

# The Problem of Zombie Cops in Voodoo Criminology: Arresting the Police Patrol 100 Yard Myth

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## ABSTRACT

The widely held criminological ‘knowledge’ that foot patrol beat policing is ineffective at either arresting offenders or reducing crime is substantially supported by research conducted by Clarke and Hough (1984), which makes the claim that: ‘...a patrolling policeman in London could expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress, roughly once every eight years but not necessarily catch the burglar or even realise that the crime was taking place.’

This claim has been repeated, apparently unquestioningly, as though it is based upon veracious empirical research evidence from policing research in the field, in at least 45 publications, which include scholarly books, peer reviewed journal articles, research reports and police magazines. Clarke’s and Hough’s claim remains influential to the extent that it is effectively treated as ‘criminological commonsense’. In fact, the claim is based upon a pencil and paper mathematical exercise involving three questionable premises. Two of these are disclosed and they are accompanied by a third, which we believe a reader might reasonably infer to be implicit. In this paper, we question all three assumptions and therefore question the veracity of its widespread use in supporting the accepted criminological wisdom about the predestined ineffectiveness of routine police foot patrol.

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## Introduction

This paper challenges the veracity of a widely cited claim that is frequently used to support arguments that foot patrol beat policing is inherently ineffective at either arresting offenders or reducing crime. It is important to assert at the outset that the main aim of this paper is not to question the body of published empirical research into the effectiveness of beat patrol policing, nor is it to focus in detail upon what beat patrol policing actually involves. Rather, it is to reveal the extent to which a claim made about the effectiveness of beat policing, which is not based upon empirical evidence but based upon unrealistic premises, has become a pervasive, pathological myth that has undoubtedly influenced the published work of many influential academics who appear to believe that it is based upon empirical evidence.

The claim, which was first made in a Home Office research study into the effectiveness of beat policing (Clarke and Hough 1984: 7) is that:

‘...a patrolling policeman in London could expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress, roughly once every eight years but not necessarily catch the burglar or even realise that the crime was taking place.’

In Britain, the USA and Canada policing policy makers, politicians, journalists and many academics have repeated the claim to the letter over the past 28 years, and it continues to be cited as ‘evidence based research’ in order to support arguments against both police and public demands for resources to be made available for more police officers to be assigned to patrol the streets, most recently by Wilson (2011a):

‘The usual "common sense" cry here is that more patrolling police officers would both prevent burglary and help the detection rate to rise. Yet a Home Office study into the effectiveness of patrolling, conducted in the early 1980s, discovered that a bobby on the beat in London was likely to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress once every eight years. The same study went on to acknowledge that the patrolling officer would not necessarily realise that the burglary was taking place, or have much chance of catching the culprit.’

The publications referenced in Table 1 indicate widespread acceptance of the claim. We have verified 45 sources that cite and unquestioningly quote the myth as based upon research evidence. None of these 45 publications criticise this claim made by Clarke and Hough (1984), nor do they mention its premises.

Table 1 includes introductory criminology textbooks (e.g. Carrabine et al 2009); policing textbooks (e.g. Reiner 2010); edited collections of contributions by leading authors in their field (e.g. Young 1992); and peer-reviewed scholarly papers (e.g. Crawford 2003). Those familiar with the claim might be surprised to learn that it is not based on empirical policing research conducted in the field, but upon a pen and paper mathematical exercise.

In this paper we examine the evidence upon which the claim is based. We then discuss our findings on the extent of belief in it. Finally, we make some highly tentative

recommendations, simply by way of a call for further research, to seek to discover more about the reasons for and implications of what might be called ‘criminological myths’.

### **The Underlying Premises of the Claim**

Clarke and Hough’s (1984) claim is based upon three key underlying premises, two of which are explained in their report and a third, which appears to be implicit. Firstly, they disclose in a footnote that they assume that police officers on the beat walk at a fixed uniform speed of three miles per hour on foot beats that each contain exactly 1,500 households, eight hours a day, 365 days a year (*Premise A*). Accordingly, therefore, if beat policing is effective it is either because, or in spite of the fact that, contrary to what the criminological literature reveals (e.g. Klinger 1997; Centre for Social Justice 2009), police officers patrol identical beats like robots and are always patrolling the streets when on duty. The second premise is that crime is equally distributed so that exactly one in 10 properties are burgled at random per year throughout the whole of London (*Premise B*). Accordingly, therefore, if beat patrol policing can reduce crime it will be because of, or in spite of the fact that, contrary to what the criminological literature reveals (e.g. Burgess 1925; Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Pease 1998, Weisburd and Braga 2006), crime is evenly distributed. The last, apparently implicit assumption (*Premise C*) is that police officers do not interpret the world around them. They do not make choices on the basis of a host of reasons for patrolling this or that street, or giving attention to this or that property, person or object. According to Clarke and Hough’s claim, police officers are passive not active. And so it necessarily follows that, if beat patrol policing can reduce crime, it will be because of, or else in spite of the fact that, contrary to what the wider policing literature actually reveals (e.g. Goldstein 1960; Reiner 1985, Loftus 2009), police officers patrol like unseeing and unhearing zombies unable to discriminate between places, times, people and many other features of the world around them. Put another way, this inferred premise is that beat policing involves no responsive, rational or even conscious ‘action’ (Beccaria 1764).

Firstly, *Premise A* is obviously false because it does not resemble what foot officers do when they patrol public areas. Even in the days before hand-held two-way radio transmitters were in regular use beat police officers did not patrol randomly. Up until the 1960’s, for example, they patrolled between a series of contact points at pre-set times (Chatterton 1979), which, although very imperfect, served as a means for communication and officer supervision (Burrows et al 1988). Moreover, officers on beat patrol before the 1960’s may not have been particularly effective at catching offenders red handed (Weatheritt 1986), but they were able to provide at least a notional preventative function. This is because their visibility on the street meant the area was receiving routine police attendance, which would have come with at least some increased risk of detection for the careless and for the unlucky offender. Furthermore, these patrol officers could respond to crime related calls for help, and gather criminal intelligence for immediate or future use. Clarke and Hough’s calculations, based as they are on *Premise A*, are patently false whenever directly applied to today’s officers, who spend on average of no more than 1 per cent of their working time on foot patrol (Centre for Social Justice 2009). Secondly, *Premise B* is obviously false because research from the time of Burgess (1925) has shown how crime is concentrated in particular geographic locations. In

fact, all environmental criminology to date shows (Newburn 2007: 589) that: ‘One thing that is now well established is that crime is not evenly distributed geographically’.

