



CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

# Critiquing Evidence-Based Policing in Britain

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A Genealogy

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Paul Betts

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# Critical Criminological Perspectives

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Paul Betts

# Critiquing Evidence-Based Policing in Britain

A Genealogy

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*For Mom*

# Preface

*If you think of it like joining a cult, it'll be much less painful<sup>1</sup>*

Evidence-based policing (EBP) has emerged in Britain and other advanced neoliberal economies in the previous two decades. To the non-specialist, EBP should not be confused with the requirements on the police to collate all available evidence during investigations into criminal matters, which the courts can then weigh to test the *evidence* for the criminal culpability of an accused person. Intelligence-led policing is something different again: the prioritisation and deployment of police resources against key issues informed by analysis of the cumulated position of a variety of intelligence sources. EBP is neither of these things. EBP is something quite specific; quite different to the two operational issues described above.

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<sup>1</sup> *This is a comment made by a former police colleague advising another student about undertaking the Master of Studies 'Police Executive Programme' at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, which promotes EBP.*

Collecting evidence is an important job for the police. In criminal cases, to ensure miscarriages of justice are minimised and faith can be retained in the justice system. Policing then appears pump-primed for an ‘evidence-based’ approach to how it might be considered. Policing is arguably intellectually predisposed to look for facts to prove points; amongst other things, gathering evidence is broadly what policing organisations exist to do. However, this relates to the prosecution of criminal cases, and that function is nothing whatsoever to do with EBP. EBP is looking for facts and truths about policing *itself*: the production of sacred and fundamental knowledge. EBP seeks to use these established facts to improve policing through the application of policy changes to policing strategies and operational tactics. EBP is unspecific about which aspects of policing need improving, against which objectives it is trying to improve, or for whose benefit. And yet, at first glimpse there is an irresistibility to the EBP approach, which carries the hallmark of enlightenment scientific progress: the possibility of human progress through our modern ways of knowing, through facts. EBP is positioned by its advocates as the next iteration of the great advances of science, technology and engineering that have been possible in shaping the post-enlightenment modern world. Evidence-based policing is founded on these solid assumptions.

EBP supplants the term ‘evidence’ over the term ‘knowledge’, and there are several reasons for this in my view. The distinction of the term evidence, over simple knowledge, ensures one attaches a status and credibility to evidence that is beyond the ordinary meaning of simple knowledge or understanding. ‘Evidence’ implies greater certainty than merely to know. This is rooted in ideas of knowledge produced by scientific inquiry as being better than knowledge and ways of understanding that may be more anecdotal, artisanal or hand-me-down. The categorisation of particular forms of knowing is crucial for EBP. The application of the term ‘evidence’ implies that EBP’s knowledge can be relied upon, proven by scientific inquiry through hypothesising and testing in repeatable experimental conditions that can deal with variables. It is therefore virtually certain to produce provable ‘facts’, upon which decisions can be made about policing with a high degree of certainty. The application of the term ‘evidence’ to particular forms of knowledge is a keystone



of EBP and it is a term that is closely monitored and guarded through application of taxonomic devices that in modern Britain have become increasingly institutionalised.

So EBP could be conceived as a kind of battleground over what types of knowledge should be used to ‘improve’ how policing is done, and how decisions are made and resources allocated. British policing has been, and predominantly remains, a craft-based vocation, with ways of knowing based on anecdote and retained through storytelling via apprenticed new entrants into the craft. EBP is an attempt to shake this approach and move policing to what a chief architect of EBP has described as ‘*a science based profession*’ (Neyroud, 2014).

