

A TALE OF TWO CULTURES: A Comparison of the Cultures of the Police and of Academia

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“Who is a wise man? He who also learns from fools.” The Talmud

Synopsis:

One of the developments in policing that is significant in creating a more just society is the increasing openness of police forces to academic work and their embracing of scientific approaches to crime management. These increasing interactions require cross-cultural understanding which is not always present. It is therefore of value to explore the contrasts between the culture of the police and of academics. It is argued that these two cultures differ in a) their approach to the nature of knowledge, b) what are considered appropriate forms of action, and c) in the objectives that motivate individuals within these contexts. These differences are generated by the overall missions of the different institutions and are usually consonant with them. However, academics can benefit from taking on board some of the perspectives of the police and the police increasingly need academic and scientific input. Thus whilst both cultures have something to offer there is great benefit in them getting to understand each other so that they can work together more productively. It is the out of the interaction between these cultures, as sort of miscegenation, that more effective policing will emerge.

Little Black Bags

In his delightful novel *The Long Good-Bye* Raymond Chandler records the conversation between two hardened detectives:

‘You two characters been seeing any psychiatrists lately?’
‘Hell,’ Ohls said, ‘hadn’t you heard? We got them in our hair all the time these days. We’ve got two of them on the staff. This ain’t police business any more. It’s getting to be a branch of the medical racket. They’re in and out of jail, the courts, the interrogation rooms. They write reports fifteen pages long on why some punk of a juvenile held up a liquor store or raped a school girl or peddled tea to the senior class. Ten years from now guys like Marty and me will be doing Rorschach tests and word associations instead of chin-ups and target practice. When we go out on a case we’ll carry little black bags with portable lie detectors and bottles of truth serum. Too bad we didn’t grab the four hard monkeys that poured it on Big Willie Magoon. We might have been able to unmaladjust them and make them love their mothers.’

(Chandler 1959 p.275-6)

Chandler was characterising 1950’s police in Los Angeles. A time and place when psychology and psychiatry were represented in the public mind by the Rorschach inkblot test and the search for psychological complexes through Jungian word association. It was also a time when the polygraph ‘lie detector’ and the use of sodium pantothenate as a ‘truth drug’ were still fashionable and acceptable in some courts. But if we up-date the technology and broaden the science base to include DNA, latent fingerprint examination and the many other developments in science that police services are embracing there is much in this conversation that captures the views of police officers today. Most notably is the conceptualisation of developments in science and technology as a bag of tricks to be taken along to a case. Ohls does not say ‘We’ll all be reading Freud and Jung instead of the police procedures manual’. He draws the processes of police training, like chin-up exercises and target practice, into the use of particular procedures drawn from the black bag of the physician.

The fictional conversation rings true to me because of how it reflects conversations I have had as a psychologist discussing research developments with the police. Not very long ago I suggested to people organising training courses for senior police officers that they ought to provide a basic introduction to scientific concepts and methods, including behavioural science, as a fundamental component of the education process. My suggestion was dismissed out of hand as being far too academic. I was assured that what they needed were practical, operationally oriented training sessions that would be of obvious and immediate value in their day-to-day work. A reaction little different from that reported many years earlier by Holdaway (1989) who spoke of the police as absorbed by crime fighting, arrests and “their insatiable need for action”.

The ‘man of action’ persona reflected in this view is also the spirit of Ohls’ comments. He does not need all the debate and analysis of the circumstances of the crime he just needs to get to the baddie and sort him out. Such a style of dealing with the world makes for good fictional drama. Heroes combat villains and good prevails. Indeed, there can be no other line of work (with the possible exception of doctors and nurses in emergency settings) that is so frequently portrayed in the mass media. It just

has to be the case that many police officers, especially detectives, see their activities as reflections of the dramas that nightly fill the TV screens. Indeed some commentators have named 'syndromes', that characterise the stance taken by police officers, after fictional characters such as Wyatt Earp, John Wayne or Doc Holliday and argued that there is a distinct phase in officers careers when they see themselves as 'tv cops'. They and the public they serve see their job as essentially one of action, not of contemplation. This is true to such an extent that a fictional detective's interest in opera (like Morse) or playing the violin (like Holmes) is a way of showing how out of the ordinary he is in having a contemplative side to his nature.