Finally, *Premise C* is obviously false because it is a fundamental point that all policing requires discretion. Studies of the police occupational culture reveal that around the time the claim was first published the majority of officers were recruited from skilled working class backgrounds (Caine, 1973; Reiner 1982) and practised a ‘craft’ of policing rather than complying slavishly to rules about where and how they should patrol their beats (Skolnick 1966). These officers relied upon then, as they do today, a considerable degree of personal discretion and reflective practice (Reiner 1985; Loftus 2009), that at even at the very most basic level is of a similar kind to that portrayed by *The British Policeman* (1959). Policing allows officers discretion to enforce the law and to implement policy, which, in turn, has created a context within which the occupational culture has flourished (Cain 1973; Manning 1977; Holdaway 1983; Loftus 2009).

In sum, the three distinct premises that underpin Clarke and Hough’s claim are challenged and in our view negated by research about crime and policing that was current at the time they published their report.

### **The Life and Evolution of the Claim**

The list of publications in Table 1 shows the earliest date we found Clarke and Hough’s claim first cited was in a chapter entitled: ‘Law order and the state of the left’, where assertions about the influential importance of Clarke and Hough’s review of policing research, and particularly their claim, are made by Gilroy and Sim (1987: 93):

‘The authors found that there was no evidence that either more patrol cars or officers on the beat could reduce crime. In fact, given the present rate of burglaries, the average officer patrolling on foot in London would expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary once every 8 years. Significantly, they also indicated this kind of research had influenced the thinking of senior police officers.’

The uncritical weightiness that Gilroy and Sim (1987) accord to Clarke and Hough’s claim – independent of other evidence from Clarke and Hough’s (1984) review of empirical evidence of the effectiveness of policing - is clear; as is their apparent belief that it played a significant role in influencing senior police officers. They even claim that (op cit: 93): ‘Sir Robert Mark was one of these chiefs of police who had accepted this view.’

While the claim might appear to have convinced Gilroy and Sim, without published evidence or further research, the possible unique impact it may have had on British police chiefs is something about which we can merely speculate. Although we do cite published evidence below that it failed to influence a former Chief Constable of Humberside. Meanwhile we do know that it has, seemingly, influenced at least one Canadian chief of police who used the claim to assert that random patrolling, whatever that could entail, is ineffective (Parkinson 2009).

We found the claim repeated in the 45 publications cited in Table 1.

**Table 1: Known publications that both cite and quote *The 100 Yard Myth* as apparently veracious evidence that beat patrol policing is ineffective.**

<b>1. Benjamin, A. (2001)</b>	<b>26. McGlaughlin (2001) p. 58</b>
<b>2. Bowling and Foster (2002) p. 989</b>	<b>27. NACRO (2000)</b>
<b>3. Brodeur (2010) p. 159</b>	<b>28. National Neighbourhood Watch Association ( 2000)</b>
<b>4. Burrows and Lewis (1988) p. 2</b>	<b>29. Norris (2003) p.254</b>
<b>5. Carrabine et al (2009) p. 343</b>	<b>30. Northern Ireland News (2002)</b>
<b>6. Coleman and Norris (2000) p. 123</b>	<b>31. Parkinson (2009) p. 6</b>
<b>7. Crawford (1999) p. 48</b>	<b>32. Reiner (2000) p.117</b>
<b>8. Crawford (2003) p. 482.</b>	<b>33. Reiner (2010) p.149</b>
<b>9. Crawford, Lister and Wall (2003) p. 3.</b>	<b>34. Rowe (2009) p. 5.</b>
<b>10. Davies, Croall and Tyrer (2005) p.147</b>	<b>35. Slapper (1999)</b>
<b>11. Dean (2002)</b>	<b>36. Socialist Review (1994)</b>
<b>12. Di Tella and Schargrotsky (2002) p. 15</b>	<b>37. Sweeney (1992) (column 188)</b>
<b>13. Di Tella and Schargrotsky (2004) p. 129</b>	<b>38. The Economist (2001)</b>
<b>14. Dixon (2005) p.7</b>	<b>39. Waller (2006) p, 12</b>
<b>15. Dixon and Maher (2005) p. 127.</b>	<b>40. Wilson, Ashton and Sharp (2001) p.36</b>
<b>16. Duffy (2001)</b>	<b>41. Wilson (2011a)</b>
<b>17. Ericson and Haggerty (1997) p. 19</b>	<b>42. Wilson (2011b) p. 80</b>
<b>18. Feltes (1993) p. 4</b>	<b>43. Wright (1999) p.20</b>
<b>19. Feltes (1994) p. 30</b>	<b>44. Writing for Students (2010)</b>
<b>20. Fraser (2003)</b>	<b>45. Young (1992) p. 53</b>
<b>21. Fyfe (1992) p. 471</b>	

<b>22. Fyfe (1995) p. 762</b>	
<b>23. Gilroy and Sim (1987) p. 93</b>	
<b>24. Guy (1992) p.4</b>	
<b>25. HMIC (2001) p. 84</b>	

Note: the publications in this table are fully referenced in the references section

The list, which we have no reason to believe is definitive, comprises nine academic journal articles, 17 books, five research reports, eight newspaper or magazine articles, two news items, one on-line student essay, one MSC dissertation, one peer-to-peer paper and Sweeney's (1992) speech in the House of Commons. In over half (62%) of these publications the claim is repeated in much the same way that Gilroy and Sim (1987) used it - to argue that research concludes that foot patrol policing is ineffective at detecting or preventing either general crime or else specific types of crime. However, the apparently useful versatility of the claim to support wider areas of research and certain causes, can be demonstrated, by way of just one example, through its deployment to make political arguments for greater rights for victims of crime (Sweeney 1992, column 188):

'It is no good victims relying on the police. A report in the Financial Times today said that a police constable on the beat in London is likely to come within 100 yards of a burglary being carried out only every eight years. We cannot rely exclusively on the police, and must allow the victims to help themselves.'

Another example, which is typical of how Clarke and Hough's claim is, apparently, seen as based on secure research evidence, is a research report on community policing for the Joseph Rowntree Trust, where the authors use it to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of beat patrol (Crawford Lister and Wall 2003: 3):

'While additional patrol remains a pre-eminent demand from the public, its effectiveness as a crime prevention strategy has been questioned by research evidence in the US and UK. In Britain, Clarke and Hough's (1984) research suggested that policing strategies of random patrol, despite their popularity, are a relatively ineffective means of combating crime. They concluded that, on average, a patrol officer in London could expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress once every eight years and, even then, they would probably not know that a crime was being committed. This conclusion appeared to reinforce earlier American research findings from Kansas and Newark that showed intensified levels of police patrols had no significant impact on crime rates and were scarcely noted by offenders or the general public (Kelling et al., 1974).'

Table 2 provides a breakdown, in five year periods, of the number of times the claim was, as far as we can tell, uncritically repeated. Between 1999 and 2003, which was a period of particularly active citation, Clarke and Hough's claim was cited in at least 20 publications.

The claim can, therefore, be assessed to have gained general acceptance in the academic domain. In the absence of any known quantifiable myth defining measurement criteria, it is on these grounds, and for reasons that should, we hope, require no further explanation or justification, that Clarke and Hough's claim is hereafter referred to, interchangeably, in this paper as either *The 100 Yard Myth*, or else simply as the myth.

