



Understanding public value through policing priorities using Q-Methodology

Quoc Thanh Vo¹, Jean Hartley², Loua Khalil², Jim Beashel³ and Steve Parker²

¹ Thames Valley Police

² The Open University

³ Dorset Police

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A copy of this report can be obtained electronically from oupc@open.ac.uk

The corresponding author for this report is Jean Hartley: jean.hartley@open.ac.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is an examination of the variety of ways in which people view policing priorities. Given the range of activities and purposes which the police undertake, and given pressures on budgets for policing, this study aimed to examine how the public value (or valuable activities and outcomes) of policing is assessed by looking at the priorities chosen by three groups of stakeholders: the police themselves, members of the public, and public service partners. In order to explore these subjective priorities, the study used Q methodology (from hereon Q) to understand what it is that police stakeholders value most about policing. There were 125 participants in the main Q study, ranging from police officers, police staff, partner agencies and members of the public in different regions of the UK. Some attention is given to the Q methodology as a research tool because it has been used relatively rarely in policing, and yet it can provide rich insights. Through using the Q method, the research aimed to identify both differences and similarities between the views of people about what the police should prioritise. The Q analysis of priorities as chosen by the 125 participants identified four major views among people about what policing should prioritise: 1) Personal Harm - reducing serious personal psychological and physical harm; 2) Engagement - reducing community harm and creating a fearless society; 3) Crime-fighter - a focus on crime itself; and 4) Good Cop - policing that is committed to serving the public. When examining these views across the three types of participants (police, partners and public), it was found that there were more similarities than differences across the three stakeholder groups, though the fourth view was predominantly held by the police themselves. The implications of these findings are explored. This study makes three contributions to understanding public value in policing. First, it is a systematic analysis of how police, partner agencies and members of the public view policing priorities which is one key dimension of public value. Second, it provides empirical research on public value which is a key gap. Third, it provides details about how Q methodology can be useful in policing studies.

Q has been used in a wide range of studies over the decades, but seldom has it been used in policing. The study used focus groups, and Police and Crime Commissioner plans and an exercise with police and academics, to understand current views on police priorities. From all these sources, 510 statements relating to policing objectives, priorities or actions were identified. These statements were systematically analysed to eliminate duplicates and to ensure clarity resulting in a final list consisting of 62 statements that represented a fairly complete range of police priorities.

The grid was designed to allow participants to sort the statements based on how they would prioritise each statement. Due to the shape of the grid, the participants are forced to make choices. The study made a deliberate decision to create a grid onto a magnetic white-board where the statements were printed onto magnetic acrylic tiles (The Q-Board). This approach allowed the experience to be far more tactile and interesting than a web-based or printed cards approach. The impact was immediate when participants saw the Q-Board for the first time, creating an element of curiosity and a willingness to get involved.

The study achieved a very satisfactory number of participants, with 125 individuals completing the Q Sort. The 125 Q-sorts were analysed to determine patterns in the data based on different participant perspectives, and the analysis revealed the four major viewpoints:

- *Personal harm*: Participants who share this view displayed a tendency to focus on crimes that cause serious personal, psychological and physical harm (such as dealing with child sexual exploitation, sexual offences, domestic abuse and modern slavery. They want the police to focus on protecting them from or reducing these types of crimes.
- *Engagement*: Participants who share this view care about serious crimes but also tend to emphasise the importance of the police engaging with, interacting with and encouraging feedback from the public. They want the police to improve partnership working and also have the police make better use of press and social media.
- *Crime-fighter*: Participants who share this view appear to have what has been more of a traditional view of policing where they value a police service that concentrates on dealing with criminal offences, particularly violent crime but also volume crime (burglary, vehicle theft) and road traffic offences. They place less priority on how this is achieved so less interested in training and development for the police, or partnership working compared with other groups.
- *Good cop*: Participants who share this view care not only about what the police do, but how they go about doing it. They feel that the police should operate with a high degree of professionalism, following the code of ethics and the victims code, but they are also concerned to maximise police efficiency for example in using new technologies and providing value for money policing.

Apart from the fourth viewpoint which is predominantly held by police officers, the individuals who align to the first three viewpoints were a mixture of police, partners and

members of the public. As a result, the groups had more similarities than differences in their perspectives about public value. This is interesting given how diverse are the societal expectations on what the police should do.

In addition, the Q-Board, far from solely being a research method, has great potential for wider application, such as a community engagement and as an education tool. Members of the public appeared to engage well with the idea of prioritising policing activities and they said they found it interesting to work with the unique and colourful Q board. Some said they became aware of a wider range of police responsibilities, and this could be a means to help develop realistic expectations through having to prioritise.

The research undertaken here makes three substantial contributions to the literature about public value and policing. First, it shows that Q methodology is a robust and sensitive tool for analysing how participants view their key priorities for policing. Secondly, this is a novel methodology to address public value, as developed by Benington (2011), which focuses on both what the public value and also what adds value to the public sphere. The former, what the public values, can be determined through the Q sorts completed by members of the public because prioritising policing activities is one way to operationalise public value. The second dimension, what adds value to the public sphere, may be assessed through the Q sorts completed by policing professionals and partners. This is slightly more controversial because it assumes that professionals are working in the 'public interest' (a claim not universally agreed). But the police in particular have detailed knowledge of how their activities may impact on the public sphere, and so the analysis can be seen to have addressed the second element of public value. Thirdly, the paper contributes with the analysis of similarities and differences in views about policing priorities, as seen by police, by officials of policing partner organisations, and by members of the public. These contributions are substantively useful in relation to policing and they also advance the call for more empirical studies of public value.

Finally, the paper has illustrated what can be achieved through the co-creation of research where the research team is made up of academics and practitioners and which builds on the expertise of each. The results of the research can be of real value to practitioners even when starting with a highly abstract concept such as public value.

Keywords: Q Board; Q Methodology; Public Value; Policing Priorities

INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC VALUE AND POLICING

This report is part of a larger research project examining police leadership to create public value, undertaken by The Open University Centre for Policing Research and Learning. The team has been led by Professor Jean Hartley, and includes Quoc Vo and Jim Beashel as Senior Practitioner Fellows (police officers on secondment to The Open University), and Dr Steve Parker and Loua Khalil as OU academic and PhD student respectively. The larger project examining public value also includes a literature review (Sicilia et al, 2017) and two case studies (Parker et al, 2017).

The intended audience for this report includes both police practitioners and academics and it examines how public value can be analysed through examining policing priorities through Q methodology. A separate guide to using Q methodology, aimed at policing professionals, will shortly also be available (Vo and Hartley, in preparation).

The research started with an interest in public value, and then searched for suitable methods to empirically assess public value. We explain what we mean by public value below. The field of public value is characterised by a notable lack of empirical research. As highlighted by Hartley et al (2017) “*despite the growing discourse on the theory and practice of public value, there are very few publications which are based on empirical research. Most publications are, instead, theoretical, conceptual, scholarly, synthetic or descriptive.*” (p. 670)

However, practitioners operating in public sector organisations are showing an increasing interest in public value. For example, in policing, the Chair of the National Police Chiefs Council, Chief Constable Sara Thornton, has argued that the twin challenges of changing demands and cost pressures mean that police forces have to think imaginatively and radically about policing. She has suggested that the public value framework can help to pursue this goal because it prompts police forces to think about the value they create and find an answer to the following questions: “*What outcomes are we delivering for the citizen? So what are the police for? What is the value we are trying to create in policing? What is the purpose of a police force? The activities it carries out are not an end in themselves but a means to an end. But what end? Is the purpose to patrol the streets? Is it to reduce crime? Or is it to make people feel safer?*” (Police Foundation speech, 2015). Hesketh and Hartley (2015) have outlined how public value is relevant to policing, and have set out the key elements of this framework.

There are various definitions and conceptualisations of public value. Hartley et al (2017) outline three somewhat different definitions all existing in the literature and Sicilia et al (2017) extend this mapping. For our purposes here, we can briefly outline both the origins of public value theory and also the approach being adopted in this study.

