

Edited by JAMES GRAVELLE
and COLIN ROGERS

RESEARCHING THE POLICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

International Lessons
from the Field



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Edited by

James Gravelle

Head of Policing and Security, University of South Wales, UK

Colin Rogers

Professor of Police Science, University of South Wales, UK

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Preface

The origins for this book lay in a discussion that took place in my office at the University of South Wales with my fellow editor, Dr James Gravelle. Having published numerous articles together, both nationally and internationally, and conducted much research and many evaluations for the police, we regularly discussed the past, present and the future changing landscape of policing across the world. The drive for evidence-based policing, coupled with the introduction of the new College of Policing, Police and Crime Commissioners and of course the need for austerity in delivering public services such as the police, led us to the conclusion that research into, and on behalf of, the police was in need of closer consideration.

Questions we posed each other in our discussions related to such topics as access into the police organisation itself, confidentiality of information, informed consent and the role of the culture of the police. Widening our thoughts introduced us to considering research that involved police and their partners and the various topics that could be considered.

Realising that many books on researching the police were, in some senses, actually books that focussed on research methodology, we decided to try and bridge that gap by introducing a book that considered real-life research methods employed by researchers, both inside and outside the police organisation. This real-life approach would, we realised, highlight the many problems of researching the police and criminal justice agencies. However, it would also allow the reader to witness how the particular researchers, working on a number of different topics, negotiated their way through these problems to ensure their research was built upon sound, ethical and valid methods. Consequently, this book, entitled *Researching the Police in the 21st Century: International Lessons from the Field*, has been written with that in mind. It is believed that the chapters in this book will be of great use to those conducting research and evaluations into the police and their partners and provide possible templates for others to use in real-life situations, whilst also allowing the student to use the examples provided in the various chapters as a learning aid. The future of policing appears to be that of a drive for professionalisation, reliant upon a bank of professional knowledge underpinned by good-quality research. We believe that this volume will assist in that quest.

Acknowledgements

It is customary for editors in works such as this to thank certain individuals for their help and work in its production. We can see no reason why this should not apply for this volume!

Many thanks go, we feel, to the contributing authors of this volume who all readily agreed to undertake the work on the various chapters. Their enthusiasm for their individual work has been inspirational, and the odd requests for amendments were cheerily met and attended to within the strict time limits set by the editors.

Many thanks should also go to Harriet Barker and Julia Willan, the staff at the publishers, who have guided us with their support.

Finally, a very special thank you to loved ones who are always the unsung heroes of such projects. To Alison and Alice – Diolch unwaith eto!! and Anna, thank you for your unwavering support.

Contributors

Editors

James Gravelle works at the International Centre for Policing and Security at the University of South Wales, UK. He previously worked for the University of Glamorgan as a consultant and Research Assistant (RA) and regularly carried out research on behalf of Police Services. Research for the police includes work on Tasking Demand Management Units (TDMUs), community intelligence and the use of volunteers. As a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, James has been involved in planning, writing and development of material within higher education on areas such as 'policing in the big society', 'knowledge management', 'policing in the financial crisis', 'the use of intelligence' and 'the impact of terrorism on policing'.

Colin Rogers is the first Professor of Police Science appointed by the University of South Wales, UK. He is a former police officer having served with the South Wales police for 30 years, retiring in 2003 at the rank of Inspector. During his police service, he undertook his academic qualifications and was appointed part-time lecturer in Criminology at the University of Glamorgan, UK. He was appointed as a senior lecturer at the Centre for Police Sciences in May 2004, and later became a Principle Lecturer, before being awarded his Readership in Police Sciences in 2010. Professor Rogers is also Visiting Professor at Charles Sturt University, Sydney, Australia. He is the author and co-author of nine books on policing and police-related matters and has published nearly 200 articles in both practical and academic journals, both nationally and internationally.

Contributors

John Foust began his career in law enforcement as a police officer in New Mexico in 1978. In the early 1990s, he transitioned into police education and training. He served as the Director of Police Training at both Western New Mexico University and at the Del Mar Regional Police Academy (Corpus Christi, Texas). In 2007, he accepted a position with

the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, DC. He currently works as a Special Assistant to the Chief of Police. In that capacity he researches critical issues to policing, monitors department-wide activities and keeps the chief apprised of events and activities. Additionally, he is a faculty member of the University of Maryland System. As an Adjunct Associate Professor, he teaches criminal justice. John is a research student at the University of Glamorgan, where he pursues his doctorate in Police Science.