This book has been written for two reasons. From my own (former) insider subject position, I observed at first-hand the development of EBP in British policing over three decades. Rooted in administrative positivist criminologies, EBP was initially an emergent academic idea. However, in the final two decades or so of my service EBP gained traction and began to form the lexicon in which policy initiatives for policing were discussed. Importantly, it has been accompanied by institutional reforms that mirror this academic idea and were observable from my subject position within British policing (Betts, 2022). Secondly, my outsider subject position as an academic political theorist afforded me insights from post-structural philosophies on power, discourse and knowledge. This meant that I felt an increasing unease with the developments I was seeing towards an increasingly hegemonic and unchallenged EBP model emerging at an institutional level within policing that seemed to offer no consideration or benefit to the myriad problems facing British policing, on racism, or misogyny for example. My external academic subject position equipped me with the knowledge to critically question what I was seeing from my internal policing subject position. So, I felt I had something to say about what I was seeing on the burgeoning adoption of EBP in British policing. My almost-unique dual subject positions therefore provided impetus, a strong rationale to conduct scholarly research, and an important reason to write this book: re-opening what appears to be a settled position on EBP in modern British policing in the hope of a more progressive future.

In the last 20 years, I have observed a certain bandwagoning around EBP amongst language, individuals and institutions. There is a notable thirst, particularly amid policing colleagues seeking career advancement, to learn more about EBP, sign up for courses and conferences, and join the newly created Societies of Evidence-based Policing. Several policing organisations have avowed to become an ‘evidence-based organisations’. From the vantage of the university I saw colleagues in that environment equally thrilled at the prospect of the police opening up their data for analysis, and seeking to partner with academics in the production of new knowledge about policing, supported by new funding streams. I noted the explosion of interest in policing degrees, attendant situations vacant for lecturers in policing in hastily created new departments and the development of new policing research centres and institutions. All of this fitted neatly into the marketised landscape of UK higher education chasing impact, funding, more externality, ‘real-world’ application, relevance and knowledge transfer in its pursuit of advancement in REF ranking tables. These trends are observable in both academic individual career advancement and institutional aggrandisement. EBP appears therefore to be in happy harmony: a coalition formed between policing and academia around common market goals.

From my dual subject positions however, something appeared rotten in the state of Denmark. Aligned to positivist criminologies and police science, EBP’s progress in modern Britain appears to ignore important debates in social and political sciences on the nature of knowledge, critique of evidence-based policy approaches in other fields and more critical criminological perspectives that call out wide-ranging problems with policing, crime and justice, that necessitate radical and transformative changes in modern Britain.

Several policing colleagues have discussed in hushed tones concerns about the appliance of science to policing, a move away from policing’s more craft-based apprenticed knowledge and the seemingly unrelenting march towards EBP. Often the issues to which EBP has turned its attention seem trifling compared to the bigger challenges facing the service. Nobody could quite articulate why, but some senior people in policing are uncomfortable with EBP as a grand project. To EBP evangelists, these concerns are easily dismissed as the incoherent whining of the luddite,

who simply doesn't understand the science: people who are resistant to change and will come to see the benefits over time through being more educated or enlightened. The articulated benefits of EBP are often met with indifference on the part of the luddites, maybe lacking the tools to voice their concerns or perhaps simply too busy to think too much about it. The luddites are ultimately passive in their acquiescence to EBP's champions with passion for their project.

The notion of a battleground over types of knowledge therefore is not entirely useful. There is a discursive contest, for sure, within academia over the positioning of EBP and what should be included as evidence. Also within policing, there is a tension associated with the change as it moves towards science and away from anecdote, but portraying it as a significant debate exaggerates the reality of what is occurring here. It seems to me to be a very one-sided battle. It is a limp battle, with only one side doing the fighting. The EBP side also comes equipped with the weaponry of well-considered and articulated arguments, the tactical advantage of framing the terms of the battle, and is increasingly securing its field position with institutional reforms and patronage from revered and high status individuals, state and institutional actors that will be difficult to overcome. In short, EBP either has or is producing 'the evidence' to secure its own position. The Ludditian side is seemingly lacking in the energy, insight, weaponry or 'bothered-ness' to fight, or even articulate a position. Having given almost three decades of my life to policing, and considered the emergence of EBP very deeply, there is a danger for me that unchallenged thinking on EBP will lead to irreversible damage to the progress policing as a potential force for social good or social justice could make in future years.