Public value first came to prominence through the work of Mark Moore (1995) and was then further developed by John Benington (2011). They created a framework, which focused on the *added value* created by public services in particular (though also other sectors and individuals can create public value also). They recognised that measures of added value needed to go beyond the counting of activities, or even the counting of outputs (e.g. stop and search, amount of intelligence submissions, number of arrests or convictions) to include ways in which public organisations contributed to the wider aims of society, for example creating a fair, just or peaceful world or enabling citizens to live confident, safe and fulfilling lives.

Using the widely recognised (e.g. Bryson et al, 2015) approach by Benington (2011), public value has two components. First, what the public indicate they value or see as important priorities, which is sometimes different from what they want. This involves professionals taking into account the values, needs and aspirations of citizens (individually and collectively) as the professionals design, provide, and evaluate services. We will show later in this report that Q methodology is particularly well suited to examining priorities. The second element of public value is what adds value to the public sphere. Associated though slightly different terms are ‘the common good’ or ‘the public interest’ (see Bozeman, 2002; Bryson et al, 2014). It is what adds political, economic, social, psychological or environmental value and it is concerned not just with immediate benefits but also with safeguarding society and the planet for future generations. In policing, as is with other organisations, there are certain areas where these two components can be in conflict with each other. What the public either as individuals or collectively value may sometimes be at odds what policing professionals believe adds the greatest value to society.

This research study is based on the Benington (2011) approach to public value as an overall conceptual framework. However, for the empirical research element of the work, we have examined how people assess the first element, i.e. how they prioritise – in this case, priorities relevant to policing. We have been unable in this research design to empirically assess the second dimension of public value, given time constraints. However, this study has implications for the second dimension which we will explore in the discussion.

Public value is an academic construct, which can be somewhat abstract and does not necessarily make sense to people working at the front-line or to members of the public. Consequently, the researchers talked with research participants about what people see as the priorities for policing and what is most valuable for the police to do.

Given that one key element of public value, as seen by Moore (2013) and Benington (2011) is “what the public value”, then there are a number of ways in which this aspect of public value can be operationalised. One such approach is that of Bozeman (2002) which is to say that value (as an outcome) is underpinned by normative values (deeply held beliefs held by individuals) about what is important for a society, and that these normative values can be discerned through analysis of policy documents, political discourse and political philosophy. However, there are some problems with this approach. First, as Bryson et al (2015) note, this normative view of personally-held values implies a degree of consensus across society which may not be justified. Particularly in many areas of public service, there may be conflicting or contested views about what it is that public servants do that is valuable. By contrast, the Benington approach sees public value as a ‘contested democratic practice’ so not everyone is likely to agree with each other about what is valuable and underpinning that they may have different values. Second, as Benington (2011) notes, what the public value is not the same as what the public want, need or aspire to. *“Much current discussion of public service tends to focus on notions of client or public satisfaction, but in order to establish more robust measures of public value it may be necessary for the public to be asked to make trade-offs between competing sources of satisfaction. The Cabinet Office report on public value (Kelly et al, 2002) argues that what the public values is meaningful only when linked to questions of what it is willing to give up in exchange for any benefits – establishing public value therefore includes trade-offs.”* (Benington, 2011, pp 42-43).

The research team wished to try Q methodology in order to present police, partners and members of the public with an opportunity to prioritise policing activities. The Q board format inevitably means that trade-offs have to occur because not everything can be prioritised to the same extent. In this sense, it is superior in examining priorities compared with a conventional questionnaire or interview.

Furthermore, Q is particularly suited to studying social issues where there is *“much debate, conflict and contestations”* (Barry & Proops, 1999, pg. 339) so using it to study public value seems appropriate. It is an exploratory methodology and is not suited to testing hypotheses, (Watts and Stenner, 2005). However for a complex and socially contested topic (such as

public value), Q is capable of revealing and providing clarity to a variety of perspectives on the focal issue (Rogers, 1995).

Policing operates within a contested environment. The public may see value in areas that directly affects them the most on an individual basis, sometimes without the knowledge or an understanding of other policing issues affecting the wider society. As a result, there will be occasions when there is conflict between what the public values and what the police value. For example, on a busy shift where resources are already stretched, do police prioritise a call reporting a noise nuisance or a report of a missing person? The former could be part of a longstanding neighbourhood issue. It could be part of an anti-social behaviour problem. The victim could be vulnerable and what on the face of it may seem trivial may in fact be really important and affects the person reporting a great deal. The latter on the other hand is not a criminal matter in itself, but policing is not just about investigating criminal offences. The missing person could be susceptible to harm by people preying on their vulnerabilities or they could be a danger to the public. A large part of policing is about preventing crime and safeguarding the vulnerable. How can the police convince the public of how much crime they prevented or how many vulnerable people they protected from harm? Q methodology may be able to provide the police with a pathway to navigate such contested environments in order to maximise public value and develop a more symbiotic relationship between the police and the public whom they serve.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This consideration of public value and how to assess it, leads us to the heart of the research enquiry. This paper therefore reports on three questions:

1. What are the views of police, public service partners and the public on policing priorities
2. How far do police, public service partners and public have similar or different views about public value?
3. How useful is Q methodology as a tool to assess public value?

USING Q METHODOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND FEATURES OF POLICING

Nearly every aspect of policing involves a degree of subjectivity, with codes that regulate police powers (e.g. Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) littered with terms such as suspicion, belief and intent. Policing activities ranging from risk assessments, performance monitoring to deciding whether an incident is a civil or criminal matter may be influenced by an officer's or administrator's experience, personal views and interpretation of law and policy. Other areas of policing interests such as public confidence and legitimacy are also subjective by their very nature (Moore and Braga, 2003). There is also a well-rehearsed phrase in policing: 'professional judgement'. Q methodology (1953) is a research method that aims to provide a systematic and rigorous means of studying subjectivity (Mckeown & Thomas, 1988).

Given the prevalence of subjective judgement in and around policing, Q methodology might seem attractive, but surprisingly, it seems to be underutilised compared to other research methods. In recent times, the evidence-based policing movement has tended to treat randomised control trials (RCT) as the Holy Grail for police research, despite many arguments that actually RCTs are suitable only for certain kinds of policing research questions (e.g. Sparrow, 2011; Greene, 2014) and that a variety of research designs and research tools are required if policing is to become more evidence-based. In particular, RCTs can address causality but are unable to address meaning and subjectivity, which can be equally important in understanding social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Robson and McCartan, 2016; Moses and Knutsen, 2007). We suggest that Q methodology can contribute to policing studies as a valuable method in its own right, not as a 'poor cousin' to RCTs.

Q has been around for over 60 years and used in fields such as communication studies, political science, psychology, advertising and environmental studies, but its use in a policing context has been infrequent (Scarborough et al. 1999). This section will briefly describe some of the Q studies in the field of policing to date.

Scarborough et al. (1999) examined the police promotion process in Lexington, Kentucky, USA by studying police officers' motivations for seeking promotion. Lexington police division had experienced a decline in the number of officers wanting to be promoted to sergeant and the study wanted to understand why. They found that promotion failed to generate motivation amongst officers and the study even identified hostile attitudes towards promotion itself (Scarborough et al. 1999). The study suggested that the primary reason for this was because officers perceived the rank of sergeant held little additional benefit over

constable and that officers did not see their freedom or control increase as a function of rank (Scarborough et al. 1999).

Tackling gang violence is a priority for many police forces in the UK, especially for metropolitan police forces, but we have not found any UK based research on police officer perception of gang characteristics. This was recently explored in the South American context by Ratcliffe (2016). It sought to understand police officers' beliefs about what explained the success of local gangs. Their perceptions were important because they provided a precursor to future policy and highlighted differences between police and community perceptions (Ratcliffe, 2016). The study found that officers perceived gangs shared many success traits and that through identifying relevant characteristics, police would be able to dismantle successful gangs.