Bernhard Frevel is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Applied Science for Public Administration of North Rhine-Westphalia and Professor at the University of Münster, Germany. He studied educational science, sociology, psychology and political science in Siegen and Cologne (1982–1986), was awarded his doctorate in Social Science at the Fern Universität Hagen (1993) and received his *venia legendi* for political science in Münster (2009). He also taught at the German Police University. He works and researches on different aspects of Police Science, especially crime prevention, security governance and the organisation of police.

Amanda Milliner studied Police Science at the University of Glamorgan, UK, graduating with a 1st class honours degree for her work on marginalised groups and is now undertaking a PhD after receiving funding to undertake the study. Amanda has previously worked for the University of Glamorgan as a Research Assistant (RA), spending time researching the police organisation on issues relating to vulnerable groups. More recently, Amanda worked as a lecturer in Criminology and Police Science, specialising and focusing on vulnerable, marginalised and hard to reach groups in relation to policing. In recent years, Amanda has published articles for academic journals aimed at both international and national audiences. Amanda's current research interest involves community engagement, with particular focus on improving the current interface between the police and vulnerable/marginalised members of society. Amanda regularly attends national and European conferences to present her findings.

Louise Skilling is currently undertaking a PhD, researching how communities in Kenya can build their resilience to improve their safety. She has served as a police officer with West Midlands Police. She obtained her MSc ('Street Girls and Their Vulnerability to HIV Infection in Freetown, Sierra Leone') from Coventry University, UK. Louise has researched groups at risk of HIV infection in South Sudan on behalf

of Population Services International (PSI) and for the past five years worked for Mines Advisory Group (MAG) as their Senior Community Liaison Advisor monitoring and evaluating their programmes globally in conflict and post-conflict settings; during this time, she contributed to the 'Sourcebook on Socio-Economic Survey' produced by Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

Garry Thomas is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Police Sciences, University of Glamorgan, UK. He is also a former police officer with South Wales Police retiring in 2012 at the rank of Inspector after 30 years' service. Garry entered the police service with an honours degree in Applied Chemistry (1981). During the course of his police service, he attained a Master's degree in the Study of Security Management (1996) and published an article in relation to the security management of enterprise parks. In addition to his operational duties with South Wales Police, he was also a Basic Command Unit Crime and Disorder Manager and was involved in the introduction of Police Schools Liaison Officers, Drug and Alcohol Arrest Referral Schemes and Neighbourhood Policing throughout South Wales. He was also a member of and provided secretarial services to the All Wales Regional Neighbourhood Policing Practitioners Group between 2005 and 2008. Garry was seconded to the National Policing Improvement Agency at the rank of Chief Inspector between 2008 and 2010, where he was a Field Officer for the South West Region of England.

About This Book

Each chapter of this book considers methodical issues surrounding research, particularly focusing on researching police organisations, their partners and their function. As part of each chapter, authors have highlighted particular challenges along with potential strategies for overcoming such difficulties, which it is hoped will be of benefit for future researchers.

Further, the chapters will explore definitions, scenarios and best practice guidelines to ensure that robust, good-quality research methods can be disseminated. Therefore, each chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the research undertaken providing readers with context and an overview of methods used as part of the study, whilst including a section of 'lessons learned', highlighting key points made throughout the research, thus providing the reader with a best practice guide that is easy to read, evaluate and put into practice.

Chapters

The first chapter provides the reader with an overview of police research. Specifically, Colin Rogers and Garry Thomas suggest that research around policing has changed significantly to meet the needs and aspirations of a changing police service, along with continually shifting political dimensions and landscapes. In addition, the chapter looks at the relationship that exists between police and academic research, before considering current developments in police research.

In Chapter 2, Colin Rogers examines a specific community safety crime prevention partnership as it attempted to reduce recorded crime and disorder, whilst also hoping to reduce fear of crime. It includes a consideration of such approaches as zero tolerance policing style, consultations with community and high-visibility policing. As the researcher worked within the police organisation involved in the research, Colin explored the challenges and complexities associated with the need to remain neutral and not influence or prefigure the outcome of the research. This specific chapter explores covert observations providing the researcher with a number of ethical challenges and decisions.

Chapter 3 examines the change in police resources deployment through the introduction of a Demand Management Unit. It analysed the work carried out by the unit as it attempted to rationalise the delivery of policing services to the public. James Gravelle discusses the role of the 'outsider/insider' approach as he explores the implications of such reform within the confines of the increasing pressure on the already finite policing resources, utilising a mixed methods approach.