Yet much of what present-day police officers are called to do includes strategic considerations, especially once they get above the rank of sergeant. Even with the huge resources that go into a murder enquiry in the UK it is no longer possible to 'leave no stone unturned' as SIO's like to claim. Some assignment of priorities is necessary. In effect, this requires the specification of some form of hypotheses about the murder then following them up. Often these hypotheses will require testing or be developed from forensic evidence and interaction with forensic scientists as varied as pathologists, toxicologists, entomologists and even investigative psychologists. Treating these advisors as merely technicians who are giving readings off a piece of equipment can lead to misunderstandings and frustrations on all sides.

The need for a scientific perspective on large enquiries was identified by Byford (1981) in his review of the Yorkshire Ripper Enquiry. Byford's point was that the exploration of the issues and testing out of ideas in a complex investigation would benefit considerably from a scientific perspective. He even suggested that a scientist should be assigned to each major enquiry to provide such a perspective, a role that came to be known as the 'Byford scientist'. Yet it is interesting how police forces interpreted this challenging idea. The role became one of liaison officer with the forensic scientists and the scientific perspective became interpreted as the need for computer systems to store the massive amount of information collected. What was proposed as a change in the way of thinking became just another piece of technology to take out of the black bag. It is therefore not surprising that twenty years later Macpherson (1999) identified similar weaknesses in the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry

This need for police interaction with the academic/scientific perspective goes far beyond major murder enquiries and has been developing over the last twenty years. Drummond (1976) pointed out that "the police are far more open with others than was the case a decade ago" (p40). Partnership strategies with various agencies in the local community are part of this increased openness. They also require a more abstract understanding of the processes that underlie the problems being tackled than was the case when it was considered just a matter of putting a bobby on the beat. Furthermore, the requirement of setting priorities for dealing with volume crime cannot be intelligently based on a casual glance of the weekly crime figures. Even issues like the management of crowds and other public order matters cannot be dealt with as just working out procedures. As Drury and his colleagues (2003) have shown, some understanding of the psychology of crowds is essential if they are to be managed effectively, but this means engaging with social science debates that have gone on for 150 years.

The difficulty of interaction between what I am characterising as, on the one hand, the academic/scientific culture and, on the other, the culture of the police is not merely a matter of vocabulary or engrained habits. It is a set of fundamental differences in thought processes, typical modes of action and the central objectives

that shape the institutions in which these cultures thrive. They therefore have implications for all aspects of the lives of the people involved.

My point is to emphasise the importance of the interaction between the different cultures. For whilst there have been many studies of police cultures over recent years there has been a tendency for their apparent academic objectivity to hide a somewhat supercilious attitudes towards the rough-neck cops. There are good reasons why police culture is different from scientific culture. There are certainly strengths and weaknesses in both. Therefore understanding these cultural differences helps to improve the ways in which the different perspectives may complement each other.

Recognising that the culture of the police is an integrated aspect of the ways in which police officers see themselves and the attitudes they hold also sheds light on such contentious issues as how racism survives in the police and why police forces have such difficulty in taking full advantage of new technologies. It also helps to explain why academics who want to help the police so often get it wrong. In order to develop our understanding further a closer look at the differences in these cultures will be worthwhile.

Ways of Knowing

Perhaps the most fundamental distinction between the police and academic communities is in what they regard as knowledge. Their histories and training, as well as the difference in context between science and the law, define what it is known in different ways. Like all such distinctions there are overlaps and variations within the different cultures but this nonetheless provides different bases for subsequent actions.

Data versus Evidence

It was the Senior Investigating Officer of Operation Trinity, Superintendent Vince McFadden (reported in Canter 1995) who first pointed out to me that what the police search for is evidence, something that can be used to prove a case in court, whereas what scientists want is data, material that they can work with, on which they can test their hypotheses. This distinction has many ramifications for the different approaches to the information available and what can be done with it.

From the police point of view evidence is valid or not. Its relevance is determined by the case in hand. It has power to convict or release. It is in the possession of one side of an argument or another and serves one or the other's ends. There is almost a sacred quality to evidence in the way it must be protected and defended. It also has power in the legal process. Evidence is finite and fills the scales of justice until its very weight tips the balance one way or the other.