From my academic position, the understandings I take from Michel Foucault's genealogical work about knowledge-power, the importance of discourse in his genealogical work in (re)shaping problematisations, what is possible in particular time periods, the significance of knowledge hierarchies and classification, and the impact discourse has on institutional modifications all mean that I feel privileged to have insights that equip me to write this book. Foucault's great theses on madness, sexuality and punishment offer understandings into the import of charting

institutional modifications over time, revealing their contingencies to re-open possibilities that are foreclosed in the hope of inspiring change. I believe I have been witness in policing to such modification that needs to be examined to understand how we arrived at our present condition, as EBP becomes increasingly strategically important. To use Foucault's own language, I feel I may have the tools available to me to explore the rules, sites or conditions in which EBP has emerged as a modern phenomenon. Given the duality of my insider-outsider policing-academic subject positions, I feel an incumbency to attempt to apply these theoretical insights to what I have observed in policing in a way that might allow for the emergence of alternative ideas on policing. This is increasingly important as British policing has lurched from crisis to crisis in recent years, with EBP still being revered as part of the answer.

This book starts exactly from this latter point. There is a gap in the critical consideration of the changes we are seeing in British policing that are being driven through the advancement of the EBP project. This book is aimed at that gap and is a humble attempt to give an alternative view for people to consider. Positioned as it is, I suppose I found the energy to attempt to articulate the concerns of the luddite.

London, UK  
Winter 2023

Paul Betts

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London, Winter 2023

Paul Betts

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# Abbreviations

ACMD	Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
ADA	Argumentative Discourse Analysis
APCC	Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
EBP	Evidence-based Policing
NPCC	National Police Chiefs Council
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
NPM	New Public Management
PEP	Police Executive Programme (at the University of Cambridge)
PFEW	Police Federation of England and Wales
PKF	Police Knowledge Fund
PSA	Police Superintendents Association
SEBP	Society of Evidence-Based Policing
WWCCR	What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (College of Policing)



# 1

## Introduction

By 2024, British policing has arguably reached a new nadir in public confidence and legitimacy to act. This has been precipitated by a series of crises that ultimately led to the downfall of Britain's first female Commissioner, Dame Cressida Dick, whose appointment had been initially welcomed as a progressive move by many observers. The conclusions of Baroness Casey's 2023 independent review of the Metropolitan Police Service (Casey, 2023) found an endemic culture of institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia, some twenty five years after Lord MacPherson first used the term *institutional racism* about policing in the delivery of the report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (MacPherson, 1999). Baroness Casey's conclusions have failed to win endorsement from the new Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley, who rejects the term institutional racism as politicised and ambiguous. There are a range of academic, activist and community voices calling for radical changes to British policing in the wake of these multiple crises, including calls for defunding the police and moving to alternative models of policing (Cunneen, 2023). Despite the crises highlighting the pressing need for fundamental changes, these more critical suggestions are often

marginalised, silenced and fail to receive active consideration for inclusion in any reformed police service. The reform of policing does not appear to be a democratic discussion in modern Britain. Moreover, contemplated police responses to these multiple challenges seem to continue to favour the more techno-managerial monopolising narratives that have forever hallmarked the conservatism and lack of progress on these important issues in British policing.