The main aim of Chapter 4 is to explore and describe the impact community intelligence has on local policing. Here, Garry Thomas explores the extent to which Community Intelligence supports policing initiatives, within the context of the National Intelligence Model (NIM). Using a mixed method approach, and from the unique position of being an 'insider' at the beginning of the research and an 'outsider' upon its conclusion, Garry evaluates the value of such intelligence, including its use, evaluation and application to assist in the delivery of police services to the public.

Chapter 5 considers a research project entitled 'Cooperative Security Policy in the City' and designed as a study based on comparative case studies with intra- and inter-comparison using a multilevel triangulated method. Bernhard Frevel evaluated Crime Prevention Partnerships in Germany using a varied methodology, including problem-centred interviews, analysis of documents, statistics (socio-demography, socio-economy, crime data), quantitative network analysis, participatory observation and surveys.

In Chapter 6, John Foust discusses the methodological approach employed for critical analysis of the police union's or association's effect on management decisions in the United States, England and Wales. This chapter discusses key points and issues relative to the research process. First, it introduces a discussion on motivation, purpose and the development of the research question. Subsequently, research strategies and methods in general are explored and the methods utilised for this particular research are described and explained. This chapter further considers the process and rationale for the selected methods and addresses specific issues that are relative to the topic at hand.

Amanda Milliner in Chapter 7 discusses the interaction between the police and disadvantaged groups, focussing specifically on adults with learning difficulties. The chapter considers how a greater appreciation of the current engagement process between the police and potentially marginalised and vulnerable sections of the community will improve police legitimacy. Given the sensitive nature and the significance of this

research study, validity and reliability, confidentiality and anonymity, are explored in some depth.

Chapter 8 discusses the research methods for investigating 'street girls' involved in prostitution and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection. Here this research suggests ways in which the police and their partners, including the public health community, can inform and educate these young vulnerable women about HIV/AIDS. Carried out in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Louise Skilling investigated using a qualitative multi-method approach having to deal with the difficulties of ascertaining the 'identity' of the 'insiders' and the definitional debates surrounding the term 'street girls'.

In Chapter 9, Colin Rogers considers some of the important and significant lessons that can be drawn from carrying out important research such as that explored by the various authors in this book. In addition, he highlights and illustrates some of the problems associated with research in general and with an organisation such as the police in particular. The chapter provides not only an appraisal of the problems faced by all of the contributors but also how they overcome these problems, thus allowing for future police and criminal justice researchers to learn and apply important lessons.

1

Research on Policing: Insights from the Literature

Garry Thomas, Colin Rogers and James Gravelle

1.1 Introduction

Policing in England and Wales is facing challenges and undergoing significant changes as a drive for professionalisation of police and the creation of a body of police knowledge to support the concept of policing as a profession is under way. In support of these changes, such institutions as the College of Policing are attempting to inculcate into the police force the concept of evidence-based practice, founded on quality research, including academic and practitioner-based research and evaluations.

However, research on policing remains an emotive subject, particularly when discussing what should be researched. Initiated in the United States in the early 1950s and in the United Kingdom in the 1960s, research on policing has gone through many stages of development and has been undertaken and supported by a variety of different institutions (Reiner, 1989; 1992; 2010). Researching the police is particularly interesting due in part to the unique position, power and privilege the state bestows on the organisation. The unique culture that exists within the police organisation makes the challenge of research even greater, offering commentators and researchers a rare opportunity to investigate and get in close to this powerful institution. The political landscape in which the police operate also adds to the sense of importance and as policing does not exist within a political vacuum, this makes the topic of policing a dynamic and sensitive area for research. Additionally, in the context of the increasing financial problems, combined with finite resources and ever-growing demands on the public police, issues surrounding expenditure, budgets, costing and performance targets play an integral part in today's police services across the globe. This remains a primary concern

for many senior police officers, politicians and others involved in policy making and service delivery. This chapter considers lessons and insights from police research undertaken in the past and also that being currently undertaken, in order to provide some idea of where this topic will lead us to in the future.