Data is very different from all this. It is the raw material out of which science is fashioned. The data itself may have varying degrees of reliability. It does not enshrine validity itself. That comes from the arguments that are developed from it. There can never really be enough data, because data itself generates the possibilities for further questions. Its quality is, of course, important but not crucial. If the data is suspect then its support for a particular hypothesis is lukewarm and future data may help develop the argument further. There is therefore a less respectful view towards data than there is towards evidence. Data is, after all, what your theory makes of it. Evidence makes or breaks the case.

When it comes to transactions between scientists and police officers over the information available from an investigation these differences in perspective take their

toll. In my experience the police are reluctant to make information available to scientists unless what can be done with it will help to turn it into evidence. Also the material that is collected as part of general stocktaking, for Home Office statistics and the like, is not regarded with anything like the same seriousness as the material collected for investigative purposes. There are even still police officers who cannot see the point in studying information from solved cases, believing that the central problem of each case is to find the evidence that will lead to a conviction.

One instance of this difference in approach was brought home to me when I was advising a murder enquiry in which a shoe print was available. Investigators went to considerable trouble to see if they could find anyone who had bought shoes like those for which they had a print. Hundreds of house-to-house enquiries were conducted, like the Prince trying to find his Cinderella. The focus was on the shoe print as evidence that would tie a particular individual to the crime scene. However, along the way the police collected data for which a market research company would have paid real money. In their enquiries they had the information on which they could have built up a statistical profile of the sort of people who bought such shoes. This profile would not have been of evidential value but it might have been useful for assigning priorities to suspects. Unfortunately the information was never systematically collected and stored so it was not possible to test out the utility of any such profile that might have been generated.

The police do collect vast amounts of information in many forms that feeds central records. Only a very small proportion of it is drawn upon to develop our understanding of crime and criminality. Recognising this, scientists are developing ways of making more effective use of the information collected by the police. Canter and Alison (2003) have argued that this is a central challenge for developing a science that is relevant to police investigations. But there is also a feedback from this. As police begin to see what can be done with all the information they collect, they put more emphasis on careful collection even though they do not necessarily know the use to which it will be put.

A clear example of this is the great improvements there have been in the way statements are taken from rape victims now that it is understood that the statement is not merely a record of the crime that had occurred to be used as evidence in court. Understanding that the statement can provide data which can be drawn on to guide the investigation beyond the presentation of evidence, has made police interviewers much more aware of the need to record the nuances of what the victim reports. This in turn means that these statements can be used much more effectively for general research purposes. One further consequence of this more thorough recording of all the surrounding aspects of an offence, when investigating burglary as much as rape, is that the victims feel they have been taken seriously and been given the opportunity to give a full account of what they have experienced.

Process versus Product

One important consequence of dealing with information as only of significance in relation to the case at hand is that it is the outcome or product of any action that is the key way of evaluating that action. The significance of knowledge for the police is in what its consequences are. This contrasts with the interest that academics have in the process by which results were obtained.

An interesting illustration of this is reported in Canter (2003) in relation to the Yorkshire Ripper Enquiry. As part of that enquiry a leading forensic scientist, Dr Stuart Kind carried out a spatial analysis of the locations of the crimes attributed to

the 'Yorkshire Ripper'. This analysis led to the specification of an area of Yorkshire in which the killer was likely to have been living. Around the time that Kind's report was presented to the enquiry a man was arrested who turned out to be the offender, Peter Sutcliffe. The arrest was the result of an alert police officer following up unexplained actions of Sutcliffe when he had been stopped for a minor crime. Dr Kind's analysis therefore played no role in helping to identify or arrest Sutcliffe and was not used as part of the evidence in court.

The lack of any direct contribution to the enquiry meant that Kind's contribution was ignored. However, the area he identified was precisely the area in which Sutcliffe lived. If that information had been available earlier it could have been of considerable help to the investigation. Of even more importance was the fact that Kind had established an approach to looking at an offender's geography that could have been useful in subsequent investigations. But when I was asked, a couple of years after Kind had submitted his report, to advise the enquiry into the Railway Rapist, I was not told of Kind's work – which was not published in academic journals at that stage. Instead I had to work out from first principles a process that was quite similar to Kind's. As it happens I was fortunate in providing this information to the enquiry before a suspect had been identified and my contribution was eventually recognised as being of value in identifying the offender. This success drew attention to my work and helped me to develop the process further and contribute to other investigations.