An in-depth examination of the various ways the myth has been employed since Clarke and Hough first published their claim is planned as part of a proposed project to more thoroughly assess and understand its reach (Sutton and Hodgson forthcoming). For the meantime, we examine how it is broadly used in all 45 publications cited in Table 1.

### **How the Myth is Used**

From the date of its creation to the present time of writing we found that the myth is most commonly used to highlight the limitations of beat policing, where it is cited in 28 publications in total (Gilroy and Sim 1987; Burrows and Lewis 1988; Guy 1992; Young 1992; Feltes 1993, 1994; Socialist Review 1994; Fyfe 1995; Wright 1999; NACRO 2000; Coleman and Norris 2000; National Neighbourhood Watch Association 2000; Reiner 2000; Duffy 2001; McGlaughlin 2001; Wilson, Ashton and Sharp 2001; Dean 2002; Crawford, Lister and Wall 2003; Davies et al 2005; Dixon 2005; Dixon and Maher 2005; Waller 2006; Carrabine et al 2009; Rowe 2009; Reiner 2010; Writing for Students 2010; Wilson 2011a, 2011b). The fact that *The 100 Yard Myth* is included in a model undergraduate criminology essay highlights the extent to which it has obtained academic status.

In three other publications the myth is used as weighty evidence to support research findings that the police spend relatively little of their time doing 'front-line' work on the streets (Fyfe 1992; Ericson and Haggerty 1997; Brodeur 2010), which readers might find particularly anomalous given that the myth is based on the assumption that all officers are on patrol eight hours a day for 365 days a year! In two other publications it is used to question the likely usefulness of neighbourhood wardens (Benjamin 2001; Fraser 2003). In two more it is used to explain the importance of local governance (Crawford 1999, 2003); twice elsewhere to discuss the general limitations of the impact of all types of policing on crime (The Economist 2001; Northern Ireland News 2002). In one case it is used to argue that all police officers are not likely to witness much serious crime (Di Tella and Schargodsky 2004), in another to argue for victims' rights (Sweeney 1992), to explain the importance of policing by consent (Slapper 1996), and, as previously mentioned, to argue that random patrolling does not work (Parkinson 2009). It is used once in a review of policing and public reassurance (HMIC 2001), once to explain the growth of CCTV (Norris 2003), once in a general overview of policing (Bowling and Foster 2002) and once to highlight the limitations of policing on terrorism (Di Tella and Schargodsky 2002).

Despite the various and at times surprising 38 per cent of exceptions we found in the literature, the myth is, as you would have thought, used most frequently for the purpose it was designed, which is to make a convincing case for the limitations of beat patrol policing.

## How the Myth is Viewed

Given the degree to which it is quoted in scholarly publications, coupled with the apparent lack of scholarly criticism regarding its premises, it seems reasonable to conclude that *The 100 Yard Myth* appears to be widely believed by criminologists and other members of the academic community to be securely supported by empirical data, logical reasoning or some other formal evidence. We suspect this to be so because so many of those who cite it introduce its conclusions with such typical descriptions such as: ‘Figures released by the Home Office’ (e.g. NACRO 2000), ‘Home Office figures show...’ (e.g. Duffy 2001) and “...a Home Office study discovered...” (e.g. Wilson 2011a). While such beliefs might be seen as surprising by some outside the field of criminology, the reasons for them remain in need of further research, especially since one of the myth’s authors is acknowledged to have admitted to its questionable foundations, but not to its questionable conclusions, in a *right for the wrong reasons* rationalisation, which was discussed by Herbert et al (2007) more than a decade after the claim was published and widely accepted.

In this one publication, Hough (1996, 64) acknowledged that he and Clarke questionably assumed police officers are robotic, but then qualified the result of their calculation by arguing that police patrols, anyway, pose small risk of arrest for most offenders. This open admission is worth quoting in full because it is here that Hough usefully refers to ‘routine patrols’ as being relatively ineffective and then moves on to explain that ‘intensive patrol activity’ in crime hotspots is proven to be effective. Most crucially, he observes that the calculations, while based on questionable assumptions, added weight to the conclusions of other research Hough (1996: 64):

‘An earlier but much less publicised British study, the Beat Patrol Experiment found broadly consistent results, on the basis of police statistics alone. The study suggested that provided that there was some level of patrol, the precise level of patrol seemed not to affect recorded crime rates. Further weight was added to these conclusions by a much quoted Home Office estimate of the probability (in 1983) of a uniformed patrol officer intercepting a burglar.

Given burglary rates and evenly distributed patrol coverage, a patrolling policeman in London could expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress roughly once every eight years – but not necessarily to catch the burglar or even realise that the crime was taking place.

In deriving this estimate, we made some questionable assumptions, particularly that patrols were robotic (or literally random) in their patrolling tactics; but even allowing for a rather more intelligent approach to the job, it was clear that routine patrols could pose only a small risk of arrest to most offenders.’

Hough’s, rationalisation for creating the claim might be considered to be fair comment, particularly in light of the research findings that he (Hough 1996: 64) cites as evidence that beat policing is ineffective at arresting offenders (e.g. Kelling et al 1974), and a much smaller and unpublished study by Bright (1969). However, his rationalisation does not appear to take account of the possible long-term criminal deterrent effect of routine patrols and their

potential long-term usefulness to gather extra intelligence and data for future detection of what would otherwise be unrecorded crimes (e.g. Schnelle et al 1975). Moreover, Hough does not appear to consider the possible compounding negative self-fulfilling prophecy impact of widespread belief in this weighty myth on policing culture and policy (Merton 1936). Those responsible for the reported early abandonment of one experiment, when researchers found that the sudden return of routine foot patrol officers increased fear of crime among the public (BBC 2003), may not have considered this point. And it is exclusively this criticism of the logic behind Hough's reasoning that Herbert et al (2007: 55) focus upon:

'But this logic misunderstands the many purposes of foot patrol, which extends far beyond catching burglars. As we argued below, officers, by their very presence or even the suggestion of their presence, deter crime. The act of visible foot patrol itself both reduces crime and reassures the public. Second, by patrolling the same beats officers build relations with the community and develop in depth intelligence of their area and the local criminals who operate there. This intelligence allows officers to target patrols more effectively'

Despite the academic reach of *The 100 Yard Myth*, besides Hough (1996) and Herbert et al (2007), we are aware of just three other publications (Adlam and Villiers 2003, Burrows and Lewis 1988, and Sutton 2010) that suggest a random and robotic policing assumption was made. We deal with each in turn.

Adlam and Villiers (2003) cite particularly strong criticism of the *The 100 Yard Myth* by one chief of police who was not influenced by it. Former chief constable of Humberside David Westwood, who described it as fallacious because it was a mere mathematical calculation, when in reality beat policing need not be a random activity. Adlam and Villiers (2003: 23) provide a critique to support Westwood's observation based, ultimately, upon the fact that the literature about the occupational culture tells us that officers share common knowledge about where they think appropriate patrols should be undertaken:

'Police work need not be hard science, but nor is it a random activity. The professional police officer need not go out and wander the streets in the hope of coming across a crime, rather as if a doctor were to wander the streets hoping to discover if anyone needed his or her services.'