Public attitudes towards the police can be complex (Waddington & Braddock, 1991). Q has the potential to help unpack this, especially given the tensions between the police and some black minority ethnic communities over recent years in the USA and UK. A Q study published in 1991 looked at perceptions of the police amongst adolescent black, white and Asian boys (Waddington and Braddock, 1991). The study found that British black boys in their sample almost exclusively viewed police as 'bullies' rather than 'guardians'. The use of Q in the study allowed for distinctive points of views to be revealed (Waddington & Braddock, 1991). The study accepts that the findings are highly tentative. However, it is pivotal that if there are to be improvements to police-public relations, the police must first understand and recognise how they are perceived by the communities they serve. Without doing so is setting up any initiatives to improve relations and public confidence to failure. Q has also been used in a domestic violence context. Young (2007) used Q to understand how women respond following a domestic violence incident. Doing so may allow for tailor-made intervention to help women to successfully escape the cycle of abuse (Young, 2007). These uses of Q in the literature illustrate the value of Q as a method in police research.

Q METHODOLOGY

Q is a methodology for subjective science, it neither denies objectivism nor is it purely subjectivism (Stephenson, 1993/1994). The method builds upon both quantitative and qualitative instruments (Ellingsen et al., 2010) to understand a particular social phenomenon. Popular qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews are ill equipped

when investigating matters that are often tacit and subconscious (Jeffares & Skelcher, 2011). Q originates from the work of Stephenson (1953) who was interested in the meaning of consciousness and coined the phrase “*a science for all that is subjective, for what is behind the eyes, as well as before them*” (Stephenson, 1993/1994). Q is primarily an exploratory rather than confirmatory technique, suitable for exploring the variety of ways in which people may perceive, think about or value something (Dormer, 2001).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The purpose of the research was to examine people’s views about policing priorities, and to answer the question how far do police, partners and public have similar or different views about public value. The research would also assess the strengths and weaknesses of Q methodology as a research tool to empirically examine public value.

In order to address these questions, the research team adopted an amended version of the five main stages of a Q analysis as characterised by Ellingsen et al. (2010):

- 1) Identification of the concourse on the topic of interest;
- 2) Development of a representative set of statements;
- 3) Q sort design;
- 4) Choice of sample
- 5) Q sort administration (rank ordering of statements);
- 6) Findings

Stage 1: Identification of the concourse on the topic of interest

In creating a Q sort, the researchers must first identify and assemble a wide and varied volume of communications (in this case on the theme of policing priorities) (Stephenson, 1953; Jeffares and Skelcher, 2011). The aim is to construct a concourse which represents the breadth of debate and using this ‘concourse’ to explore people’s views about the issues. The concourse forms the basis of the Q sort. The concourse is represented through a collection of self-referable statements (or comments) about a particular topic that can be systematically mapped to show the diversity of discussion and the collection of statements is called the Q set (Jeffares & Dickinson, 2016). The Q set, in other words, is a collection of statements that

captures the wide range of views on a particular subject. These are the statements which each participant is asked to sort at the Q-sort stage. The range of statements or items had to be as comprehensive as possible, both to reflect the concourse in the 'real world' and so that a participant can prioritise the values that they feel are most important in policing, while not being so many that the task of prioritising is cognitively too complex (e.g. too many statements to remember or look at to be able to compare them before placing them on the sorting grid). The sorting grid is where participants place the statements. The study refers to this sorting grid as the Q board and it will be discussed further below.

Initially the research team considered whether it was possible to combine concepts (and therefore statements) about both leadership and public value into one concourse but they decided it would make the statements ambiguous and lack equivalence (difficulty in sorting statements on two different topics). This required leadership to be examined using different research methods (see related paper by Parker et al, 2017).

So the team focused on policing priorities and decided that the question to respondents should be "*what is most important to you in policing?*". Using the Q board format meant that participants would need to choose between different priorities as set out in the concourse statements.

The concourse statements were identified as policing activities. Ensuring a sufficient concourse drew on a range of sources: analysis of five Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Crime Plans; the conducting of two focus groups with police officers; results from a neighbourhood policing priorities survey (Gwent Your Voice); an interactive event with participants who were all police or academics working in the field of policing, who each wrote down statements about the most important priorities in policing; and finally an analysis of other publically available policing literature such as from HMIC and the College of policing

It was valuable in this part of the research that the initial draft concourse was identified by a serving police officer. This is so that knowledge and understanding from a practitioner perspective about what the police do is used early in the study to capture the concourse and identify quickly what is relevant. Later, the concourse statements were refined and reduced in number. They were made clearer through the questioning of phrasing by the whole research team, consisting of both academics and police officers.

PCC Crime Plans were suitable for developing the concourse because they are public statements from the elected representative for policing for a locality and reflect a range of issues of both local and national interest. The selection of the five PCC Crime plans to analyse was based on providing a diverse set of UK police forces so that a wide catchment of police priorities could be considered, making the concourse relevant to UK policing in general. The forces cover England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They range from large urban areas, smaller towns to rural villages. The forces consist of varied ethnic minority populations and areas of high deprivation as well as affluence. The five forces were: Thames Valley Police; Greater Manchester Police; Metropolitan Police Service; Police Service of Northern Ireland; and Gwent Police.

The research team stopped analysis of plans after those five forces because no different items were being discovered. This is an indication that the saturation point has been reached, in other words the full range of possible statements from this particular source have been found. The critical issue is not analysing the popularity of a given statement, but rather on collecting a wide variety of statements.

The statements gathered from all the sources described above were placed into an Excel spreadsheet, noting the source of the statement and the general theme of the statement. Five broad themes were identified from the statements collected from the PCC Plans: 1) confidence; 2) crime; 3) safeguarding; 4) collaboration; and 5) efficiency. This initial grouping is designed (for research team purposes only) to help organise the statements so that similar or identical ones can be identified.

One finding from this part of the development of the Q concourse was noting that the PCC Crime Plans were more focused on gaining public confidence; police working together with the community; addressing local crime such as anti-social behaviour; and safeguarding vulnerable people. By contrast, there were relatively fewer statements about national threats such as terrorism and cybercrime (they were present but were much lower key in the plans).

In total, 216 candidate statements were identified from the PCC Crime Plans. Candidate statements are those to be considered for use in the final list of statements (Q sample) to be used in the actual Q sort by participants. 216 statements is too many to make a feasible Q sort, and there were some duplicate or semi-duplicate statements. So three members of the wider research team (R1, R2 and R3, one unconnected with the Q research) examined the statements to identify duplicates or near duplicates. To help minimise contamination, each

researcher completed this process separately and without prior discussion. The aim was to reduce the number of candidate statements whilst maintaining a balance that represents the full range of the universe of discourse (Scarborough et al. 1999). The statements were first grouped. R1 and R2 grouped the statements into 30 groups, whilst R3 grouped them into 31 groups. Each researcher identified very similar themes. Once this was done, duplicate statements could be identified as well as allowing statements to be carefully combined where they were ambiguous or where the statements were close enough to be combined.

Consideration was given to minimise the researcher's own subjectivity to influence this process (reducing bias) by ensuring that any combined statements created used, as far as possible, the same words from the PCC Crime Plans and not interpretations of them. The research team ensured that the reduced statement sample was both representative of the overall sample (original list of statements) and included statements that contrast greatly from each other (van Eijk & Steen, 2014). This is an inductive sampling technique whereby patterns and groups emerged as the statements were collected (McKeown & Thomas, 1988) and examined, resulting in a list of 46 PCC Crime Plan statements.

To provide a further source of statements and widen the source of statements, focus groups were organised with the help of Gwent Police. Originally, four focus groups were planned but only the first two turned out to be feasible. The first group consisted of police officers and staff (rank of police constable, detective constable or police staff equivalent only); and the second group consisted of more senior police officers and staff (rank sergeant, inspector, chief inspector or police staff equivalent only). It was not possible to arrange the third group of police partners (e.g. social services, probation, education health) or a focus group of members of the public, because volunteers could not be reached within the timescale. Consequently, the results from a neighbourhood survey into policing priorities was analysed (Gwent Your Voice) in order to give the concourse a better balance.

Although the two focus groups and Gwent Your Voice are not demographically representative of the population, the deliberate groupings was an attempt to ensure the concourse was sufficiently representative of possible views (Kennedy, 2013). Officers of more senior ranks were separated from more junior ranks, and likewise members of the public were separated from the police, and the police separated from their partner organisations. The reason for this deliberate design is to minimise power differentials amongst participants in order encourage more open and honest discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2001), thereby generate a more diverse concourse.