I have learnt from this that in order to have any scientific process taken seriously by the police it is no use demonstrating that its principles are sound and empirical data have validated those principles. It has to have been successful in use in an actual investigation. Of course this limits the uptake of any scientific developments and those that are utilised owe more to the 'success stories' they are sold on than to the robustness of the science behind them. It also means that attempts to convince police officers that certain scientific processes are relevant to their activities often fall on stony ground unless they can be illustrated with gripping accounts of their effective use.

Trend versus Case

The focus on outcome also gives emphasis to individual cases and the success or failure of procedures applied to them. This makes police forces exceptionally vulnerable to making decisions on the basis of unusual, one-off cases. It also means that there is little understanding of how to place the information on a particular even into a broader context. Anecdote and apocrypha can replace an understanding of the trends that are what science produces.

There is considerable evidence that most people have difficulty in understanding probabilities without formal training. Gambling and such institutions as the National Lottery would have far less appeal if people understood what the odds really meant. But this weakness manifests itself in police work when people purveying particular processes offer up examples of the success of the process without putting that into the context of the general trend of successes and failures. So, for example, a case in which a 'lie detector' has proven useful will be mentioned without any understanding of the significance of findings that in a high proportion of cases it does not help to demonstrate guilt. Indeed the idea that psychophysiological indexes of emotional excitement may be, on average better indicators of innocence than they ever are of guilt (Kleiner 1999) is difficult for people to understand if they are focusing on cases where such a process has 'worked'. Similarly, procedures that have

great potential for the police may be quickly dropped because of one 'failure' despite the trends that indicate their overall effectiveness.

Trade versus Profession

One fruitful way of characterising the differences in approach to the nature of knowledge in the police compared with scientists is to see police officers as typically plying a trade. They know the details of the procedures they must follow to achieve certain ends, whether it be for instance a legal arrest, preparation of evidence for court, or the management of a public demonstration. But they have little command of the principles behind the procedures they are following or an understanding of the empirical trends on which such procedures can be based.

The contrast is with the professional perspective that recognises all decisions as part of an evolving body of knowledge. The actions of any professional are a contribution to the development of that knowledge base, which is why research is so highly prized by all professional bodies. Any given example is understood as an illustration of a possible class of examples. It is a point within a trend that may be understood or may still be enigmatic. It is data out of which further understanding may be emerge if it is put together with other examples.

Of particular interest here is the way the focus on the mechanics of a procedure, against the background of discussions about particular cases, provides the seeds for prejudicial attitudes that in their extreme are racist and/or sexist. The essence of a professional perspective, that comes from seeing any given example in a broader context, is to be able to take an objective stance that distances a person's views of him/herself from the judgement of the case at hand.

Simplifying thought processes characterises one case as typical of a whole class of poorly defined events. These uninformed views are then bolstered by similar anecdotes, as when examples of particular ethnic minority groups involved in particular crimes are taken as definitions of the nature of those groups. This sharing of individual cases provides a framework in which racism is seen as a logical conclusion and is extremely difficult to change by 'diversity training'. What generates the 'institutional racism' to which Macpherson (1999) drew attention, is not therefore the entrance of many people with racist attitudes into the police service, but a way of looking at the information available that supports a very limited understanding of the processes from which crime emerges. So long as many examples are presented to illustrate actions by individuals from ethnic minorities and these examples are used to defend trends without a broader picture of the processes involved then no matter what courses police officers have, about what opinions are or are not acceptable, there will still be a drift towards racism that emerges from treating policing as a craft for coping with individual cases rather than a profession that draws on trends and a scientifically based understanding of crime.