Further questions need to be leveled at the random premise of *The 100 Yard Myth* with regard to the absence of information about how randomness was calculated. Thompson (2008) highlights the doubts about veracity that arise when research methods are cloaked in obscurity. Because we are not told what assumptions, method, or type of calculations were used to calculate randomness we cannot judge its veracity in this particular regard. This is an important omission, because it creates problems for those who might seek to improve upon, replicate, verify, or, perhaps more aptly, criticise Clarke and Hough's claim. Real life randomness is not necessarily represented by uniform coverage. For example, in one famous study of World War Two flying bombs landing in London, truly random phenomena were shown to appear to cluster by chance (Clarke 1946). It is possible that the calculations that inform *The 100 Yard Myth* did not take account of the possibility of such non-uniform random patrol clustering. If they had done so, then it is possible that Clarke and Hough's mathematical exercise, regardless of the fact that real police officers do not patrol randomly,

might have produced a significantly different result, and perhaps even a different conclusion. In which case, it would have added no weight to the conclusions reached by empirical studies.

The myth's random patrol premise was criticized by Burrows and Lewis (1998) for being false. In this case, Clarke and Hough's powerful and weighty claim was not denounced for being unrealistic, as we might expect. Instead, it was, apparently, used by Burrows and Lewis to rationalise, as Hough (1996) did eight years later, that the right answer was reached by the wrong means in order to reinforce the case against beat policing. Burrows and Lewis (1988: p.2), write: 'Of course officers rarely patrol randomly; but even so catching burglars red handed will be the rare exception, and not the rule.' In our view, one implicit assumption behind this reasoning is that catching burglars red handed by other preferable policing methods is the rule, or at least not a rare exception. Unfortunately, while Burrows and Lewis (1988) discuss alternatives to beat patrols, such as plain-clothes observation for catching car thieves, they fail to complete their argument because they provide no evidence for what they believe to be comparably more effective methods for catching burglars red-handed that are the rule rather than the exception. Furthermore, what Burrows and Lewis (1988) mean by 'the rare exception and not the rule' is unclear. For example, if, theoretically, 30 per cent of burglars could be caught either red or cold handed by beat policing, then catching them by beat policing would be relatively rare and not the rule. And yet it would, arguably, be quite effective.

Sutton (2010: 803) questions *The 100 Yard Myth's* assumptions that crime is evenly distributed and that beat patrol officers are wandering automatons:

'Clarke and Hough concluded that a patrolling policeman in London would, on average, pass within 100 yards of a burglar breaking into a home once every 8 years; this conclusion has been cited by politicians, police and criminologists to argue that more police on the beat is not the answer to crime on street. Yet Clarke and Hough's analysis was based on limited notions of crime being uniformly distributed, on a homogenization of 1980s London crime data only, and on the belief that all police foot-patrol officers police all neighbourhoods as randomly strolling automatons.'

While good scholarship can, of course, be openly speculative, our essential criticism in this particular case is that the use of subsequent rationalisations for relying upon questionable assumptions to underpin unrealistic research, which many others believe is realistic, is surely not the best course for promoting good scholarship and making policy recommendations.

As we have shown, of the five known publications that have, albeit to a very limited degree, questioned the myth, two sought to rationalise rather than condemn its creation, because it was said to have reached the right conclusion by the wrong means. Two others identified only the problem of its random patrol premise. Sutton (2010), however, questions two of its unrealistic premises and its unrealistic homogenisation of London crime data.

We might conclude from this that the *100 Yard Myth* has enjoyed a rather charmed existence. In the apparent absence of published research evidence to explain why the *100 Yard Myth*

was sustained and why so widely believed, we currently have no more than a number of, arguably, plausible, though necessarily speculative, explanations.

One possible explanation for why the myth has been so widely accepted by the academic community is ‘confirmation bias’ (Nickerson 1998). This is a plausible hypothesis that we believe is particularly worthy of further research, because such bias is widely accepted within psychology (e.g. Baron 2000) to be an important explanation for why people credulously believe in other people’s claims that have, to say the least, questionable foundations (Parke 2000: 151):

‘...important new claims tend to attract followers who see what they expect to see. Evidence that would seem much too weak to stand on its own is taken seriously if it seems to agree with what others are reporting.’

Another reason for the myth’s extensive uncritical acceptance in the literature might be due to its compellingly simple attraction, or perhaps even what we might think about as the argument winning ‘affordance’ (Norman 1999; Ekblom and Sidebottom 2008; Unsworth et al 2012) in relation to supporting the situational crime prevention policing agenda (Newburn and Smith 1994).

Perhaps we should not be particularly surprised that *The 100 Yard Myth* is so widely cited, quoted and believed to be based upon real policing research, for in the late 1980’s and throughout the 90’s it played a weighty role in a new joint police and Home Office drive to promote the compelling idea that the police alone cannot effectively fight crime because there are limitations on the extent to which police can control particular crimes. However, we are unlikely ever to know with any degree of confidence what, if any, part the myth might possibly have played in facilitating that rational paradigm change so long after it happened.

While some social scientists could continue to propagate the myth by means of citation cabals and expert in-group knowledge signaling (Rock 2005), our research shows that journalists, criminologists and other social scientists appear, also, to be mutually reinforcing one another in their belief in the myth. Such confidence might stem, at least in part, from the fact that Home Office research studies are widely considered to be research conducted to rigorous methodological standards. Indeed this is exactly how Hope (2009: 125) described, presumably, the other findings in Clarke and Hough (1984):

“We may have been down this road before. More than 30 years ago there was another wave of experimental evaluation in criminal justice, though its fruits turned out to be less abundant than those promised by Professor Sherman. Based on research conducted to the highest standards, including the randomized, controlled trial design (Farrington, 1983), extensive reviews of the effectiveness of penal treatment, criminal justice sentencing and police practice all seemed to come to the same conclusion—‘nothing worked’ (Martinson, 1974; Brody, 1975; Morris and Heal, 1981; Clarke and Hough, 1984).”

The myth does confirm the results of the review of the other studies that Clarke and Hough (1984) included in their report, at least in so far as they conclude that routine, uniformed, beat

foot patrol policing is probably ineffective at catching offenders red-handed, which may, in part at least, explain why criminologists and other social scientists have strangely failed to detect that it is based upon an unrealistic mathematical exercise.