British policing has however embraced academic interventions in the previous two decades, in the form of so-called evidence-based policing ('EBP'), which captures the idea that operational and strategic decisions can be based on research knowledge graded as 'evidence'. On the surface, this development offered initial hope that British policing might begin to listen to academic research calling for more progressive policies. However, after twenty years of advancement, EBP is being developed in ways that seem to progress conservative agendas and further marginalise more critical interventions. It is EBP, with particular notions of 'evidence' and research positioned in alignment with state-driven agendas, that attracts resources, attention and consideration in reforming British policing in an 'evidence-based' way (Holdaway, 2020). EBP has come to exert significant influence on how actors think, speak and act about British policing. EBP now shapes policing discourse and it has become institutionalised, attracting state funding and dominating policing research. Amongst a range of available competing ideas about how policing, crime and justice might be transformed, the question is why EBP is acquiring hegemonic status? How did we come to this position? And what might be the impacts of EBP's uncontested progression, particularly as it has shifted from an emergent and contestable set of academic ideas into a transposed institutional reality of modern British policing? This book explores the emergence of EBP in modern Britain from a historical and theoretical perspective, using discourse analysis to propose a genealogy of EBP in modern Britain and explore these questions.

From about the early 2000s, EBP has emerged as the answer to a range of unspecified, unclear and somewhat trifling managerialist problems with policing that have become prioritised for action. Examples include a lack of 'professionalism' or the inefficient use of resources.

Simultaneously, fundamental big questions about policing and crime, and the critical or more theoretically informed academic literature that discusses these have become increasingly marginalised, lacking influence in the policy sphere (Smith, 2010). What type of policing modern society should aspire to or what counts as ‘crime’ in early twenty-first century Britain are questions increasingly silenced by EBP’s more managerial interests (Hillyard & Tombs, 2007; Pemberton, 2007).

The language of EBP has become common parlance amongst civil servants, police officers and British policing’s political overseers. EBP’s rise has been remarkable. Distilled, EBP’s core idea is to apply research knowledge to policing policy and operational decision-making in order to make it better. EBP’s lineage in Britain can be traced to about the mid-1990s, although its intellectual origins lie in experimental and administrative criminology emerging in the US, that focussed on policing from about the 1970s (Goldstein, 1979). Notably, the US research of scholars such as David Weisburd and Larry Sherman has been particularly influential in shaping and extending EBP, both of whom remain prominent figures in the world of EBP. In 1998, Sherman set out a definition of EBP, hence through ‘useful research’ to ‘*provide continuous quality improvement in the achievement of police objectives*’ (Sherman, 1998, p. 6). There is limited definition or debate in EBP’s academic literature of which police objectives might be improved, or for whom, but nonetheless EBP journey and development from an academic idea into institutional reality in modern British policing has been significant, and this story is the focus of this book.

Although differing subtly in their approach to American experimental criminologists, simultaneously in the British context the research of academics such as Nick Tilley and Gloria Laycock began to influence the Home Office, founded on a ‘what works’ mantra, during the early 2000s. In 2001, Laycock established the Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science based at UCL, London. This was broadly synchronous with UK government policy dominated by ‘what works’ that attracted significant public funding and built on ‘problem oriented policing’ to bring research ideas and findings into public policy. Laycock was engaged in the Home Office Police Research Group, and the Home Office ‘Tilley

Awards' on effective practice in policing are enduringly named in honour of Professor Tilley.

EBP has therefore emerged within a British context of policing, government and public policy from circa 2000, a period that was congruent with New Labour's 'what works' agenda—an agenda with which EBP shares an ideological heritage. Hillyard et al. noted the increasing tendency of the Home Office to control research funding on crime in the direction of empirical 'what works'/crime science research, charting progress to 2004 (Hillyard et al., 2004). Arguably, however, EBP builds on a much longer-standing partnership tradition of criminologies linked to state agendas in Britain, which have been documented as dating back to at least the League of Nations in the 1930s (Walters, 2003).