There is another process that also fosters prejudicial attitudes. A process that has been understood by psychologists for more than half a century. As the distinguished social psychologist Gordon Allport wrote in 1951:

'attitudes serve a purpose in the life-economy of the individual. The California farmer who is prejudiced against Japanese-Americans has a definable attitude, but this attitude is not isolated in his life. Rather it may be for him a means of excusing his failures, maintaining his self-esteem, and enhancing his competitive position' (p 373)

In other words, prejudice is sustained whenever there are real psychological benefits to holding prejudicial views. If they make the racist feel more significant, enable that person to cope more readily with anxieties and frustrations, give the feeling that they are an accepted part of a group, then edicts and assessments will not weed out people who hold those views. Others who will be more careful in keeping those attitudes to themselves will just replace any individual who is ejected from the police force because he has revealed racist attitudes. It is only by removing the reliance on individual cases, the focus on evidence and the development of an understanding of how trends operate and are revealed that the environment for prejudice can be destroyed.

Ways of Acting

The approach to the nature of knowledge that distinguishes the two cultures is a product of the different relationships to the legal process that distinguishes science from police work. The training police officers get is, inevitably, focused on the law and its workings. The practical constraints and demands that come from working as an arm of the law are not present for academics and scientists. This gives academics a fundamental commitment to intellectual freedom that is a luxury the police cannot indulge in. There is as a consequence a shaping of the processes by which they go about their activities that further distinguishes between their different cultures and interferes with their effective co-operation.

Refutation versus Confirmation

Science is based in failures. It is by challenging hypotheses that they become more robust. Yet such challenges go against the well-documented human tendency to seek out confirmation for any suppositions we make (Wason 1960). It is because of this natural 'confirmation bias' that the training of scientists gives such emphasis to mastering procedures for setting up tests of hypotheses so that they can be refuted. There are, of course, parallels in police work, most notably determining whether a suspect has an alibi that would, in effect, refute the hypothesis of guilt. Yet the resources involved in police work and the emphasis on the case currently the focus of attention means that there is a reluctance to risk exploring possibilities that may turn out to be without substance and a tendency to look for support for any suggestions that emerge.

The risks involved in offering up a suggestion that may prove to be invalid are managed in science by starting with small-scale experiments that are not part of the main stream of activity. As these prove fruitful they are developed further. However there is always the risk that an experiment will fail.

For men of action there is a considerable loss of face in putting in process systems or action plans that turn out to be unproductive. The way of thinking that relates directly to the search for evidence to support a particular viewpoint also is brought to bear when new strategies or procedures are put in place. It is rare indeed, for example, for a consultant to be asked to provide a system that is then piloted to determine the conditions under which it fails and then to use this to develop the system further. Instead individuals become identified with particular approaches and their career development is based on the success or failure of what they recommend. There is therefore considerable pressure to seek out evidence for the effectiveness of what has been introduced rather than treating it as a pilot scheme that may need further development.

Publication versus Secrecy

One of the main ways in which scientific findings gain their robustness is through the process of submitting the work for publication and having it reviewed by peers. Thus whilst there are disadvantages to this system, most notably an inherent conservatism and a tendency for current scientific fashions to dominate, it provides a basis for checking the validity of the conclusions of research. There are a number of well-documented failures of secret research that informed policy making, the failures being due to the lack of overt scrutiny of the research findings.

Yet in my early contact with senior police officers they expressed puzzlement as to why I should want to publish my research. Some even claimed it was just to have the pride of seeing my name in print. They understood nothing of the career imperative to publish and less of the moral imperative of putting back into the public domain something of value that was made possible with support from the public purse. The importance of sustaining the development of scientific understanding through contributing to the scientific literature seemed alien to them.

A number of people have commented on the 'defensiveness' of police culture. Holdaway (1989) refers to the secrecy, lack of trust and feeling of a need to 'watch your back' that is found in many interviews with police officers. Some of this comes from the understandable concern to maintain security over sensitive information that is part and parcel of the investigation of criminal activities. Hiding information from those who may destroy evidence or evade detection or capture is a wholly appropriate part of police activities. This becomes a dominant way of dealing with the world that makes contact with academics often quite fraught.

Anarchic versus Hierarchical

It is interesting to consider the implications of action plans that are aimed, at least ostensibly, at refutation in an atmosphere of open debate and publication of results. I would suggest one implication is that anyone with the intellectual skills can challenge anyone else. Authority is only as powerful as the most recent successful experiment. Furthermore, knowledge can be gained from published sources by anyone who can understand it and then acted on. This all produces an unstructured network of contacts and influences that are extremely difficult to manage. The world of scientists is thus anarchic in some fundamental sense of the way in which the discipline is managed and evolves.