**Table 2: Uncritical publication of *The 100 Yard Myth* in intervals**

1984-88	1989-93	1994-98	1999-03	2004-08	2009-date
2	5	5	20	5	8

The fact that *The 100 Yard Myth* has been relied upon in at least 45 publications as apparently sufficient grounds for believing that foot patrol beat policing is inherently ineffective does not mean that it is the cause of the reduction in such policing in Britain. Neither does its use in this endeavour mean that intelligent use of capable and motivated officers to pound the beat is likely to be particularly effective. To believe such a thing would be to fall into the either-or fallacy trap (Shermer 1997). Notwithstanding, it is important here to repeat the point already made that we do not know whether, and if so to what extent, *The 100 Yard Myth* might possibly have acted rather like a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1936) and played a role in the creation and entrenchment of policy making, police management and rank and file police officer intuitional attitudes against foot patrol beat policing.

One might argue that the widespread and unwitting use of *The 100 Yard Myth*, to bust another myth - that greater and widespread use of routine foot patrol beat policing is the best answer to crime - is an unintended consequence of its creation by Clarke and Hough. Such unintended consequences from intentional behaviour have been a major component of sociology from its beginnings. These include Merton's (1936; 1949) Self- Fulfilling Prophecy, Wilkins' (1964) Deviancy Amplification, Tannenbaum (1938) and Lemert's (1951) Labelling Theory, Young (1971) and Cohen's (1973) concept of Moral Panics; Clarke and Weisburd's (1994) Diffusion of Benefits hypothesis; and Sutton's (1995) Supply by Theft model, which shows how those who buy stolen goods support the market for their own future victimisation.

Another unintended consequence of the creation of *The 100 Yard Myth* is that it appears to be mutating in publications that do not reveal its origins. We are aware of two possible variants. Since they do not quote the original myth faithfully, these slight variants are not included in Table 1. Our first discovery of the myth mutating in the literature in this way is in Tuck's (1994) publication of an otherwise identical four-year rather than eight-year version. Then we discovered what appears to be a possible mutation to 11 years in a student text book, where the authors criticise what they believe to be un-evidenced beliefs about beat policing (Marsh et al 2004; p. 146), while themselves failing to provide any calculations, other evidence or confirmable references in support of the somewhat familiar statement that they deploy to criticise those who call for more beat police patrols:

'It is commonplace to hear comments about 'more bobbies on the beat', and images of golden law-abiding days, without any real evaluation of what the bobbies are actually going to achieve. In fact there is plenty of evidence which shows they are unlikely to prevent or detect

crime. For, example, victim surveys such as the British Crime Survey point out that an average beat control [sic] might pass within 100 yards of a burglary every 11 years (and not necessarily know it was happening).’

From our observations of *The 100 Yard Myth*'s mutation in the literature, we might hypothesise that if left un-busted, recognisably related variants might serve to further ‘brace’ the original so that it, and they, become even more widely accepted as veracious and weighty ‘knowledge’. Our tentative research into the evolution of the myth leads us to suggest further that such a scenario might entail the myth being used to support an even wider variety of different empirical research findings in pursuit of an ever widening variety of various academic, policy and political causes.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

What do we mean when we talk about the effectiveness of beat policing? Do we include specific measures of the effectiveness of police officers who make judgments as they walk the beat? Or do we mean the effectiveness of beat policing calculated on the assumption that all police officers have exactly the same or almost the same levels of motivation and skill? If the answer is the latter we are assuming that officers work without reflecting upon what they do day by day. In short, we ask: *Shouldn't we include the notion of human variance and agency, which is widely supported by the policing literature, in any experiment and evaluation of the likely effectiveness of foot patrol beat policing in high crime areas?* If the answer is yes, then we necessarily need to take account of more inconveniently emotive and easily contestable issues and variables such as motivation, skill, support from and responsiveness of the police services and related government policy departments.

In posing the above question we are in broad agreement with Young's (2011) argument that the dominance of positivism in North American criminology, and in British ‘administrative criminology’, has in no small part arisen from a drive for measurable, uncontested, certainties in social sciences in order to remove contested meanings from criminal justice and other social policy making in an attempt to claim for it the kind of certainties that are more usually associated with the natural sciences (Young, 2011: 198):

‘The correctional arises out of the technical needs of social control, with this in mind, it is drawn towards positivistic, natural scientific models of human behaviour. Basing itself on the hugely successful achievements of natural science, it seeks deterministic laws of causality which are universal in their explanatory power.’

Noting the limitations of ignoring essential social conditions, experiences and reflexivity that shape human behaviour (Young 2011: 195) essentially concludes that such orthodox criminology produces merely an observation (or data) of behaviour with no understanding of, and therefore no explanation for what it is we are observing or analysing.

However, something more than a healthy scepticism is required to understand the widespread attraction of *The 100 Yard Myth*. Because, despite his famous objections to administrative criminology, even Young (2004), an advocate of the Left Realist school, appears to have

taken it literally at face value in that he failed to question its unrealistic premises (Young 1992, 1999). Moreover, a review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, which sought to make a case for the promotion of beat policing, like so many others, similarly accepted *The 100 Yard Myth* as an unproblematic and real empirical policing research informed fact.

From this we might conclude that perhaps the story of *The 100 Yard Myth* is indicative of the possibility that there is too little attention paid to theories and research findings in contemporary criminology, with too few scholars teasing out for detailed scrutiny the poorly evidenced and implicit value laden assumptions upon which some of them are based. Evidently, the fact that so many criminologists credulously believed *The 100 Yard Myth* is a mystery that requires more research to produce an evidence-based explanation.

The spread of *The 100 Yard Myth* is an example of what can happen when we reduce the complex affairs of Man – police officer reflexivity and agency in this case - into more compellingly simple, predictable and universal, wieldy, yet wholly inadequate, models based on irrational or otherwise logically fallacious assumptions. At the heart of *The 100 Yard Myth* is the assumption that real police officers are not endowed with the creativity of human practice and reflexivity. This characteristic is not untypical of positivist criminology, which arguably disavows the validity of emotion and style in the investigation of human experience.

Their belief in the proliferation of such research practice leads Ferrell, Hayward and Young (2008) to write about the problem of attributing too much authority to quantitative criminological research because doing so creates a compelling yet essentially irrational 'aesthetic of authority'. They advocate instead wider use of new forms of ethnography.

Moving on, we need to ask: how did *The 100 Yard Myth* become widespread to the extent that it was reinforced and disseminated by so many experts? We suspect that part of the answer to this question might be found related in some way to the fact that, most ironically, *The 100 Yard Myth* has been used over the past 28 years as a device to dispel, what many of those who deploy it believe to be another deeply imbedded myth that routine foot patrol policing alone is the most effective way to detect, prevent and reduce crimes. Deploying one myth in order to seek to slay another might effectively strengthen (brace) the deployed myth, turning it into what we might call a braced myth. If so, then *The 100 Yard Myth's* arresting appeal as a myth busting tool may have functioned as an upward spiralling knowledge consensus building mechanism within the wider academic community and beyond. The fact that so many criminologists, policy makers and others appeared to believe it and/or cited it as veracious, possibly without examining, and certainly without revealing, its questionable foundations may, in turn, have influenced others to accept it. Exactly why so many of both the criminological Left and Right believed the myth is an area in need of further research. Whether such braced myths as *The 100 Yard Myth* are more likely to be extraordinarily deeply entrenched, and therefore particularly difficult to slay, remains to be seen.