1.2 Past developments in the research on policing

Reiner (1989; 1992; 2010) suggests that research on policing practically commenced in the United Kingdom at the start of the 1960s with a change in the politics associated with the police and theoretical developments in disciplines such as criminology, sociology and law. He credits Michael Banton with being the first British academic to carry out empirical research on policing in his study entitled 'The Policeman in the Community' (Banton, 1964). Reiner (1992: 439–441) gives Banton's (1964) research numerous plaudits, including a 'significant starting point', a 'pioneering sociological study', a 'central research strategy', the 'study was ahead of its time' and 'path breaking'. Banton's (1964) research was quite rare not only in being the first empirical research, but also as it provided a comparison between policing in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Research on policing in the United States was already being pioneered by sociologist William Westley (1953; 1956; 1970), with his studies on police occupational culture, which focussed on police violence and secrecy (McLaughlin, 2007; Greene, 2010). Further, between 1965 and 1967 President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973) established the Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (under Executive Order 11236) (Katzenbach, 1967) to extensively research all aspects of crime and law enforcement in the United States and to provide funding for future research (Rojek et al., 2012). As Punch (2010: 155) points out, at this time all eyes were on the United States, as the United States was seen as 'the land of research, publications, and innovation – but also of violence, discrimination, and corruption in policing', and thus all aspects of policing 'good and bad' were open to research.

Reiner (1989; 1992; 2010: 11–12) suggests that there have been four stages in the development of the research on policing since the 1960s, namely *consensus*, *controversy*, *conflict* and *contradiction*.

The *consensus* stage commenced in the 1960s, when research such as Banton's (1964) tended to support the police, emphasised what was good about policing and what could be learned from the successes in policing. Banton (1971; 1973; 1975) was also responsible for organising

three seminars in the 1970s at the University of Bristol on 'The Sociology of the Police', which were influential in evaluating the research of the time and deciding on the future themes for academic sociological research on policing in the United Kingdom.

The *controversy* stage appeared during the late 1960s and early 1970s when the research became more critical of police practices (and mal-practices), and academic researchers began to take a greater interest in policing, particularly in its limitations. Smith and Morgan (1989: 235) argue that 'research has cast serious doubt on the effectiveness of traditional policing strategies'. However, Greenhill (1981) suggests that research of an organisation's practices adds a degree of professionalism to that organisation and increases its status. Brogden and Shearing (1993) and Chan (1996; 1997) support this view and suggest that professionalism changes organisational culture and has a positive impact on accountability.

The *conflict* stage occurred during the late 1970s and early 1980s, as policing and politics merged, and critical and radical criminology as well as Marxist academic research flourished. This period also saw resurgence in the quest for police accountability and governance. Morgan (1989a; 1989b) argues that research on policing is an important function in holding the police to account. However, MacDonald (1987: 5) advises that the drive for accountability has 'forced research back onto the organisational agenda'. Brown (1996) suggests that the findings of the research undertaken during the *controversy* and *conflict* stages resulted in the development of some hostility between the police and academic researchers, and difficulties in researchers' gaining access to police staff and data. A problem also highlighted by MacDonald (1987) and Laycock (2001: 1), who maintain that 'Practitioners and researchers have operated in different universes for a long time'.

The *contradiction* stage of the late 1980s coincided with the growth of realism, and in particular, 'left realism' as advocated by Lea and Young (1984). Left realism contradicted the view of the Home Office's preference for 'administrative criminology' (Cornish and Clarke, 1986) and the 'right realism' of Wilson (1975). Since the 1980s, the concept of realism has changed the focus on policing towards greater police effectiveness and crime control, and seen the introduction of policing initiatives such as problem-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing (Reiner, 2010). Brown (1996) suggests that in contrast to the previous two stages, academic research was now required by police managers to ensure that the service they provided was efficient, effective and economical. Research was also seen as a useful tool to challenge reform and to stimulate innovation (Weatheritt, 1986). Therefore, it

was also important that the research was valid, reliable and objective (Hibberd, 1990). In the current era, Reiner (2010: 13) argues that 'The driving paradigm for most police research now is clearly *crime control*'.

Reiner (1992: 444–456) initially suggested that there were 'eight distinct types of institutions supporting research on policing in Britain', namely, Academic Institutions, Research Councils and Foundations, Government Organisations, Internal Police Research, Independent Research Organisations, Pressure Groups, Journalists and Private Enterprise. However, Reiner (2010: 9–11) later reduced this to four sources of police research, namely, *Academic Research*, *Official Police Research*, *Think Tanks and Independent Research Organisations* and *Journalists*.