As Drummond (1976) and many others have pointed out "police departments are almost universally structured to conform to the military hierarchical model of organisation" (p.19). There is at least a notion of the strong chain command that is necessary for organised action in response to incidents and crimes as they happen. Ranks are important in determining authority and therefore as in all hierarchical organisations information flows as water does, more readily from the top down than in the other direction.

In their dealing with academics the police have concern as to what form of control there over information or the actions of individuals but at the same time tend not to understand that their contacts with a student or junior member of staff may be unknown to the others more senior in the organisation. Academics, by contrast, make the mistake of assuming that because something has been authorised by senior police officers there will inevitably be support for it from the rank and file.

The public expects an enormous amount of discretion from the most junior police officer. He or she is looked on as the representative of the forces of law and

order at the particular point in time that the public comes into contact with them. Police officers quickly learn that they have to wield this discretion with confidence if they are to be taken seriously. This engenders a network of contacts that are far closer to the anarchy with I have characterised academics than is often appreciated. The crucial difference, though, is that the processes of publication and peer commentary ameliorate academic anarchy. In contrast, the myth that police officers are actually operating under the control of a strict chain of command combines with the inherent culture of secrecy to generate conditions in which bad practice can be perpetrated for generations without anyone knowing about it.

This complex organisational process is one of the reasons why developments in policing tend to move in fits and starts, often after a serious bloodletting, such as the Yorkshire Ripper or Stephen Lawrence enquiries. Whereas academic life has unfolded with only minor changes over the half a millennium that universities and scientific laboratories have been in general existence there have been very considerable changes in the fundamental processes that characterise police work over the century and a half that police forces have played a role in public life.

Key Objectives

I have tried to be even-handed in my accounts of police and academic cultures, probably with less success than I would like. It has certainly not been my intention to imply that there are fundamental flaws in police culture that are the cause of many failings. Rather, I have been trying to identify what characterises the different cultures and to show the implications these characteristics have beyond their immediate sphere of relevance. The crucial point is that these characteristics are derived from the primary objectives of the different institutions. It is the management of the knock-on effects of achieving these objectives that is the challenge that emerges when scientists and the police are brought into co-operation with each other.

Knowledge versus a Conviction

The central difference in objectives can be distilled down to a difference between the search for a conviction and the desire to contribute to knowledge. These differences are doubtless being eroded as the police become more involved in public order issues and a desire to respond generally to community concerns. Applied scientists are also keen to have their findings acted on, although that often becomes confused with consultancy activity that takes them outside of a strictly academic environment. Yet the approach to knowledge and the patterns of activity are still largely dominated by these differences in objectives.

The important point here is that these different objectives are what the organisations are there for. As citizens we no more want our police to spend their time unpicking the subtleties of bodily decay or the criminal's psyche than we want our physicists to seek out wrongdoing and ensure that a conviction is achieved. But these different objectives do point the practitioners in different directions as has been discussed, the police officer to the uniqueness of the crime at hand; the academic to the broader debate within the discipline.

Career versus Posterity

One intriguing consequence of these different key objectives is in the way individuals within the different contexts consider their own personal objectives. This relates back,

in some ways, to the distinction drawn earlier between craft and profession. The professional takes a broader perspective of his/her contribution than the craftsman.

Until very recently academics evaluated their scholarly pursuits in terms of how they felt they could contribute to knowledge. There is a subtle arrogance here. People stay within academia, on lower salaries and with less social status than their abilities may be able to gain for them in commerce or industry, in part because they wish to be at least a footnote in history. They think they have something to offer intellectual life that will be recognised by posterity. Changes in the management of universities are undermining the possibility of indulging in such high-flown aspirations, but they are still an acceptable part of academic culture.

By contrast it is more common for police officers to consider the way in which their current activities may directly further their career progress. In part these considerations are probably brought about by the many more levels in the organisational hierarchy that are typically available to ambitious police officers. These days many academics in their 30's are just pleased to obtain a full-time, permanent job. Also, police officers may retire after fewer years service than academics so the more capable ones look to how their current job can open the way to post-retirement employment.