The development of EBP in Britain significantly intensified from the middle 2000s, both as an academic idea and as it began to influence policing. In 2007, Larry Sherman began his tenure as Wolfson Professor of Criminology at Cambridge University and Director of the Institute of Criminology. Sherman and his ideas remain a major influence on the progression of EBP in Britain. Under Sherman's leadership, in 2008 the Institute founded a new Police Executive Programme ('PEP'), centred around Sherman's version of EBP, bringing 'science' to the way policing makes operational and policy decisions: how policing gets done. This extended the legacy of the state-linked 'police studies' in the Department of Crime Science at Cambridge, whose history is well documented elsewhere (Walters, 2003). The Cambridge programme has become a refuge for retired senior officers to mentor and supervise students on the PEP. For example, Peter Neyroud was the Chief Constable heading the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) overseeing its transformation into the College of Policing in 2012/3. It is noted elsewhere how Neyroud ensured NPIA funding for the first EBP conference in 2008 (Holdaway, 2020, p. 24). At the time of writing, Neyroud is an associate professor promoting EBP at the Institute, latterly being nominated to replace Sherman as Director (Designate) of the PEP. Sherman's preferred approach remains 'experimental criminology', and his leadership of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge through education, acquisition of research funding and dissemination of research have ensured his ideas remain extremely influential in shaping and progressing EBP in Britain

as it has become institutionalised (Betts, 2022). Holdaway notes the Cambridge influence on EBP, labelling this version as Cambridge EBP ('CEBP') (Holdaway, 2020). The preferred term for this version of EBP used in this book is 'purist' EBP, which includes the Cambridge version, but has now extended well beyond Cambridge and this is explained further below.

The Society of Evidence-Based Policing was founded at Cambridge in 2010, subsequently later spawning associated societies in other advanced neoliberal economies (US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, latterly, the Netherlands). SEBP exists to bring together academics, police officers and policy-makers with an interest in progressing EBP's ideas and research. A new 'College of Policing' was announced by the Home Secretary in 2011 to 'professionalise' policing and champions EBP as a central plank of this professionalisation agenda—the College further institutionalising EBP as an entity within academia, politics and policing. The College aspires to attain 'Royal' status, following the model of medical royal colleges. Galvanised, these powerful institutional partnerships of Cambridge University, the Home Office and the College, exercise or contribute to control over access to police research funding, data and dissemination using a variety of gatekeeping mechanisms, ensuring EBP has grown in strength and stature, benefiting markedly from state patronage (Betts, 2022; Holdaway, 2020).

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century therefore, there is notable coming together of what Young (1986) described as 'administrative criminology': the growth of the 'what works' agenda within UK government policy-making and a growing narrative on the need to 'professionalise' policing. Taken together, these are the roots of EBP in Britain. Web of Science citation indices for the term '*evidence-based policing*' support this summarised trajectory and key dates. Before 2005, the term was cited only a handful of times a year. By 2012, this had risen slowly to 226, with 339 by 2014. By 2019, the number of citations of this term increased rapidly to 1420. Sherman's (2013) paper '*The Rise of Evidence-based Policing: Targeting, Testing and Tracking*' is the most cited work on the subject at 141 citations, demonstrating his influence.

Within British policing there has been a bandwagoning surrounding the emergence of EBP, with numerous graduates of the Cambridge

programme strategically positioned as advocates of purist EBP. There appears to be very limited consideration of literature or research on policing that sits outside of the Cambridge/EBP 'bubble', or that questions its foundational assumptions. There appears an uncritical acceptance of the teachings of the Cambridge programme, and a zealous evangelism about purist EBP in the way actors eulogise about the discovery of a new religion.

Graduates of PEP and the purist EBP scholars whose ideas populate the programme appear simply unaware of theoretical or critical socio-criminological literatures, or critique of evidence-based approaches in other policy fields. This is of concern given the positions of influence occupied within policing by purist EBP converts. It seems of crucial importance to have senior police officers who think independently, disruptively, challenge, and are respectful of the diversity of approaches that pluralism can bring, critical of what policing does, in the hope of progress and improvements in policing for citizens and the public good in an age defined by policing crises.