One thing of which we can be certain is that the lesson in this story is the importance of knowing the basis for weighty research evidence, particularly its underlying assumptions. If such knowledge is not available, then it is essential to critically analyse all assumptions

underpinning research claims and findings. To do otherwise might lead to the perpetuation of criminological myths.

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This paper was subject open peer review.

### **Open Peer Review Comments.**

#### **Roger Hopkins Burke Chair of the Open Peer Review Process:**

**None of the reviewers have objected to the publication of this paper on academic grounds. There is a general feeling that the paper makes a useful academic contribution to knowledge and I concur with that opinion. There are a few suggestions as to how some ideas might be better developed and a few layout issues regarding a table. But in my judgment this paper is perfectly adequate and fit for purpose. I think that one of the good things about the open peer review process is that it enables the readership to appreciate exactly what reviewers have said about the sort of paper they would like to see. In my personal opinion, as chair of this process, I think that there will always be a difference between a paper that is fit for purpose and what the reviewers would ideally like to see.**

**RHB: Nottingham Trent University 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

#### **Reviewer 1 - Academic**

##### **The Problem of Zombie Cops in Voodoo Criminology: A 27Year Old Myth about Beat Patrol Policing is Busted**

Open Peer Review for the International Journal of Criminology by Professor Keith Hayward, University of Kent:

**Decision:** Publish

**Comments:** This is an insightful and jauntily-written paper that sets out to challenge the old criminological chestnut that a patrolling policeman in London would, on average, only pass within a 100 yards of a residential burglary once every eight years (Clarke and Hough, 1984). In keeping with the criteria of the innovative open review process of the *International Journal of Criminology*, my first task here as reviewer is to deliberate on whether or not the paper has met its stated/core aims, whilst at the same time making a new empirical contribution to the existing literature. Here I think the decision is a fairly straightforward one in that the article clearly succeeds in problematizing – and indeed largely undermining - Clarke and Hough’s much-cited and highly influential assertion about the efficacy and cost effectiveness of police beat patrols.

Much is made in criminology today of the need for ‘evidence-based’ policy and ‘experimentally-proven cost effectiveness’, most of it, of course, coming from crime preventionists, rational choice and risk and resource proponents, and those who lust after a so-called ‘experimental criminology’. It is interesting then that a seminal paper associated with crime prevention which continues to be cited as an exemplar of the ‘evidence-based research’ has been proven here to be deeply flawed; both in terms of its shaky ‘pen and paper’ mathematics, and its misreading of the on-the-ground realities of police beat practice. By challenging three key underlying premises associated with Clarke and Hough’s claim

(what one might describe here as ‘the robotic premise’, ‘the crime distribution premise’, and ‘the officer heuristic premise’), Sutton and Hodgson have highlighted the danger of oversimplifying the complex nature of certain criminological concerns – in this case the diverse realities and spatial biographies that (can) constitute everyday police beat patrols. This, of course, will be music to the ears of certain critical and cultural criminologists who worry (sometimes unnecessarily (see Rock, 2011)) that the impetus behind ‘evidence led’ criminal justice policy might serve to downgrade other forms of qualitative or theoretical inquiry. However, beyond these concerns, Sutton and Hodgson’s research serves a second and very important disciplinary function by posing (in stark terms) the fundamental question of what actually constitutes ‘evidence’ in the evidenced-based approach? In this sense, ‘The Problem of Zombie Cops in Voodoo Criminology’ should be roundly welcomed by crime prevention and evidence-based proponents.

It is because this paper has such a wide disciplinary appeal that I feel it should be published. (Following the spirit of the open review process I feel it’s acceptable to mention that) I recently took part in a lively debate about the various merits and demerits of both the rational choice approach to crime prevention and cultural criminology. One of the conclusions I drew was that: ‘no *one* criminological position can or should be valorised over all others. Rather, each has a particular role to play at particular times in particular settings/contexts... The way forward is clearly to foster a discussion (e.g. Hay 2004) about the relationship between rational and (what appears to be) irrational action that acknowledges the mutual effectiveness of *both* “concepts”’ (Hayward, 2012: 31). In many ways Sutton and Hodgson’s paper is on message with this statement. Specifically, in its assertion that the way forward for future evidenced-based policing scholarship is to afford more attention to both ‘theory’ and ‘research findings’; a middle ground position that is also reflected in the paper’s conclusion where an interest in agency and emotions are stressed as a buttress to narrow abstract theorising.

This is not to say, of course, that the paper is not without its problems. Organisationally, I felt the balance between the early sections that attempted to undermine the key premises upon which Clarke and Hough’s beat patrol “myth” is based, and the rump of the paper which is concerned with the life of the “myth” and how it has been utilised in criminology, was tipped a little bit too far in favour of the former. Specifically, I felt that a more detailed examination of the (3) premises could have been undertaken, rather than simply allowing established policing studies references to do the heavy lifting. The question of ethnography raised its head towards the end of the article, but was given scant coverage. At one level, this is not a problem - the paper makes no mention of ethnography in its claims or abstract, and certainly I do not wish to suggest that ethnography should replace quantitative criminology, or that ethnography is appropriate in all instances. It is not. However, given that this article seems to want to promote a middle ground position which includes the notion of ‘human agency’ and ‘emotion’, perhaps a more fulsome statement could have been included about how one might better embed qualitative research into evidence-based approaches. Finally, a minor quibble, but as a cultural criminologist interested in style, not something I can overlook, I felt that the current title might be a tad overblown (not least since Jock Young’s term ‘voodoo criminology’ is never really introduced or explained in the article). A slight reworking of the rubric might therefore be in order to ensure the article reaches its widest possible audience.

I look forward to seeing the article in print, and in his case reading the other reviewers comments.

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- Hayward, K. J (2012) 'A response to Farrell', *Social Policy and Administration*, 46 (1) pp 21-34
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## Reviewer 2 – Chris Eyre Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire Constabulary

As a serving senior police officer the paper provides an interesting explanation of the basis of the often quoted conclusion that '...a patrolling policeman in London could expect to pass within 100 yards of a burglary in progress, roughly once every eight years'.

While the passive, undirected patrolling that underpins the conclusion has not been the basis of any policing strategy in any force I have served in, the authors' explanation and analysis of its application in academic research and within public policy statements is enlightening.

Decision: Publish as is.

