

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Hertfordshire		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 30 – Philosophy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving Police Ethics Training and Practice: virtues and ethical risk in policing		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> John Lippitt	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 1992-2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Professor John Lippitt's research has influenced policies, practices and training affecting at least 13,000 police officers and staff – and by extension, the communities they serve. As a direct result of Lippitt's work, a more central role is now given to the virtues of policing and the ethical risks of cognitive biases in police ethics training.</p> <p>Through his role as Ethics Advisor to Hertfordshire Constabulary and the subsequent impact of this work on several other forces, his research on the virtues has improved police ethics training, ethics guidance implementation and professional standards. It has impacted upon the interpretation and implementation of the national police Code of Ethics ('the Code') within Hertfordshire Constabulary and beyond, and the quality of ethics training available across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies, by focusing on what the Code implies about the virtues required for good policing and the ethical risks of various cognitive biases. It has also influenced policy changes pertaining to reviews of decisions and decision-making processes of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Professional Standards Department, which also covers officers in the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit and thus includes officers in four further police forces.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The underpinning research was conducted by Lippitt at the University of Hertfordshire between 2000 and 2020. His research since 2000 has focused on Kierkegaard and ethics, especially on the moral psychology of various virtues and vices. In particular, it has addressed: the ethics of humour, friendship and collegiality [3.1, 3.2]; the nature of respect, self-respect and selflessness [3.3]; humility and its relation to selflessness [3.1, 3.4, 3.5]; and hope, forgiveness and self-forgiveness [3.3, 3.5]. All this is relevant to the national police Code of Ethics, which – apparently unwittingly - uses virtue-heavy terminology and in which 'respect' and 'selflessness' are two of the key 'principles'.</p> <p>Since 2013, Lippitt has been working extensively on the ethics of forgiveness [3.5]. This includes investigating whether or when forgiveness violates justice or fairness (also a principle in the Code). Another central aspect of this research has been the ethical implications of various cognitive biases. He argues that recognising – and taking responsive action against – such biases is an important aspect of the process of 'reframing' one's view of the wrongdoer that takes place in ethically responsible forms of interpersonal forgiveness, and is a key component in developing the virtue of 'forgivingness'. In many cases, he has argued, such reframing may be what justice demands.</p> <p>Lippitt's work is motivated more by an interest in the moral psychology of various virtues and their interrelationships than in the claims of 'virtue ethics' as an ethical theory. This interest pertains to his work with the police insofar as he has argued that several of the concepts described in the police Code of Ethics as 'principles' are more productively explored as virtues. This has raised important questions: since the Code is meant to be at the heart of policing, and if sound ethical judgement requires the cultivation of virtuous dispositions, what does this imply for</p>		

the education and training of police officers and staff? Is the Code, tacitly if not explicitly, trying to develop people with particular qualities of character? This focus on virtues and character has influenced the nature of the interventions Lippitt has made in police ethics training. For instance, he has argued that some of the positive qualities associated with 'preferential' friendship have a legitimate claim in productive work-place relationships (which some interpretations of the 'objectivity' principle in the Code would deny). Further, his research on the ethics of self-denial [3.3] has implications for the Code in that it rules inadmissible certain interpretations of the 'selflessness' principle. The need to eschew self-focused vices (e.g. selfishness and self-centredness) should not be taken to support an exaggerated focus on self-denial (which some interpretations of the 'selflessness' principle sponsor) as this conflicts with the legitimate claims of proper self-respect. This has implications for various social groups who are still under-represented in the police. These and related ethical themes have been explored in the training outlined in section 4.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Lippitt, J. (2000). *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 3.2 Lippitt, J. (2007). Cracking the mirror: on Kierkegaard's concerns about friendship. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 61(3), 131-150.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-007-9117-x>
- 3.3 Lippitt, J. (2013). *Kierkegaard and the Problem of Self-Love*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 3.4 Lippitt, J. (2019) "Beyond worry? On learning humility from the lilies and the birds", in Adam Buben, Eleanor Helms and Patrick Stokes (eds), *The Kierkegaardian Mind*. London: Routledge.
- 3.5 Lippitt, J. (2020) *Love's Forgiveness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### Evidence of quality:

All outputs were peer-reviewed. 3.1 was submitted to RAE2001, 3.2 to RAE2008, 3.3 (double-weighted) to REF2014 (when research on Kierkegaard was singled out by the sub-panel report on the unit as the 'particular strength' of the Hertfordshire Philosophy submission). 3.5 (double-weighted) has been submitted to REF2021 and was supported by a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship (see below).