There is a debate within advocacy for EBP between the purists and literature that can be described as 'realist'. 'Realist' work typically identifies the tensions caused from pursuing 'purist' positivist pseudo-scientific methods in the production of research knowledge about policing as a complex social phenomenon, and in urging more caution on purist claims of generalisability from their experimentation. Arguably, the realists' archetypal position in offering critique ultimately becomes self-undermined by their final position, which falls into the 'lure of relevance' (Chan, 1994; Laster, 1994). In general terms, realists suggest amendments to how EBP might be done better, while ultimately agreeing with the very modern requirement for evidence-based policy to help 'improve' policing (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Cowen & Cartwright, 2020). For example, in dealing with the problems caused by 'knowledge hierarchies' (a cornerstone of EBP), which grades research according to its method of production or usefulness for policy-makers, realist work is characterised by arguing for the extension of types of knowledge that should be included within such hierarchies, arguing to extend EBP discourse to embrace more mixed methods research (Sidebottom & Tilley, 2020;



Willis & Mastrofski, 2016), or ensuring that local context and understanding the mechanics of implementation of initiatives are included in any attempts to understand ‘what works’ (Cowen & Cartwright, 2020). Realists therefore, rather than following the tensions they expose to a different—and arguably more logical—conclusion that questions the ontological assumptions upon which EBP rests, often conclude by supporting EBP as a concept, albeit with several recommended modifications (see Bullock, 2020, as a further example).

EBP therefore seems to currently orbit between two gravitational pulls: the purist and the realist. Although ‘policing improvement’ is very poorly defined or discussed within the EBP literature, whichever version of EBP is interrogated, the interests of EBP seem to be incredibly narrowly focussed on ‘improving’ very specific aspects of policing that accord with conservative statist views. Despite critique from realist scholars, EBP largely fails to engage with a diversity of perspectives and views policing from a very limited pseudo-scientific perspective. EBP has developed obsessive concerns over minor matters of only managerial interest, such as the deployment of police resources in ways that are most ‘efficient’ (see Heaton & Tong, 2016, for a discussion on EBP’s potential to improve cost-effective use of police resources following NHS drugs methodologies, as an example). Many police staff, academics, politicians or indeed members of the public may not prioritise such managerial concerns as the key problems of modern British policing in need of further research and investment, when the service is beset with more fundamental problems (Casey, 2023).

Rooted in evidence-based medicine, administrative and experimental criminology, EBP is obsessive about methodology (purist models of EBP with randomised control trials, in particular) and ‘hierarchies of knowledge’: how knowledge can be classified to ascribe it the much-vaunted label of ‘evidence’. EBP is especially pre-occupied with the ‘robustness’ of ‘what works’ research to an extent that is rarely encountered in other branches of social science research. Debate over what counts as evidence is a distinguishing hallmark between purist and realist positions. Often realist critique comes from a reactionary position of seeking to widen the approach set out by purist advocates (Sidebottom & Tilley, 2020). It remains problematic that EBP’s advocates

have succeeded in institutionalising judgements about the quality of knowledge (research) being applied to policing—and therefore ascribing the label of ‘evidence’—using simple hierarchies, without any apparent consideration of the literature on the contested nature of knowledge, or post-structural perspectives on power-knowledge as a contingent product of discourse (Foucault, 1991). Transmitting opinions on the classification of knowledge as ‘evidence’—truth and facts about policing—to police leaders and policy officials through the Cambridge PEP programme and other forms of institutionalisation amplifies this concern.

There is a rich literature that critiques ‘what works’ in other public policy environments (on the NHS see Morrell, 2006, or Fotaki, 2009, as examples). There is also a weighty international literature debating the use of *evidence-based policy* (with which EBP shares lineage) in various other policy fields. There are calls for evidence-based policy-making to be challenged (Marston & Watts, 2003, on youth justice in Australia), with others suggesting evidence-based policy approaches need to be more modest in their claims over truth and knowledge (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Solesbury, 2001). Additionally, there is a vigorous and ongoing debate within criminology on the nature of the discipline and the purposes to which the fields emanating knowledge might be put (Loader & Sparks, 2013). This helps to demonstrate the narrow type of criminologies upon which EBP rests: experimental; administrative; crime/police science. Knowledge authorised as evidence through EBP discourse is simply one version of a range of options that *could* (and potentially *should*) be deployed to support the development of policing policy and practice in more progressive directions, if indeed there exists an ongoing political determination to marry knowledge to policy (see Chancer & McLaughlin, 2007; McAra, 2017).