In relation to the focus groups, it used an exercise and question schedule (**Appendix 1**). This is a document for the researchers to use in running the focus group, containing step-by-step what needs to be covered in the focus group. This ensured that each focus group was conducted similarly and to minimise the possibility of the focus group facilitator's own subjectivity influencing the participants. The schedule contained a list of questions as well as prompts to help encourage discussion and increase the chances of relevant statements emerging.

The fourth step in developing the concourse was an interactive session with police officers and staff, and academics undertaking research in aspects of policing, at a session of the Centre for Policing Research and Learning. There were eight groups of participants and each group were asked to write on post-it notes their own view of the most important priorities in UK policing. In total, 147 statements were gathered from the groups.

Finally, other literature was analysed in order to gather any other statements or viewpoints which may have been missed from the other sources described above. From all these sources, 510 statements were collected for the concourse, many of which were duplicates. As the number of duplicates continued to increase, it was a sign that saturation point had been reached, i.e. the likelihood of finding a unique statement about a given topic was getting more difficult.

It can be seen that considerable effort and careful design went into collecting candidate statements for the Q sort, ensuring a variety of sources of statements and a variety of stakeholders. The next step in the research was to reduce the number of statements to a final set which would be manageable and sortable by participants from all walks of life.

Stage 2: Development of a representative set of statements

Reducing the set of statements involved several steps. The final set of statements (the Q sample) is much smaller than the initial collection because there will inevitably be a limit to how many statements a participant could be expected or willing to sort through (Durose et al. 2015). Not only is there a need for the final set of statements to be manageable, but they need to preserve the diversity of the sample (Fisher, 1960). This means that the final list of selected statements need to represent all the diversity of views from the various sources, regardless of how popular or unpopular a certain view is. In doing so, it is vital that a deliberate and conscious attempt is made not to control the meaning of a statement (Jeffares

& Dickinson, 2016) otherwise bias will be inadvertently introduced into the final Q sample (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

The Q sample is a collection of heterogeneous (different) statements which the participants will sort, with each statement making a unique but recognisable assertion (Watts & Stenner, 2005) about policing priorities. The research team, made up of academics and police practitioners, went through all the statements in the concourse to end up with a final list of 62 statements (Q sample) for the Q sort (**Appendix 2**). This was done methodically, by first grouping the statements into common themes. The themes identified were: 1) collaboration; 2) communication; 3) confidence; 4) crime; 5) efficiency; 6) non-crime; 7) staff focus; and 8) victim care. The themes were derived by grouping the concourse statements, using researcher knowledge of key themes in policing, as expressed in national policing documents, and through discussion amongst the research team. The concourse items are presented, in Appendix 2, in these categories.

Each group of statements was then examined one by one to: remove duplicates; ensure that the statements were clear; ensure that there were no multiple priorities or values within a single item; and that there were no meta-statements. An example of a statement with multiple priorities is: *“supporting victims and witnesses by ensuring they receive the support they need and increasing overall victim satisfaction”*. There are two priorities in this statement: 1) supporting victims and witnesses; and 2) increase victim satisfaction. Such a statement is ambiguous, and therefore would be hard to interpret in the pattern of any participant’s Q sort. A meta-statement is one which expands on the initial point made. For example: *“supporting victims and witnesses by ensuring they receive the support they need and increasing overall victim satisfaction. It is about having a victim-centred focus to policing because this increases public confidence”*. This is both a double statement and is also very long. As a result, statements were designed to be short, clear and as concise as possible. The refining and reduction of items followed accepted practice in item selection in surveys and questionnaires (e.g. Rust and Golombok, 2009).

The number of statements in the Q sample will depend a lot on the subject matter, with guidance provided by Watts & Stenner (2005) that the statement number should be: *“somewhere between 40 and 80 statements is considered satisfactory”* (pg. 75). The research team selected 62 statements, which falls comfortably within this advised range. This is less than the range of possible views about police priorities but there is a trade-off between inclusion and feasibility to sort. There is the sense that the Q sample can never be truly

complete as there is always something else that could be said (Watts & Stenner, 2005). However, through careful building of the concourse and a systematic sampling approach described above, the Q sample is as diverse, balanced and representative as possible.

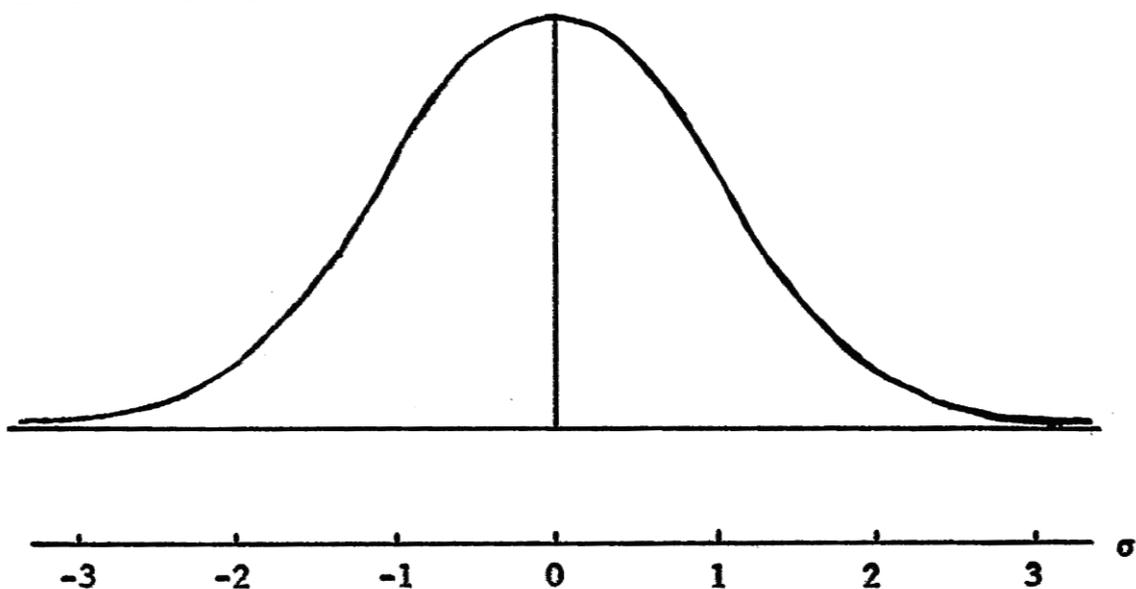
Stage 3: Q sort design

With the final set of statements determined, the next task was to design the grid which will be used by the participants to sort the statements. One of the advantages of a Q sort over a survey with Likert scales, is that the participant is forced to prioritise some statements over others, because the shape of the Q board means that only a particular number of statements can be given a high priority, while others must inevitably take a lower priority (as chosen by each participant). The participant may wish to move statements around as they undertake the task and so this makes the completion of the Q sort more interactive. This fits public value theory well because value, according to Benington (2011) can be recognised in part by the choices made to prioritise that value over others. We can apply this approach to policing priorities.

However, the question remains as to how many high priorities will be meaningful in a Q study and how many categories between low and high priority. In other words, what should be the shape of the Q board where participants are asked to place the statements (priorities)? This will vary from study to study, depending on the research question, but some broad parameters are generally accepted in Q methodology (Watts and Stenner, 2005). A number of Q scholars, including the originator, suggest the use of a quasi-normal distribution of columns (Burt and Stephenson, 1939; Brown 1971; Brown 1985; and Cottle and McKeown, 1980), which creates the shape of a bell curve (see **Figure 1**). Typically, Q methodology studies adopt a quasi-normal distribution grid (Ellingsen et al, 2010). By quasi-normal, it means that the shape *approximates* to a normal distribution. Stephenson believed that similar to person measurements (such as height) where a large number of people would be around the mid-point of the bell curve, the same may be true for viewpoints (Burt & Stephenson, 1939). It is also a forced-choice frequency distribution. Forced, because participants must rank the statements within the grid in terms of ranking across columns. This is not a full ranking approach where every item must be put in rank order, i.e. rows do not denote a rank, so a statement placed above another on the grid within the same column are of equal priority. By being forced, it allows for beliefs to emerge which may otherwise be lost if it were a free distribution where participants are not forced to make choices (McKeown & Thomas, 2014).

