts of interest are a problem for police as they may lead an officer into inappropriate or even illegal conduct, and they tend to create the appearance of bias in an organization that should appear to be strictly impartial in the discharge of its duties to the community. The usual method of dealing with a conflict of interest is to disclose the conflict, to remove the source of conflict, such as by officers divesting themselves of other financial interests, or to avoid the conflict, such as by officers distancing themselves from the particular matter of conflict. However, the very nature of policing is such that some officers, particularly those working in restricted circles, will be faced with conflicts of interest that cannot be dealt with by such means. These sorts of situations present an unavoidable problem for the police officers involved.

Over the last 20 years or so, conflicts of interest have come to be recognized as a significant problem in many professions. A recent book, Conflict of Interest in the Professions, edited by Michael Davis and Andrew Stark (2001) examined the problems that conflict of interest may cause in a wide range of professions, from law and govern-