While such debates can be found in EBP academic literature—notably in the debate between purist and realist ideas vying for influence as to which type of knowledge might be valid as EBP progresses (contrast, for example, Pawson & Tilley, 1998; Sherman, 2002)—these arguments remain largely absent from EBP’s growing hegemonic institutional status *within policing*. Debates and nuances of this kind are generally written

out of other texts that commend or advocate for EBP approaches generated from spaces such as the College of Policing, or in official statements that tend to favour EBP's simplistic motif story-lines.

This body (the UK College of Policing) has tremendous potential to follow the pathway to innovation Johnson (2010) associates with such major advances as the printing press, which was inspired by the wine press: a lateral-thinking style of adaption of an idea used in one setting (evidence-based medicine) to another (such as evidence-based policing). (Sherman, 2013, p. 379)

Setting aside the arrogance of this claim, the lexicon of EBP as it becomes more deeply institutionalised within British policing appears unaware of critique of the 'evidence-based' policy movement in other fields (Pawson et al., 2005; Sanderson, 2002), or the debates within criminology on the problematic relationship between its knowledge production and the state (Hillyard et al., 2004; Walters, 2003); or these are, at least, glossed over. Through the development and aggrandisement of EBP discourse an academic discipline has been created, and an entire industry developed, that supports the states need to specify, classify, survey and evaluate policing. For those interested in progressing policing in more radical and diverse trajectories for the benefit of all citizens, the emergence of the EBP phenomena and its impacts requires much further scrutiny.

There are centuries of philosophical debate on modernity, science, knowledge and its liberating potential for humanity. Given the ongoing philosophical debates on science, the criticisms of evidence-based policy-making found in other policy domains and the unsettled arguments on the state of the criminology discipline, Sherman's claim that deployment of particular types of research knowledge ('evidence' from experimental criminology) into policing through EBP's aggrandisement shares a similar potential for human flourishing as the invention of the printing press feels like a very bold assertion indeed. Certainly, it is a claim worthy of further examination in this book.

## 1 The Organisation of This Book

This book is set out in seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature surrounding the development of EBP, describing and unpacking the debates and tensions apparent for EBP that arise from the literature and require further consideration. There is a notable absence in the EBP literature of critically-positioned, theoretically informed or post-structural research. Wider scholarship is used in this chapter, highlighting relevant studies from criminology and social policy, work from fields other than policing and work on the sociology of knowledge to help position some of the potential problems readily identifiable with EBP's continued advancement.

The literature that advocates for furtherance of the EBP approach is described as falling into two broad camps: purist and realist. EBP academic literature is a combination of advocacy for and debate of the purist/realist approaches. This comprises the existing domain of EBP literature. Importantly, both positions ultimately support the expansion of (their differing versions of) EBP as a project, and so ensure extending EBP discourse.

Four key themes from the literature are used to structure Chapter 2. The first section explores 'neoliberal strategic alliances' that are promoted between individual and institutional actors through the progression of EBP discourse. These relationships share strategic alignment on neoliberal objectives, such as advancing individual market positions. Second, '*political evidence selection*' summarises the existing literature on political interference in 'evidence-based' policy. Following Harding, distinction is drawn between 'old politics' that crudely self-selects research 'evidence' to support preordained policy positions and 'new' or 'obscure politics' that pre-wire outcomes due to the operation of normalised assumptions (Harding, 1991, 1992). Third, '*academic evidence selection*' is explored as an example of the 'new politics' that have expanded through EBP discourse and have the effect of including or 'othering' alternative research knowledge about policing. This 'othering' is facilitated and (re)produced through the development of disciplinary governance elements through EBP discourse. Examples of this include the use of knowledge hierarchies and conditional access to funding or data through