Theoretically at least, there does not appear to be an agreement on why Q-Methodology often makes use of a quasi-normal distribution, but it has been accepted as a pragmatic and convenient approach in capturing viewpoints and item ranking, along with encouraging the participants to make choices between statements rather than rating them (say) equally (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The sharpness of the peak of the curve (kurtosis) is a design question related to the focus of the study. A shape similar to a normal distribution is used for subjects where participants are expected to be uninformed or interested, whereas, for highly controversial subjects, a flatter distribution may be used (see Brown 1980, pg. 200). The study utilised a scale of +1 to +9 for the columns, from low priority (on the left) to high priority (on the right). It was felt that a nine-column scale provided a balance between giving participants enough to think about but at the same time not to make it onerous as to make the sorting exercise too long.

Fig. 1: Normal Distribution, Bell Curve (from Brown, 1980 pg. 282)



The presentation of the Q board with its quasi-normal curve was presented with the peak in the middle facing downwards not upwards (see Fig. 2). The research team used this design because this was a shape that would help to avoid the middle being seen as ‘average’ rather than middling priority.

Fig. 2: Quasi-normal distribution for Q-Sort accommodating 62 statements

choices which have to be made about priorities in practice, when police budgets cannot cover all the expectations of all citizens about policing activities.

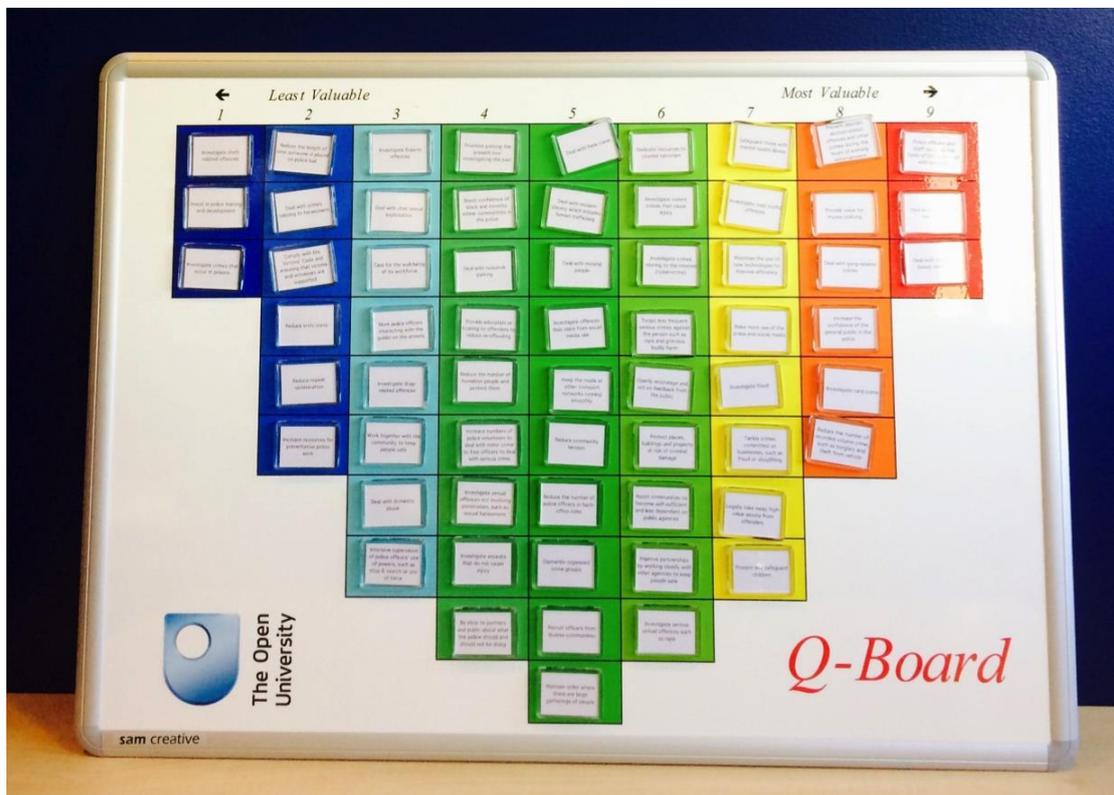
Conceptually, the forced prioritisation is an important point to note because it frames the mindset of the participants whilst they sort. Although the shape of the distribution should be considered mainly for practical reasons, Brown (1980, pg. 288-289) showed that the chosen distribution hardly affected the outcome of the study.

A major decision was made by the research team as to whether the Q statements and grid should be presented in electronic format or in physical format, given that both are logically possible ways to collect data. Some time was spent considering the pros and cons of each approach and expert help was sought. In the end, the researchers chose to use a physical board and physical tiles. The research team selected this medium for two main reasons: 1) by watching the participants sort and on occasions listening to their thinking out-loud, valuable contextual information could be gathered; and 2) it provided a valuable opportunity to engage with police officers, staff, partners and members of the community about policing research. The concern about using an electronic format is that the response rate was likely to be lower, or that there would be drop-out with some half-completed grids, which would be completely unusable data (as the statements are ranked). Also, there was concern about firewalls for some organisations which might reduce response rate. Some members of the public who are not IT-literate would be excluded. The research team felt that a bright, colourful physical board would be more attractive than yet another questionnaire on a computer screen. Finally, since Q methodology has not been applied to the public value framework before, it was felt to be useful to have researchers close to participants as they completed the grids to learn whether the grid made sense to the participants and therefore that the data were meaningful. This also enabled the researchers to ask a few questions after the completion of the board, with questions about how easy or difficult the person found the sort, and also what prompted their choice of priorities. Also for these reasons a paper version sent out in the post was rejected. Administering a Q-sort in person is generally felt as the best way of collecting the data even taking into account the convenience and time saving of other approaches (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The Q Board (**Fig. 2**) was deliberately designed to be bold and colourful to provide a sense of enjoyment for the participant and to reduce any anxiety the person might feel at undertaking this unfamiliar task. A rapid research enquiry was conducted as to whether

colour may consciously or unconsciously affect how participants complete questionnaires, surveys and Q sorts. No existing research was found on this topic from a perusal of the literature about survey and psychological instrument design, and so the research team decided it was safe to use a coloured board but that the statements themselves would be a neutral white. Traffic light colours (red to green through amber) were avoided on the board in case this biased the participant. Instead, a bright array of colours was used with a different colour for each of the nine columns. Participants were informed that the colours had absolutely no meaning and are used to help see the columns clearly (+1 to +9). The board was otherwise white and it was magnetic, so that the statement tiles could be moved around on the board but could not be accidentally knocked around.

Fig. 3: Magnetic Q-Board with acrylic tiles



Each of the 62 statements were printed on to white card and each put in a magnetic acrylic tile. The participants were given the tiles to arrange on the Q-Board (Fig. 3). It was felt that this tactile approach made the process of sorting more enjoyable. . This approach proved successful, with comments from participants such as: “*this is very well designed*” (Participant No. 005) and “*enjoyable*” (Participant No. 31).

A surprising side effect of the determination to create a board which is inviting and enjoyable to complete is that some police forces have found that the Q board is useful as a tool to discuss policing priorities. The Q board has so far been used internally in Humberside Police Evidence Cafés and in Thames Valley Police during training sessions and at World Café events with the public. Discussions are taking place about whether the board can be used more widely with members of the public.

Stage 4: Choice of sample

The group of individuals (participants) who will complete the Q sort is known as the P-set or P-sample. For this study, the P-set consisted of police officers and staff; partners; and members of the public. Such a ‘multiplex’ of individuals consisting of those familiar with policing as well as ordinary members of the public increases the possibility of exposing unexpected views (Rogers, 1995). As previously mentioned, Q seeks to reveal patterns in these views, rather than exploring in the individuals who hold the views. As a result, a large number of participants are not required, though the research still achieved a very satisfactory number of participants. Rogers (1995:182) provides a useful analogy to help understand this:

“It is rather like dipping into an aquarium known to contain only, say, seven kinds of fish. One does need more than the odd specimen to know that there are goldfish in the tank or that an angel-fish is differently configured from an angler fish. Around 40 to 50 ‘dips’ should give a good picture of the speciation present. So it is with a Q study. Similarly, just as no particular ‘dip’ matters in exploring the tank contents, neither does the having of (or failure to have) any particular individual participant in a Q study.”