Peer-reviewed funding awarded to Lippitt for his research since 2000 includes:

- 2004-5, £11,000 from the Hong Kierkegaard Library and £3,711 from the British Academy (solo awards)
- 2008-9 and 2009-10, £7,754 from the Higher Education Academy (collaborative grants with B. Larvor)
- 2010-12, £157,185 for a Marie Curie Fellowship (collaborative grant with P. Stokes)
- 2018-20, £92,235 for a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship (solo award)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Lippitt's research has had an impact on the way the national police Code of Ethics is interpreted, resulting in changes to police ethics training and education reaching at least 13,000 police officers and staff. While helping to embed the Code of Ethics into police culture, his work has shown that rather than being simply a set of abstract rules or principles, the Code implies a set of normative standards about the *character* expected of those who work in policing. Lippitt's work with the police has also focused on the prevalence of cognitive biases in human beings, the ethical risks for policing arising from this, and how these may be combatted. This has been achieved through interpreting and influencing the implementation of the Code; advising senior officers on the Code; and helping to redesign ethics training and education for police officers and staff. This began with Hertfordshire Constabulary, but has since spread to other police forces, as detailed below.

### **Informing the work of Hertfordshire Constabulary - involvement and context**

In July 2014, as a result of Hertfordshire Constabulary having become aware of his research on the virtues, Lippitt was invited to serve as an external ethics advisor to the Constabulary's 'Ethics Committee' and 'Ethics, Equality and Integrity Board'. These bodies were formed following the introduction earlier that year of the Code: a written guide to the principles that every member of the policing profession in England and Wales is expected to uphold and the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet. In the wake of various perceived ethical failures in policing, the Code was introduced to play a practical role in guiding the everyday behaviour of all police officers and staff (rather than only being turned to later when unprofessional behaviour becomes outright misconduct). It is intended to emphasise what good policing looks like.

Responsibility for embedding the Code lies with the Chief Constables of individual forces. Jane Swinburne, the Temporary Assistant Chief Constable (TACC) who was Hertfordshire Constabulary Ethics Committee Chair during 2014-17 states that Lippitt has provided the Constabulary with **"valuable insight on key issues since 2014"** [5.1].

Lippitt's research has directly informed: presentations given to senior officers and members of the Ethics Committee; one-to-one advice given to the Constabulary's ethics leads; and the content of seven commissioned training videos made available to officers and staff at all levels through the Constabulary's intranet and through face-to-face training on the Code. Through this involvement with Hertfordshire Constabulary, Lippitt has informed senior officers' thinking about ethics and has helped to improve the quality of ethics training available to police officers and staff at all levels. TACC Jane Swinburne states that Lippitt's work has had a **"significant impact on the Constabulary's building of the Code of Ethics into police culture"** [5.1].

In 2015, Lippitt advised on the design of a questionnaire to discover how the Code had been received by the Constabulary's officers and staff in its first year. Lippitt's research (e.g. on the ethics of self-denial [3.3]) fed into the questionnaire design, leading to useful insights, such as the diverse ways in which different officers understood the 'selflessness' principle. Lippitt analysed the 1,510 responses (a response rate of over 40% of the entire force [5.2]) and wrote a report making several recommendations on future training needs and related policies. These included the importance of focusing on the character or virtues of a good police officer, as opposed to a list of abstract principles that had – the survey results suggested – failed to inspire officers. The force report that **"as a direct result of Professor Lippitt's findings, the Constabulary made immediate changes."** These included: rewriting ethics training and changing the way it is cascaded down the organisation; shifting communications strategy to demonstrate chief and senior officer endorsement of the Code and its implications; and developing a more sophisticated bank of ethical dilemmas, in order to demonstrate more clearly the importance of such dilemmas to police work [5.1].

Following his involvement with Hertfordshire Constabulary, Lippitt was one of 19 invited academic participants in a consultation organised by the national College of Policing (the professional body for policing) on the ethics of undercover policing. The College's report from this workshop held in June 2016 [5.3] went on to inform College policy on this issue has been used by Lippitt in the training of senior Hertfordshire Constabulary officers.

### **Developing ethics training for police officers and staff – Hertfordshire and beyond**

In June 2016, Lippitt ran a workshop on 'Making Ethical Decisions' for senior officers and staff, which explored some of his research on the moral psychology of virtues and vices. Lippitt drew the force's attention to the fact that internal communication documents from the Chief Constable (e.g. 'The Hertfordshire Way') were heavily if unwittingly rooted in the language of the virtues, and yet the implications of the importance of character for policing were unexplored in existing ethics training. The very positive written feedback collected [5.4] indicated a desire for more such sessions. But this event – and training sessions which Lippitt subsequently observed – also revealed the prevalence of various cognitive biases with ethical implications (related to Lippitt's

ongoing research on forgiveness, as detailed above). Accordingly, Lippitt was invited to present on this at 'Valuing Our Leaders', a workshop for all senior officers in the force (December 2017), in the context of research on which features of the working environment bring about 'moral disengagement' (individuals acting unethically without feeling distress), understood to be a major cause of misconduct and corruption cases. Lippitt was keen to demonstrate that the ethical risks of cognitive biases – such as self-serving bias, over-confidence bias and the fundamental attribution error – go far beyond those pertaining to 'protected characteristics' such as race and gender, the typical focus of standard 'unconscious bias' training.