Academic Research was generally undertaken by academics at *Academic Institutions* such as universities and other higher education establishments. During the 1980s, centres specialising in police studies appeared within these institutions offering undergraduate and post-graduate degree courses in criminal justice and police studies. Reiner (1992; 2010) observes that up until the 1980s, nearly all the published research on policing was undertaken by academics from disciplines such as criminology, sociology, psychology and law.

Official Police Research includes research undertaken by Government Organisations and Internal Police Research. *Government Organisations* historically involved in research on policing include the Home Office Research Unit, the Home Office Research and Planning Unit (HORPU), the Home Office Police Research Group (PRG), the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics (RDS) Directorate and the Home Office Science Group. Reiner (1992: 448) suggests that during the *conflict* stage in the development of research mentioned above, there was an 'extensive development of local government research on policing'. The period after 1981 saw the creation of a number of local authority police monitoring groups whose attention was focussed on researching the activities of their local police, particularly in relation to police accountability. This research brought some local authorities into direct conflict with the chief constables for their areas. However, after the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 (Home Office, 1998), most of the local government research on policing has been undertaken in conjunction with the police and focussed on partnership policy issues (Reiner, 2010). Other statutory organisations such as the Audit Commission (1990a; 1990b; 1993) have also conducted research on policing, particularly in relation to performance management and efficiency.

Internal Police Research generally falls into two main categories: national and local research. National internal police research is normally undertaken by bodies affiliated to the Home Office, such as the Scientific Research and Development Branch (SRDB), which was formed in 1963 as a direct result of Recommendation 44 from the Royal Commission on the Police: Final Report: 'We recommend the establishment of a central unit, under the general direction of the chief inspector of constabulary, with responsibility for planning and research (paragraph 241)' (Willink, 1962: 144). The SRDB was mainly staffed by seconded police officers and scientists, who conducted research on operational policing issues and technical equipment, and liaised with police forces around the country. The seconded officers were later to form the Police Research Services Unit (PRSU), whose role was to act as a liaison between the scientists of the SRDB and the police service (Weatheritt, 1986). More recently the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), Research, Analysis and Information (RAI) Unit (now part of the College of Policing), has carried out research nationally on behalf of police forces throughout the United Kingdom. Local internal police research is normally undertaken by small research and planning units, which are generally staffed by police officers and police support staff. Their role was mainly administrative and involved evaluation of certain police initiatives. The research they produced was rarely critical of their force and was used to 'support a preferred course of action rather than analysing the necessity for it and the results of it' (Weatheritt, 1986: 19). However, Weatheritt (1986) does concede that improvements have been made, as internal staff gained more research expertise and advice was sought from external experts. The Government's New Public Management (NPM) initiative (Barton and Barton, 2011) of the early 1980s, with its emphasis on economy (value for money), efficiency and effectiveness, also encouraged the police service to undertake good-quality research to improve its performance (Weatheritt, 1986). More recently, research undertaken by internal police research units follows current academic research principles and produces objective, valid and reliable research findings (Dawson and Williams, 2009; Stanko, 2009).

Think Tanks and Independent Research Organisations also include Reiner's earlier 'Research Councils and Foundations', 'Independent Research Organisations' and 'Pressure Groups' (1992: 444–456). *Research Councils and Foundations* appeared during the 1980s and were funded either by the government or by charitable organisations interested in undertaking research on policing. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is one of seven government-funded research councils in

the United Kingdom and supports research on policing and the wider criminal justice system. The Nuffield Foundation is an example of a charitable trust that is financially and politically independent, financed from its own investment portfolio and supports research on policing.

Independent Research Organisations such as the Police Foundation was established in 1980 as a self-funding independent charity. 'The Police Foundation is the only independent think tank focused entirely on developing knowledge and understanding of policing and crime reduction and challenging the police service and the government to improve policing for the benefit of the public' (Police Foundation, 2013). Other independent research organisations that undertake research on policing include the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and the influential Policy Exchange (Loveday and Reid, 2003; Boyd, 2012).

Pressure Groups concerned with political issues and, in particular, civil liberties, have been involved in monitoring and researching the police since their inception, mainly focussing on police accountability. Liberty (formally the National Council for Civil Liberties) established the Civil Liberties Trust (formally the Cobden Trust) in 1963 to undertake research on its behalf in the field of civil liberties. Another group that conducts research on policing under a statutory obligation is the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (formally the separate Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality, and their counterparts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). The EHRC operates under the remit of promoting and monitoring human rights and protecting, enforcing and promoting equality in relation to 'age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment' (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2013).