Due to the relatively few number of participants and non-random nature of selection, the views revealed are representative of the participants and must not be generalised to the wider public (Raje, 2007). It identifies how individuals see an issue and establishes their views on a particular topic. The P-set can be smaller than the Q-sample, i.e. it is normal for the number of participants to be less than the number of statements (Brouwer, 1999). A reason for this is linked to the analogy by Rogers (1995) provided above: the concept of “finite diversity”, where there can only be a limited number of patterns in the views (Barry & Proops, 1999).

However, in this study, the researchers achieved double the number of participants compared with the size of the Q sample.

The sample of participants (called in Q methodology language the final P-set) consisted of police officers and staff from British Transport Police, Gloucestershire Police, Gwent Police, Humberside Police and London Metropolitan Police. Together, these forces serve a variety of communities with different needs and priorities. Geographically, they cover the southeast and north of England, along with Wales

The sample also included policing partners from two organisations: the Midlands division of a rail transport organization, and a local authority in the same geographical area as the Welsh police force. .

Members of the public were harder to recruit. An attempt was made in a community centre in the Welsh police area but volunteers were not forthcoming. There were people using the community centre but the majority did not wish to participate. A small number were recruited from the PCC's Saturday morning surgery. Other members of the public were recruited from The Open University (volunteers in a cafeteria, so not connected with the Centre for Policing Research and Learning). In the end, the numbers of members of the public was satisfactory, but the research team recognise that more would have been better.

The diverse and careful sampling helped to increase the possibility of uncovering distinct viewpoints and means that the study has included a range of stakeholders. The final sample was 125 participants, of whom 61% were police (both officers and staff), 25% were partners and 14% were members of the public. The percentages are based on the participants the research team was able to recruit within the research time frame.

Volunteers to complete the Q board were recruited through the organisations above (or in public places for the members of the public). Care was taken in attracting volunteers and ensuring that none felt pressured to participate. Communication was carefully worded and the option was available for those interested to register their interest directly with the research team as opposed to through the host organisations. A short 'Frequently Asked Questions' document was created to help the organisations and potential participants understand what the research was about and what to expect.

Stage 5: Q-sort administration (rank ordering of statements)

The steps the study took to complete this stage as follows: 1) Creating the list of instructions for participants and facilitators; 2) Administering the Q-sort; and 3) Collecting and recording the data.

Step 1: Creating the List of Instructions for Participants and Facilitators

Instruction sheets were created for facilitators and participants. In Q, this is often referred to as “conditions of instructions” (Ellingsen et al. 2010, pg. 399). The instructions that participants were given were as follows:

“Everyone knows there are a lot of conflicting demands on the police. The Q-Board has been designed so that you can indicate what is most important to you in policing. There is no right or wrong way to complete the Q-Board. We would like you to complete the Q-Board based on what is important to you.”

The instruction sheet for facilitators also included a post-sort set of questions to ask the participant. There were five questions:

- 1) What was your general rationale for the decisions you made?
- 2) Have you found any statements more difficult than others to sort? (Why was that?)
- 3) Of the three statements most important you, why did you place them there and which is the most valuable to you?
- 4) Of the three statements least important you, why did you place them there and which is the least valuable to you?
- 5) How did you find the experience?

Such questions and recording of general comments made by the participants is vital to help with later interpretation of the sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2005). All the responses to these questions along with the participant number and type of participant (police officer, police staff, partner or public) was transcribed and the findings used in the analysis below.

Step 2: Administering the Q-Sort

The two Q-Boards were taken to the participating organizations or into public spaces as appropriate to collect sorts from different participants.

The research team collected 125 sorts over 15 days (an average of 8 sorts per day). Each participant took between 25 to 45 minutes to sort the 62 statements and to complete the short post-sort interview. Two facilitators and two participants sometimes used the same room, and where this happened the facilitators ensured that no-one was crowded or overlooked. Post-sort interviews took place in separate and quiet locations. This set-up minimised any potential emotional contagion: *“a process in which a person or group influences the emotions or behaviour of another person or group through the conscious or unconscious induction of emotion states and behavioural attitudes”* (Schoenewolf, 1990:50). Participants must not feel like they are being judged for the decisions they make, or else the sort they produce will merely represent what they believe society expects rather than their own deeply held personal views.

Each participant, on arrival, was asked to read and sign a consent form to participate in the research and to optionally answer ten demographic questions (**Appendix 3**). The information included job title, age group, gender and highest educational qualification. Every participant provided this information.

Usually in a Q study, participants are asked to complete a pre-sort. During the pre-sort, the participant would be asked to place the tiles containing the statements into three piles: 1) “agree”; 2) “disagree”; and 3) “neutral”. The process of pre-sorting is valuable in that it allows the participant to familiarise themselves with the statements (Durose et al. 2015). For the current study, there are no “neutral” statements as described above. However, pre-sorting was not used in this study because of the lack of neutral statements. Participants were observed throughout the Q sorting, and it was noticed that most laid all the tiles out on the Q-Board, away from the columns, read them and began sorting. For many of them, this gave them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the statements before they began sorting them, and in this regard, this can be considered as a form of pre-sort albeit not a formal part of the instructions. In addition, for all participants, the benefit of using tiles and a large Q-Board was that it allowed the participants to easily move the statements around and therefore change their prioritisation as they went along (and this also eliminated the need for a pre-sort). Once they finished sorting, they were given a further opportunity to review the entire board and tiles in front of them and decide if they wished to make any changes. They were then briefly interviewed in relation to the five post-sort questions. Once participants have completed their sort and the post-sort interview, they are asked if they had any other comments or questions before leaving.

Step 3: Collecting and Recording the Data

After the participant had left the room, the facilitator took a photograph of the completed sort whilst the tiles were still on the Q-board. The tiles were then turned over in their place to show the statement numbers. Again, a photograph was taken. This meant that there was a digital record of the sort, in case of any mistranscription of the data, because the researchers then noted the statement number and position of the statement for each sort. The photographs taken actually became handy as the research team had to refer to them in order to check recording mistakes. As a result, all 125 of the sorts completed by the participants could be included in the study with none lost. Even with the few mistakes, the transcription error rate was still extremely low, around 0.47% (which is typical of transcription tasks, Schmidt and Hunter, 2015) and which the researchers were able to remove. We turn now to stage 6 of the Q methodology which is to report the findings.

FINDINGS

In this section, we examine the priorities of the participants in two main ways. First, the paper examines the policing priorities in terms of which items were most likely and least likely to be seen as priorities, both for the overall sample, and also by each group (police, partners and public).

Second, we apply multivariate analysis to the whole Q sorts, in order to discern particular patterns in the data from participants. This will use a form of factor analysis adapted to the Q methodology (Watts and Stenner, 2005).

Characteristics of the sample

Before turning to the analysis itself, the paper examines the demographic characteristics of the sample, as shown in **Table 1**. The police participants were the largest group overall, at 61% of the sample, but this group consisted of fairly evenly numbers of police officers (29%) and police staff (32%). There were participants from all ranks below chief officer level (i.e. up to chief superintendent). The percentage of public service partners (local government officials, national transport officials) was similar at 25%. However, the numbers of members of the public willing to take part was lower than those approached to take part in the research but was still satisfactory at 14% of the total sample. Whilst the primary consideration in Q methodology is given to developing the Q sample and the design of the Q sort (McKeown &

Thomas, 2014), a deliberate effort is still required to ensure as much variability in the P-set as is practical (Brown, 1980). As a result, a proper consideration was given to allow different police stakeholders to participate as illustrated in **Table 1**. Remember, complete representativeness is not required since the aim of Q is to explore attitudes in a given population: “*the major concern of Q methodology is not how many people believe such and such, but why and how they believe what they do*” (McKeown & Thomas 2014, ch. 3 pg. 5).