These differences in personal objectives map onto the issues mentioned earlier of a culture of secrecy and a focus on particular cases. For the ambitious police officer solving the current case him/herself, or making an arrest, can have very direct career prospects. There are therefore pressures to hold onto information relevant to that case that will be of direct benefit to the individual officer. If, on the other hand, a police officer is at a stage in their career when academic recognition may be of some utility they can be very forthcoming and open to academic collaboration.

Academics often ignore these dynamics at their peril, thinking that the benefits of sharing of information on which science is supposed to be based will be immediately recognised by their police contacts. For the academic the information opens the way to contributing to knowledge from which s/he gains respect from colleagues and sometimes even promotion. For the police officer such openness to those outside the police is fraught with dangers and does not necessarily offer any direct career benefits.

Of interest also is the way in which scientists who find their way into the police service in various jobs quickly absorb the ethos of secrecy and the use of information for personal career development. Some learn that association with particular high profile investigations offer the possibility of success stories that can outweigh any contributions to knowledge those individuals may make. There is certainly a curious sort of kudos that comes with the assignment of a 'man-of action' image to someone who is thought of as a scholar, almost an 'Indiana Jones' syndrome. But, like most, such images it is inevitably more mirage than reality.

Politics versus Ideology

One further consequence of the very different contexts of police and academic work is the pressures to which they are prone. Crime and policing are so much on the political agenda and police forces, appropriately, need to respond so directly to pressures from elected politicians that an awareness of the current Political concerns is essential for effectiveness at least in the higher echelons of the police. Traditionally academics, especially scientists have been spared these concerns. This does not mean they are immune from any form of social pressure. As noted earlier, the peer review process, for example, provides a coercive process that requires academics at least to

be aware of the current academic orthodoxy in their discipline, and in most cases to take it into account.

Police officers are less likely to be aware of the fashions within the arcane debates of science than scientist are to know about the issues reported regularly in newspapers. Political imperatives also change more rapidly than do scientific ideologies. These different contexts therefore do offer further bases for confusions and misunderstanding when embarking on collaboration.

Long-term versus Short-term

Overall the objectives of the police tend to be couched in the here and now. Problems appear quickly on the horizon and charge towards police forces that have to be able to respond quickly. Academic life has a more leisurely pace. Journal articles can take months, often years, to be published and research projects of any note rarely take less than a couple of years to complete. There are therefore rather different rhythms in the two different cultures and getting them synchronised can be difficult, although certainly not impossible.

Conclusion

As a member of the public I want action from the police. The constant public refrain for more Bobbies on the beat is a product of the belief that crime is prevented and solved by the hands-on acts, lifting the collars, of on-the-spot police officers. Yet there are many pressures that are making this less and less effective, however much the public and tabloid press still believes it is of operational value. The police are under pressures from many different directions to take a more strategic approach to their activities. There is consequently an inherent conflict between what populist politicians demand of the police and what is needed to manage the modern police service.

On the other hand, academics have to respond to the demands of their discipline whilst being able to show, at least to their students if not to their peers, that what they are doing has some 'real-world' relevance. Agencies that fund research are also under increasing political pressure to demonstrate that the work they support has some value to society. As a recent EPSRC initiative shows, tackling crime offers great potential for scientific innovation provided that can be integrated with the work of the police.

What this analysis shows is that the academic/scientific community and the police service need each other. The pressures coming from both contexts for greater co-operation are healthy and will be productive if both draw on their own strengths and recognise the special qualities of the other. For example, if information is collected both with an eye to its evidential value (and therefore the care with which it must be obtained and recorded) and its scientific value (and therefore the need to collect it over time and across carefully recorded samples) then it will provide a firmer base for all the uses to which it can be put.

One interesting consequence of this treating of information as both evidence and data is that those who provide the information, whether they be victims or witnesses, experts or even suspects, will see that they are being taken seriously and their experiences have the potential of contributing to improvement of society for all. But that improvement also requires a more effective sharing of information and the results of its analysis. It requires the respect for the sensitivity of information to be

tempered with the value of serious publication. Overall, the ability to respond immediately to a dangerous incident or recent crime, for which the police are often so effective, needs to be balanced with the longer-term perspective that comes from academic study of these incidents. It is harnessing the benefits that comes from the complementarity of the two cultures out of which a more just society will evolve.

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