## Reviewer 3. David Simmonds: National Policing Improvement Agency

The writers present an interesting intellectual problem concerning the widespread use within criminological literature of a claim that routine foot patrol is ineffective based primarily upon an arithmetical calculation put forward by Clarke & Hough in 1984. Rather than positing a research question the writers construct a complex and thoughtful critique of the way the claim came about and the manner in which it has been adopted into the canon and used in the years since initial publication. By confining the paper to the actual model constructed by Clark & Hough and not to the broader question of whether foot patrol is effective they have made the subject manageable and engaging. It will be of significant interest across the whole spectrum of criminological inquiry and is also likely to generate interest amongst critical thinkers in other disciplines as an example of how fundamental professional truisms can be based upon inadequate scholarship.

The subject is original in its approach and scope. Apart from web articles by one of the authors there is no published literature dealing with the foundational validity of Clarke & Hough's proposition. It is well researched, drawing upon a wide range of primary sources across a range of sociology, criminology and professional police studies. The paper is well organised, starting out from a stated aim to "challenge the veracity of a widely cited claim..." which it does by robustly undermining three basic premises of the patrol model proposed. There is a comprehensive section dealing with the way in which the claim has passed into the literature and continues to be influential today. The concluding part of the essay muses on the reasons for such enduring academic credulity. It speculates on whether positivist criminology's drive to find scientific certainty in human behaviour may have paved the way for broad acceptance of such a model and culminates in a recommendation for further

research into “why so many of both the criminological left and right believed the myth...” This paper makes a significant contribution to the body of learning about crime but also about the scientific method and intellectual rigour in the social sciences.

On a personal note I found the paper to be extremely interesting and completely engaging. It enunciated many of my own unformulated thoughts and memories about Clarke & Hough’s proposal and the impact it had within the police service. I hope it has the same effect on other readers who may be inspired to think and write more about the topic.

The paper is phrased in the terms of “myth-busting.” I have some concerns that the terminology may be slightly polemical and alienating. A treatment of the subject that adequately exposes the fallacy of the *100 yard claim* whilst being precise and clinical about the nature and extent of its inadequacy may be more appropriate for a serious journal. The scale of the fallacy they have exposed in this paper does not render the epithet of ‘myth’ inaccurate but the authors could mitigate this polemic and enhance the credibility of their challenge by incorporating more neutral, commonly used tools of logical or semantic debate. For example, if the assumption is made that Clarke & Hough started out with a bias against foot patrol it could be argued the *100 yard claim* is a “straw man” argument in which the model of patrol, as understood by its proponents, has been substituted for another poor proxy which is singularly easy to attack. If on the other hand Clarke & Hough are thought to have approached their subject from a neutral position of enquiry then they appear to be guilty of a “category mistake”<sup>2</sup> in attributing ontological similarity to the concept of patrol that police officers actually carry out and the fictitious, arithmetical account of patrol in their model. Of course it would still be open to question whether this category error was the result of ignorance about patrol or mischief.

The assertion that the myth was a significant driver of partnership working “...it played a weighty role in a new joint police and Home Office drive...” needs citation. You mention that it will be difficult to ascertain this so long after the event. However, as it stands that paragraph stands aloof from the rest of the paper in making a point that is not up to proof. It may be simpler and more relevant to prove that, as a result of the *100 yard myth*, the understanding of patrol has changed within the police profession, from crime prevention and detection to reassurance, engagement and partnership problem-solving, possibly driving the move towards Police Community Support Officers now being the main patrol cadre.

The only significant omissions that occurred to me were;

1. The absence of any analysis about what could, or should, have been done with the model had proper academic interest or scrutiny been operant. The authors have successfully shown that the academic and police world were remiss in accepting this claim but they have not shown what avenues of enquiry it should have generated and what syntheses might have arisen to inform understanding of patrol.
2. The authors’ recommendation for further research into academic credulity about this claim is quite correct. However, this would still leave a hole in the literature about the effectiveness of patrol which might leave the myth alive. There should be some kind of challenge to the world of criminology to properly probe the issue of patrol effectiveness. Robust research and a new authoritative study might do more to replace the 100 yard myth than just pointing out 30 years of gullibility.

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<sup>2</sup> Ryle, G (1949) *The Concept of Mind*. London. Hutchinson’s University Library. Pg 6-7  
[www.internetjournalofcriminology.com](http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com)

It is possible the *100 yard claim* may continue to be used and cited. At least now, however, there will be an authoritative account of its inadequacies, especially regarding the aspects of human contingency and variability, which had been so notably absent. The zombie cops may continue to patrol through the crime literature but they will now be carrying some heavy baggage.

**Reviewer 4. Tom Ellis: University of Portsmouth (Principle Lecturer)**

**Review of ‘The problem of zombie cops in Voodoo Criminology: Arresting the police patrol 100 yard myth**

This review has been carried out as a potential discussion enabler with the authors. I have carried it out as the sort of review that I myself would appreciate and expect, ie, in a constructively critical manner that provides considerations for the authors in refining their work prior to publication.

This review confines itself to the key substantive issues I identified and in which, in my opinion, require attention. Minor proofing and stylistic comments will be sent in hard copy to the authors.

Overall, I think that the article has definite merit and a publication about this topic is long overdue. It is the most systematic review so far regarding the progress of what I see a back of an envelope arithmetical calculation (I have suggested using this word instead of ‘mathematical’ because I think that more clearly reflects reality and rightly downgrades the quality of the myth bases) that has taken on a life of its own within criminological literature, and, in my experience and opinion, has become a cultural meme within criminology. As such, the topic is a very valid and important one that needs to be published as a ‘polemic with evidence’.

As ever, there are some key issues which I think require the authors’ attention prior to publication. I think there are 3 issues which deserve further consideration and attention to maximise the value of the publication.

**Issue 1:** The article is a sustained critique of the 100 yard myth, and belongs to a polemical tradition that invites reaction and further research. However, to some extent, it needs to produce its own evidence base to do this. This is done mainly through 2 tables and several lists. For the reader, I think it is too long, and there are numerous repetitions, some of which are identified in the hard copy. It is good as a draft, and a necessary stage, but there are structural issues that need attention for a final draft. My gauge for this is whether I would recommend it as reading for other academics and, more so, students. I think an article of 5k words would be sufficient here, more clearly structured around the 3 premises first mentioned and outlined on p.5 of my copy. I also think that your excellent flagging of citation cabals and ‘expert in group knowledge signalling’ (Rock, 2005) is much more central to your argument about the myth and should be developed much more here, and not left until p.19

Much space could be saved, and the points made more cogently, by better use of Tables/Figures to summarise the key elements. For instance, Table 1 is too basic. There is no justification for using alphabetical order here and I would suggest chronological order would be better, perhaps with lines/shading indicating key time periods. Different columns can also

be introduced to condense more information in a more useful format for the reader. For instance, page numbers are cited for some but not all – a new column ensures that this information is complete. Similarly, the information immediately after the table needs to be used to add another column in the table about the type of publication. I don't have the full answer here, it needs to be looked at by the authors, but the more you can make your table work in this way, the less the reader is faced with having to trawl through, and back through the text several times, which is not very effective or pleasant to read. The table will give a good reference point, and it leaves the text available to make punchier substantive points about the relevance of the material in the tables. If you apply this point to the 'How the myth is used' section on pp.11-12 of my hard copy, you can see how it will allow you to make your key points in the text much better, without getting bogged down with that level of detail, which is going to be a tough read for all but the very enthusiastic (ie, you won't be getting to those who carry on using the myth though laziness). I have used grids in order to do this, both in summing up concepts and evidence, and all but one reviewer appreciated this approach, which is gaining ground, so I think IJC should be at the forefront. I have attached one of the following 2 articles in which I have used this approach for you to look at and decide for yourselves, but I do think the article needs to be much tighter in this way. The grid approach would improve it and make sure that it is used and cited more.