There was an almost equal split in gender (50% and 50% rounded up). Every participant had some form of educational qualification. In terms of police officer experience, the average number of years of service was 14.9. The age of the participant was also diverse and covered all adult age groups. (It would have been interesting to capture the views of youths, particularly since the police continue to try and engage with the younger generation in order to educate and prevent crime, but it was not practical to organise with the issue of parental consent to be considered.)

These demographic data are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The sample: demographic characteristics

	Number	% Of Total
Participant Groups		
(1) Police	76	61
Police Officers	36	29
Constable / PCSO	20	16
Sergeant	9	7
Inspector	5	4
Chief Inspector	1	1
Superintendent	1	1
Chief Superintendent	1	1
Police Staff	40	32
(2) Partners	31	25
(3) Public	18	14
Total	125	100
Average length of police officer experience (years)	14.9 years	
Gender		
Male	63	50
Female	62	50
Total	125	100
Age Group		

18-24	11	9
25-34	48	38
35-44	28	22
45-54	25	20
55-64	7	6
65+	6	5
Total	125	100
Highest Qualifications		
None	0	0
A levels	42	33
First Degree	51	41
Post Graduation Degree	32	26
Total	125	100

Most and least valued priorities

The most likely and least likely statements to be viewed as priorities will be presented for the overall sample first, before being broken down into individual groups.

Three most valued statements: Overall

The three statements seen as most valuable and placed within the column +9 overall were statements 31, 20 and 49.

Statement 31: “Deal with child sexual exploitation” was viewed as the most valuable priority, appearing 44 times under scale +9, with 35% of participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 20: “Investigate serious offences such as rape” was viewed as the second most valuable priority, appearing 43 times under scale +9, with 34% of participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 49: “Protect and safeguard children” was viewed as the third most valuable priority, appearing 28 times under scale +9, with 22% of participants placing it in the top three.

Three least valued statements: Overall

The three statements seen as least valuable relative to the other statements and placed within column +1 overall were statements 55, 45 and 30.

Statement 55: “Deal with nuisance parking” was viewed as the least valuable priority, appearing 81 times under scale +1, with 65% of participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 45: “Reduce the length of time someone is placed on bail” was viewed as the second least valuable priority, appearing 31 times under scale +1, with 25% of participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 30: “Investigate crimes that occur in prisons” was viewed as the third least valuable priority, appearing 22 times under scale +1, with 18% of participants placing it in the bottom three.

Three most valued statements: Police

The three statements seen as most valuable and placed within the column +9 by police were statements 49, with 20 and 31 as joint second and 40 as fourth .

Statement 49: “Protect and safeguard children” was viewed as the most valuable priority, appearing 25 times under scale +9, with 33% of police participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 20: “Investigate serious offences such as rape” was viewed as the second most valuable priority, appearing 24 times under scale +9, with 32% of police participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 31: “Deal with child sexual exploitation” was viewed jointly as the second most valuable priority, also appearing 24 times under scale +9, with 32% of police participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 40: “Dedicate resources to counter terrorism” was viewed as the fourth most valuable priority, appearing 23 times under scale +9, with 30% of police participants placing it in the top three.

Police officers and staff made comments such as: “*these are very important to me for police to deal with as they could have a significant impact on the lives of many*” (Participant No. 013); “*they represent awful crimes to young people*” (Participant No. 016); “*crimes that happen to the young massively impact on their future life*” (Participant No. 106); “[prioritise] sexual offences because it affects the lives of victims in perpetuity” (Participant No. 011).

Three least valued statements: Police

The bottom three statements seen as least valuable relative to the other statements and placed within column +1 by police were statements 55, 45 and 30.

Statement 55: “Deal with nuisance parking” was viewed as the least valuable priority, appearing 54 times under scale +1, with 71% of police participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 45: “Reduce the length of time someone is placed on bail” was viewed as the second least valuable priority, appearing 16 times under scale +1, with 21% of police participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 30: “Investigate crimes that occur in prisons” was viewed as the third least valuable priority, appearing 14 times under scale +1, with 18% of police participants placing it in the bottom three.

Police officers and staff made comments such as: “*nuisance parking is an inconvenience, not a priority*” (Participant No. 017); “[*nuisance parking is*] *not important in the grand scheme of things and there are some things that are frustrating, but no harm is caused*” (Participant No. 100); “[*the Prison Service*] *should deal with crimes inside*” (Participant No. 60); in relation to bail, “*imposing artificial constraints does not reflect the complex reality of policing*” (Participant No. 27).

Three most valued statements: Partners

The three statements seen as most valuable and placed within the column +9 by partners were statements 49, 31 and 20.

Statement 49: “Protect and safeguard children” was viewed as the most valuable priority, appearing 14 times under scale +9, with 45% of partner participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 31: “Deal with child sexual exploitation” was viewed jointly as the second most valuable priority, appearing 11 times under scale +9, with 35% of partner participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 20: “Investigate serious offences such as rape” was viewed as the third most valuable priority, appearing 10 times under scale +9, with 32% of partner participants placing it in the top three.

Partners made comments such as: “*children are the most vulnerable and in need of protection*” (Participant No. 046); “*I have children. I would hate for something to happen to*

them” (Participant No. 056); “All placed here due to seriousness of the crimes and effects on victims” (Participant No. 084).

Three least valued statements: Partners

The three statements seen as least valuable relative to the other statements and placed within column +1 by partners were statements 55, 45 and 30.

Statement 55: “Deal with nuisance parking” was viewed as the least valuable priority, appearing 21 times under scale +1, with 78% of partner participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 45: “Reduce the length of time someone is placed on bail” was viewed as the second least valuable priority, appearing 6 times under scale +1, with 19% of partner participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 30: “Investigate crimes that occur in prisons” was viewed as the third least valuable priority, appearing 5 times under scale +1, with 16% of partner participants placing it in the bottom three.

Partners made comments such as: in relation to nuisance parking “*it is not important to policing, it is a local authority matter*” (Participant No. 056), a view that was repeated often amongst the partner participants; “*prison offences should be investigated by the prison, not police. The police have done their job getting them into prison*” (Participant No. 119); “*you don’t need highly trained resources to deal with low level misdemeanour*” (Participant No. 121);

Three most valued statements: Public

The three statements seen as most valuable and placed within the column +9 by the public were statements 20 and 31 as joint first, statements 35, 38 and 40 as joint second and statements 36 and 49 as joint fourth¹.

Statement 20: “Investigate serious offences such as rape” was viewed as the most valuable priority, appearing 9 times under scale +9, with 50% of the public participants placing it in the top three.

¹ In ranking systems, where statements are equal in rank, the ranking system then moves to the number which follows the numbers which are equal (e.g. if two statements are ranked first equal, then the next statement is ranked as third).

Statement 31: “Deal with child sexual exploitation” was viewed jointly as the most valuable priority, appearing 9 times under scale +9, with 50% of the public participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 35: “Investigate violent crimes that cause injury” was viewed jointly as the second most valuable priority, appearing 4 times under scale +9, with 22% of public participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 38: “Deal with modern slavery which includes human trafficking” was viewed jointly as the second most valuable priority, appearing 4 times under scale +9, with 22% of public participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 40: “Dedicate resources to counter terrorism” was viewed jointly as the second most valuable priority, appearing 4 times under scale +9, with 22% of public participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 36: “Dismantle organised crime groups” was viewed jointly as the fourth most valuable priority, appearing 3 times under scale +9, with 17% of public participants placing it in the top three.

Statement 49: “Protect and safeguard children” was viewed jointly as the fourth most valuable priority, appearing 3 times under scale +9, with 17% of public participants placing it in the top three.

The public made comments such as: *“crime that have the worst impact on people”* (Participant No. 004); *“[based on] severity and impact”* (Participant No. 089); *“if you put a dent in organised crime, it will have an impact on a lot of other crimes”* (Participant No. 094); *“kids can’t defend themselves”* (Participant No. 090).

Three least valued statements: Public

The three statements seen as least valuable relative to the other statements and placed within column +1 by the public were statements 45, 55 and statements 30, 50 and 54 as joint third.