Journalists have also carried out research on policing, which generally involves observational studies in relation to police corruption, police tactics and policing practices and other matters not subjects of research by academics.

Although omitted from Reiner's (2010) revised sources of police research, *Private Enterprise* is also responsible for funding research on policing by academics, particularly in relation to business crime (Reiner, 1992: 455–456). This has expanded in recent years with the increase in the number of private security companies providing policing services that were traditionally provided by the police service.

In addition to the four sources of police research outlined above by Reiner (2010), Brown (1996: 180–186) suggests that there are also

four types of research investigators, which she identifies as *Inside Insiders*, *Outside Insiders*, *Inside Outsiders* and *Outside Outsiders*. These terminologies are used as a framework when considering researchers' contributions to this book.

Inside Insiders research investigators would come under Reiner's (2010) *Official Police Research* source and in particular the category of *Internal Police Research* and sub-category of local internal police research (Reiner, 1992). Internal or in-house (inside) research on policing is generally undertaken by police officers or police support staff (insiders) from within their own police force. *Inside Insiders* have received quite a lot of criticism from academics in the past, with their research findings being regarded as 'foregone conclusion' research (Weatheritt, 1986: 19). Brown (1996) suggests that internal police researchers have very little research experience, and their research is seldom scrutinised by academics or published in academic journals. However, she does recognise that as more police officers and staff attain higher education qualifications, for example, to become university graduates or undertake post-graduate studies, their experience of research is improving. Punch (2010: 157) argues that most senior police officers in the United Kingdom now have a degree; several have more than one degree, and he has been 'impressed with their knowledge and academic ability' as 'smart cops'.

Outside Insiders are those who are generally regarded as former police officers and staff who become academics and conduct research on policing, such as Holdaway (1979; 1983; 1989; 1991; 1996; 1997; 2009) and Young (1991). Heslop (2012: 525) regards Holdaway as a pioneer in the research on policing and describes his study as the 'most ground-breaking ethnographic studies of the occupational culture of the British police ever undertaken', particularly as Holdaway conducted his field work covertly as an *inside insider*, before leaving the police service in 1975. Individuals in this group have an intimate inside knowledge of policing, but as academics are still viewed with some suspicion because they now operate outside the police culture. Brown (1996) also suggests that *outside insiders* include police officers and staff seconded to national organisations, such as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) or Home Office research departments or units, that research and externally examine individual police forces. Members of this group are often criticised for following government dictates and their research efforts are concentrated on management and organisational issues, particularly in relation to performance management.

Inside Outsiders are categorised as professional research investigators working within the internal research departments of police forces, such as the Metropolitan Police Service, Strategic Research and Analysis Unit (SRAU) or professional researchers commissioned by police forces to undertake research or consult on a particular issue. Dawson and Williams (2009: 375) assert that the SRAU provides the Metropolitan Police Service with quality bespoke research with the aim of improving 'organisational learning' and providing evidence on which 'decision making can be grounded' whilst still working within a police culture.

Outside Outsiders are described as professional academics who undertake research on policing on behalf of academic institutions, government organisations, think tanks, independent research organisations and even private enterprises. They are individuals who are independent of, and do not receive funding from, the police service. Journalists, whether academics or not, may also fit into this category.

Innes (2010: 128) appears to support Brown's proposal of four types of research investigator (1996) and offers four relationships under which research on policing is conducted: *Research by the police*, *Research on the police*, *Research for the police* and *Research with the police*.

Research by the police is very similar to the *inside insiders* researcher above, with research being conducted internally by the police without the direct support of academics. This research is generally analytical, producing information and intelligence products from crime and performance data.

Research on the police is conducted by academics on a policing topic, with little input from the police on the design and conduct of the research. This may be compared to the *outside outsiders* researcher above.

Research for the police involves the police commissioning research on a specific policing topic, which is managed by a professional academic researcher. This relationship has comparisons with the *inside outsiders* researcher above.

Research with the police is undertaken as part of a collaborative partnership between police staff and academic researchers to find a solution to a specific policing problem or issue. This relationship would involve collaboration between *inside insiders* and *outside outsiders* to the benefit of both the police staff and the academic researchers. *Research with the police* appears to be gaining renewed interest and momentum in relation to the current and future development of evidence-based policing (Sherman, 1998; 2009; Bullock and Tilley, 2009; Lum et al., 2011).