institutional reforms. Fourth, '*enlightenment scientific method and objective truths*' refers to the underpinning foundational beliefs of EBP: that the adaptation of pseudo-scientific methods employed within evidence-based medicine, aping its language, methods and standards can be transposed to produce objective truths, 'facts' and 'evidence', upon which policy improvements can be made for 'better policing'. Chapter 2 ends with a summary of seven areas of concern about EBP that arise from the literature and are addressed through the reporting of discourse research that comprises the remainder of this book.

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical framing and methodological approach taken to the research upon which this book rests. A book of this nature requires this important space to set out key concepts relied upon in producing this discourse analysis of EBP in Britain. Foucault's work is subject of contestation and interpretation in a variety of studies, so Foucault's translated original texts were used to develop an understanding of his work. Chapter 3 includes discussions on: archaeology and genealogy; episteme, discourse and truth formations; power-knowledge; subject positioning; and *techne*, discipline and governmentality. Foucault encouraged examination of '*issues of current concern*' and suggested this to be done through a very specific type of historical method. Foucault described working genealogically to create a '*history of the present*' (Foucault, 1975, pp. 30–31) to understand how our modern problematisations and ordering of things appear as they do. Foucault was interested in how particular discourses came to acquire hegemonic status and authority to define modern truths, particularly claims made by social scientists and psychologists. Foucault sought to expose this contingency through detailed archaeological methods, unearthing the hidden origin of rules and specific social practices that become institutionalised to claim legitimating authority over time.

The founding of the EBP project on notions of the deployment of scientific methods to discover absolute and generalisable truths about policing has therefore unsurprisingly attracted the attention of a Foucauldian scholar. Foucault particularly focussed on medicine in elements of his work (Foucault, 1963, 1964). Notably, how in the nineteenth century focus on health shifted to a more pathologised version that we now recognise as modern and normal: a focus on disease, and

a return to normality. EBP's roots lie in evidence-based medicine, and its associated claims to legitimate and 'authorise' truths about policing; therefore, the use of Foucault's ideas to examine EBP discourse finds particular resonance.

A clear methodological approach to the discourse research that underpins this book is also set out in Chapter 3. Foucault is noted for leaving a lack of methodological instruction for those who follow him (Kendal & Wickham, 1999). Foucault's legacy in this regard means the production of this book has wrestled the problem of how to conduct historicised discourse research from a Foucauldian perspective. Approaches of other discourse analysts after Foucault are summarised (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Hajer, 1995, 2002; Hall, 1997; Howarth et al., 2016; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), noting the commonalities of each approach, before outlining the methods used to produce this book. This borrows most strongly from the work of Maarten Hajer, focussing on the nexus of analyses of story-lines; subject positionality; and institutional modification (Hajer, 1995). The chapter also describes how texts for analysis were selected and coded, focussing on four core groups suggested as having the most influence upon EBP discourse: academia; operational policing; politico-official texts; and special interest groups.

While being of limited interest to EBP scholars per se or indeed policing practitioners, Chapter 3 adds very important context to how this approach to analysing the emergence of EBP in Britain has been developed. Using such an interpretive method, it is vital to include this section for reasons of transparency, providing agency to the reader. The section may also prove valuable to those new to Foucauldian theory, or otherwise interested in his ideas and methods as an introduction, or for other researchers seeking to use discourse analytical methods in their own research.

Chapters 4–6 collectively outline the research findings from the discourse analysis that is together presented as a genealogy of EBP. Chapter 4 sets out findings from the research into EBP discourse *story-lines*. This includes elaborating EBP's principal story-lines revealed through this research, as well as the functions story-lines play in advancing EBP discourse. In three sections, examples taken from EBP's