Assistant Chief Constable Nathan Briant, by now the Ethics Committee Chair (2017- ), wished for these insights to be further disseminated within the force [5.5]. This led to Lippitt scripting and recording a suite of seven videos in 2018. These explore in some detail the ethical risks of cognitive biases in police work; the importance of character and virtues for policing; and the roles of – and problems with – forgiveness and self-forgiveness in the wake of ethical failure. The material goes beyond the usual unconscious bias training to examine how biases increase the risk of making ethically bad decisions, and how an awareness of bias can aid the reframing of offenders. The videos, which include interviews with senior officers applying 'theory' to 'practice', were made available to all Hertfordshire officers and staff on the force intranet (July-August 2018), and also used as the basis of face-to-face training sessions. The Assistant Chief Constable reported that **"The standard of professionalism rivals any commercial product that I have seen and the content has been very well-received across the force"**, adding that in total this work **"has in my view placed Hertfordshire Constabulary at the forefront of thinking in relation to the Code of Ethics"** [5.6].

The videos were commended by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) inspection report on Hertfordshire, which praised the centrality given to thinking about ethics in the force, stating that **"Ethics are [sic] well understood and accepted across the force. Every member of the workforce we spoke to was clear that ethics are at the forefront of everything they do"**. By 2019, HMIC were describing the video series as **'Best Practice'** to other forces they visited [5.7]. Lippitt and Briant were invited to write an article on this work for *Police Professional*, a magazine with a national reach, which featured their piece as its cover story (March 2019 [5.8]) and to give a 'best practice' presentation about it to the UK Police Ethics Guidance Group (UKPEGG), which consists of ethics leads from forces nationwide (July 2019). This dissemination and the HMIC commendation led to further enquiries from the British Transport Police, South Wales, Thames Valley, Wiltshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and West Mercia Police, and even Police New Zealand, all of whom were provided with the videos and expressed interest in using or adapting them for their own training purposes. The series has to date reached at least 5,000 officers and 3,000 staff just within Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, and is used as the basis of the ethics training of new recruits and supervisors [5.7].

This work further led to:

**Improving the decisions and decision-making processes of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies (BC&H)**

Increasing recognition of the ethical risks of cognitive bias highlighted by Lippitt's videos was a contributory factor in the formation of a new BC&H PSD Scrutiny Panel (September 2018). In the wake of the number of complaints about bias and discrimination from BAME officers, staff and members of the public, BC&H PSD was keen to review its decision-making to ensure that it is proportionate, fair and consistent with the Code. The Panel, which includes officers representing minority groups and a number of external advisors, has the specific purpose of influencing change on these issues. As the new Panel's Ethics Advisor, Lippitt attended every meeting, helped draft its Terms of Reference and reviewed the ethical dimensions of various PSD cases. Detective Chief Superintendent Amanda Bell, the Panel Chair, reports that Lippitt **"provided invaluable feedback and insight and challenged my thinking and that of other panel**

**members on many occasions” [5.9].** This included challenging the informal policy of automatically telling certain complainants that ‘you will be believed’, which Lippitt encouraged the Panel to rethink in the light of the Code’s fairness principle.

Bell further reports that Lippitt’s input “**directly shaped the drafting of the new Terms of Reference, identified learning recommendations that the Constabularies needed to implement**” (drawing again on his work on virtues and biases), and “**directly informed the content of new BC&H PSD policies**” around: breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour and Code of Ethics; investigation of discrimination cases; abuse of position for an emotional or sexual purpose; and anti-corruption and whistle-blowing procedures. Important strategic recommendations made by the panel have been cascaded to the 13,000 officers and members of police staff working within the 7 forces represented by BC&H and the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit. These have “**helped shape and improve the ethical and cultural values within [these] forces but more importantly for the communities that [we] serve**”. DCS Bell also states that “**staff from protected characteristic groups have provided positive feedback that the work of the panel had genuinely improved trust and confidence within the workforce. This was the primary objective of the Panel and Professor Lippitt was instrumental in the panel achieving this goal.**” This Panel has also been held up as an instance of **Best Practice** by HMIC [5.9].

Senior officers Briant and Bell both concluded that while there remains work to be done in these areas, Lippitt’s advice and guidance has made a “**significant contribution**” to the progress made so far, and to “**embedding ethical values within BC&H and policing nationally**” [5.7, 5.9].

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1** Letter from Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Jane Swinburne (Hertfordshire Constabulary Ethics Committee Chair, 2014-17), November 2017
- 5.2** Email confirmation of staff numbers & proportion
- 5.3** Report on Undercover Policing Ethics Workshop for College of Policing, June 2016
- 5.4** Feedback on ‘Making Ethical Decisions’ workshop, June 2016
- 5.5** Hertfordshire Constabulary Ethics and Integrity minutes, September 2017
- 5.6** Letter from Assistant Chief Constable Dr Nathan Briant (Hertfordshire Constabulary Ethics Committee Chair, 2017- ), July 2018
- 5.7** Further letter from Assistant Chief Constable Dr Nathan Briant (Hertfordshire Constabulary Ethics Committee Chair, 2017- ), November 2020
- 5.8** ‘The only way is ethics?’, featured article by John Lippitt and Nathan Briant in *Police Professional*, 14 March 2019
- 5.9** Letter from Detective Chief Superintendent Amanda Bell (Chair of BC&H PSD Scrutiny Panel), November 2020; terms of reference of Scrutiny Panel; *The Shield*, October 2020