Jenkins, C. and Ellis, T. (2011) The highway to hooliganism? An evaluation of the impact of combat sport participation on individual criminality. *International Journal of Police, Science and Management*, Vol. 13 No. 2, 2011, pp. 117–131. DOI: 10.1350/ijps.2011.13.2.234

Ellis, T., Pamment, N., and Lewis, C. (2009). Public Protection in Youth Justice? The Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) from the inside. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 11 (4).

(I also think that the tables need to be properly situated near their first mention in the text)

Another related issue here is the status of the content of Table 1, which is really the bedrock of the article. I think the statement on p.9 that it is not definitive probably under-represents what you have put together. I think you need to present this more confidently and positively. First, it is obviously the 'most definitive list' so far. I think you should be bold on this and outline how you put it together (the story is always more cohesive when formally written down than that it probably seemed what you did it). There is always going to be an element of serendipity etc. here, but I think you could list (in a grid of course) journals years (presumably 1984 to now), key topics, words etc. I think you will have more structure than you think to this. My radical suggestion is that you THEN say that despite this, it is unlikely to be exhaustive and invite readers to submit further examples to a Wiki that you set up in IJC and the table can then be developed as a living document alongside the original article! To me, that is using a web-based journal to its full potential? But what do I know!

Back to the Table 1 again, on reading the large quotation on p.10 of my hard copy that ends with Kelling et al, 1974, it got me thinking about other evidence. Table 1 does not inform the reader whether the myth is used on its own as the sole citation for evidence of the myth, or whether other evidence is brought to bear, and whether this other 'evidence' is based on real research. This brings me on to issue 2

**Issue 2:** There is little reference to other evidence that might support the myth and my real problem is constituting the notion of the zombie cop by referring to real cops who are actually, through police culture, not robots. In a nutshell. The article seems to be suggesting that studies of police culture show that real cops aren't zombies and will studiously and

steadfastly have their own knowledge about their area and will use this to be more effective in catching a burglar, or in just deterring them. I find this very problematic and I wonder if the article really needs to take this on, rather than just ensure that readers understand how pervasive and unevidenced the myth is.

The first problem is that you aren't dealing with the issue that Kelling et al might be right, or do you go back and criticise their evidence, and the similar studies that show that reducing police/redundancies doesn't increase crime – there are plenty of them?

The second is that the literature shows that officers as a group and a culture often do not value patrol, or by extension, service to the public. My reading of the literature is more cynical (realistic?). There is Manning's 'shit work' but Bittner, Skolnick, Punch and many others onward show how this is a likely occupational attitude. Diary of a Police Officer and many activity analyses show that the police have little time for active self-initiated patrol (it is mostly not in big enough chunks of time) and when they do, they don't want it. They also don't get assigned to the same beat over time and don't build up a picture of where to focus on (there may be exceptions but these are usually time limited like the Kirkholt Burglary Project – and the back story there is that they brought in hand picked officers and got rid of the deadwood). If they do focus on particular spots, it is often shops and houses where they get free tea, food etc., not really where the crime is. This is oversimplifying, but so is the article I think. I do not think it is feasible to oppose the myth with the idea that police officers, if left to their own devices, will be better by default. The underlying proposition is that managerialist attempts to control officers' time are wrong (woolly?) headed, and that the whole 'policing by objectives' attempt to target patrol more effectively was too. But this approach was there from the beginning. Police boxes were there to ensure officers bothered to patrol.

The idea that officers are queuing up to get out on the streets and would cause a stampede if only they were allowed to is surely another myth? The fact that they don't do much patrolling is documented well in the formation of PCSOs and there is no mention of their role in patrolling and public reassurance. They probably aren't zombies and they probably do more policing by objectives than the 'real' police ever did, though the odd one is caught frequenting a brothel (hot spot) when they are on patrol. Too much to bite on here for the article, but I hope that has given some food for thought in terms of the seemingly Dixon of Dock Green copper that I think the article in its current form suggests.

The other crucial element here is that you are using Westwood, through Adlam and Villiers, to support the ideas that officers naturally pick on the right 'places'. This ignores the well established notion of 'police property' and the subsequent creation of hot spots of crime by simply picking on the people that they think should be picked on and raising the recorded crime there. This is in Reiner's chapters of the Oxford handbook and Bowling and Phillips also cover the modern phenomenon, with a racial bias, of over being over-policed and under-protected. You find the crime hot spots you want to find, and the development of NIM took account of this idea – picking on young black men in nice cars in St Paul's or Brixton when there haven't been any reported issues related to this is now supposed to be justified. Just one example of letting officers decide for themselves.

**Issue 3:** Toward the end of the article, and not as a theme throughout, you draw in what I think are 2 quite contradictory arguments. First, you use Jock Young to complain about positivistic thinking, but you then rely heavily on developing an 'evidence-based' approach which is an anathema to so called anti-positivists in general, and Jock in particular.

I am always wary of ‘anti-positivists’ but I am also equally wary of ‘managerialists’. I think you need to offer some sort of combined methods synthesis to explain the myth and try to develop at least the beginnings of a manifesto for a way out of it – that would be a real boon to the article. Was the myth wrong only because of its assumptions, but actually correct according to other studies (Banton started the ball rolling by finding that cops didn’t do what they were supposed to in E&W) – it is a different take on ‘right for the wrong reasons’, it suggests that proper evidence-based studies (not anti-positivist ones) need to be cited instead of, or as well as, the myth? Or they need to be cited to show that is it ‘wrong’ or ‘overstated’, rather than being used to support Westwood’s understandable, but ultimately paternalistic and subjective, notion that coppers know what is best (they might, but that doesn’t mean they want to do what is best rather than what is best for them).

Finally, I think there is an implicit assumption that anything with numbers in it that measures police performance, is wrong, and by implication, managerialist. To some extent I agree with this as middle managers in CJ are a generally a menace, as are the systems that reward them from above for being a menace and incentivising manipulation of data (The Wire has many excellent examples and the whole raft of academic Compstat publications supports this view). However, that does mean that you need to be smarter about what and how you measure ‘performance’ and what constitutes success. I’d be very wary of the police defining this for themselves.

I hope that doesn’t sound too negative. I think there is a good publication there, but I think it could be better focussed and shorter in order to make the important point at its centre.