Statement 45: “Reduce the length of time someone is placed on bail” was viewed as the least valuable priority, appearing 9 times under scale +1, with 50% of the public participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 55: “Deal with nuisance parking” was viewed as the second least valuable priority, appearing 6 times under scale +1, with 33% of the public participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 30: “Investigate crimes that occur in prisons” was viewed jointly as the third least valuable priority, appearing 3 times under scale +1, with 17% of the public participants placing it in the bottom three.

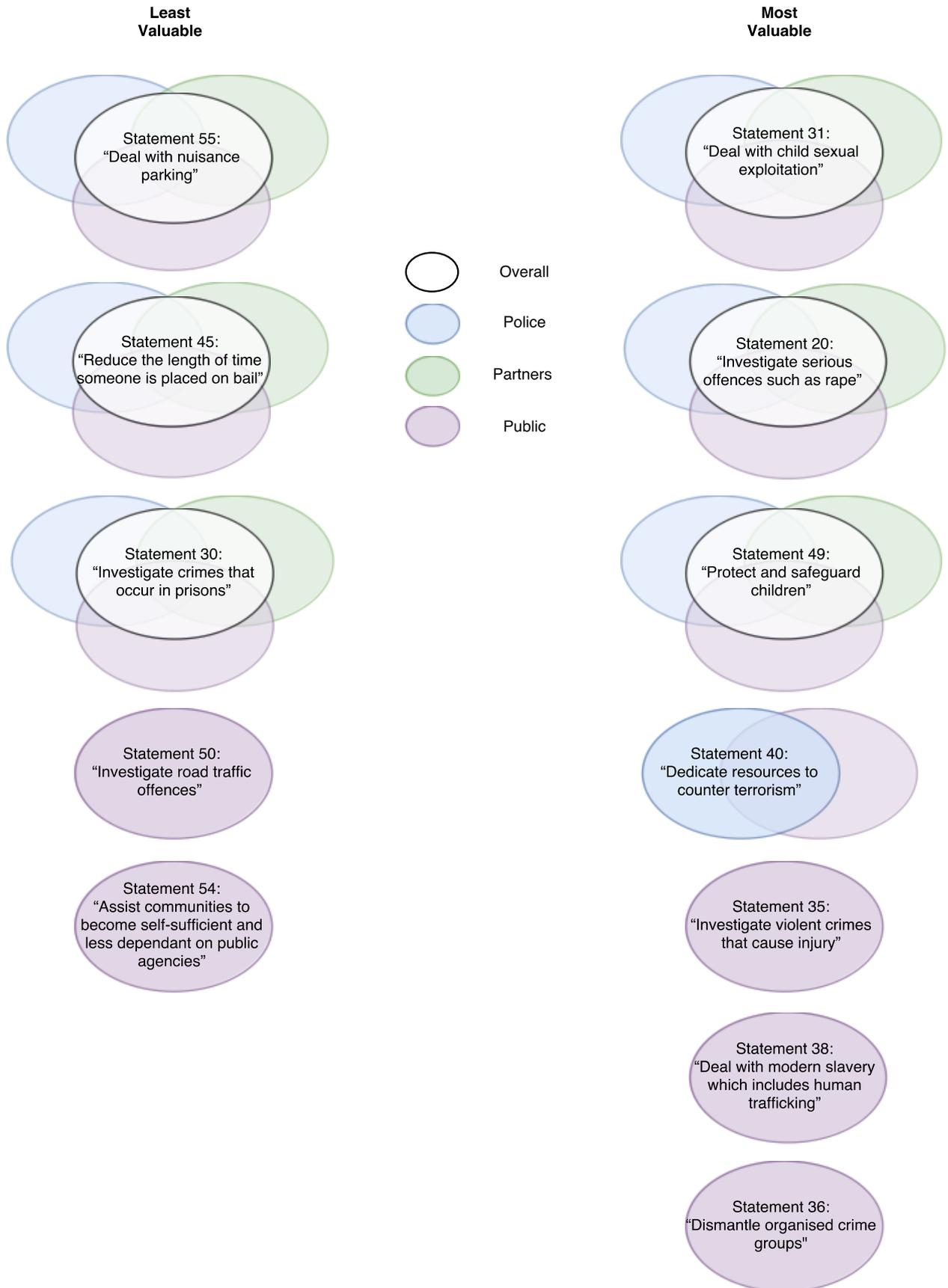
Statement 50: “Investigate road traffic offences” was viewed as the third least valuable priority, appearing 3 times under scale +1, with 17% of the public participants placing it in the bottom three.

Statement 54: “Assist communities to become self-sufficient and less dependant on public agencies” was viewed as the third least valuable priority, appearing 3 times under scale +1, with 17% of the public participants placing it in the bottom three.

The public made comments such as: “*nuisance parking is not a police issue*” (Participant No. 094); “*nuisance parking can create problems, but it is not important as the other statements*” (Participant No. 090).

As **Figure 4** illustrates, there is a considerable degree of overlap between the priorities as seen by the three groups, and this suggests that there could be a strong basis for collaborative discussion between the stakeholders as to how these issues might be tackled.

Figure. 4: Diagram illustrating overlapping least and most valuable priorities



Analysis of different types of participant

Turning now to the factor analytic procedures, this part of the paper now examines the different patterns of prioritising within the group of participants. While the analysis above has been in aggregate this section examines the variation among the respondents in how they view priorities.

The analysis employed by Q consists of a by-person correlation and factor analytic procedure (Watts & Stenner, 2005). Being a by-person factor analysis is important. It is due to the fact that it is by-person rather than by-variable which distinguishes Q from other methodologies; i.e. it is the person who becomes the variable (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This way, we understand the *“life lived from the standpoint of the person living it”* (Brown, 1996:561). Factor analysis is a statistical process used to reveal patterns and connections in opinions, potentially uncovering insights (Raje, 2007, p. 468). In Q methodology, a ‘factor’ indicates a cluster of persons who have similar Q-sorts and therefore share a viewpoint (Brown, 1980). The remainder of this section will provide a step-by-step guide to completing the analysis and subsequent interpretation.

There are several software resources providing statistical analysis based on rankings (as used in Q sort) to complete the analysis: The research team selected KenQ which is a web-based application accessed via: <https://shawnbanasick.github.io/ken-q-analysis/>. It allowed for Q sorts to be entered online or offline through a spreadsheet. When done online, the software automatically checks the Q sorts for duplicate or missing numbers. Data validation rules and conditional formatting allowed for duplicate or missing numbers to be quickly highlighted and rectified within the spreadsheet.

An extract of the correlation matrix is shown below.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix between Q-Sorts

Q-Sorts	001	002	003	...	123	124	125
001	100	31	26	...	48	38	28
002		100	0	...	-3	44	28
003			100	...	46	35	27
...			
123				...	100	40	60
124				...		100	34
125				...			100

The first step in the multivariate analysis is the creation of a correlation matrix (table) of all the individual Q-sorts (Table 2). The matrix shows the relationship of each Q-sort with every other Q-sort (Watts & Stenner, 2005), i.e. one person’s viewpoint against every other person’s viewpoint. The correlation matrix of Q-sorts is seen as a transitional step needed for factor analysis to be completed, so in most cases no attention is needed on the matrix itself (Brown, 1980, pg. 287). Of course, if the matrix reveals extremely high degrees of correlation between each sort, this may require further exploration.

A centroid factor analysis was then applied. Centroid is a method of factor analysis and is the method often used in Q studies (Jeffares & Skelcher, 2011). With centroid factor analysis, it permits the researcher a degree of freedom to consider factors that are guided by theory, which may have been discounted using other methods (Brown, 1980). The researchers did not specify the number of factors at this point. Four factors were identified, accounting for 50% of the variance, i.e. these four factors or shared viewpoints explain 50% of all the participants’ views (**Table 3**). Factors were selected where eigenvalues were greater than 1.00, following advised procedures on this. Eigenvalues are used in factor analysis to determine the significance of a factor. Factors with eigenvalues less than 1.00 are regarded as insignificant and of too little interest to be considered (Brown, 1980:40).

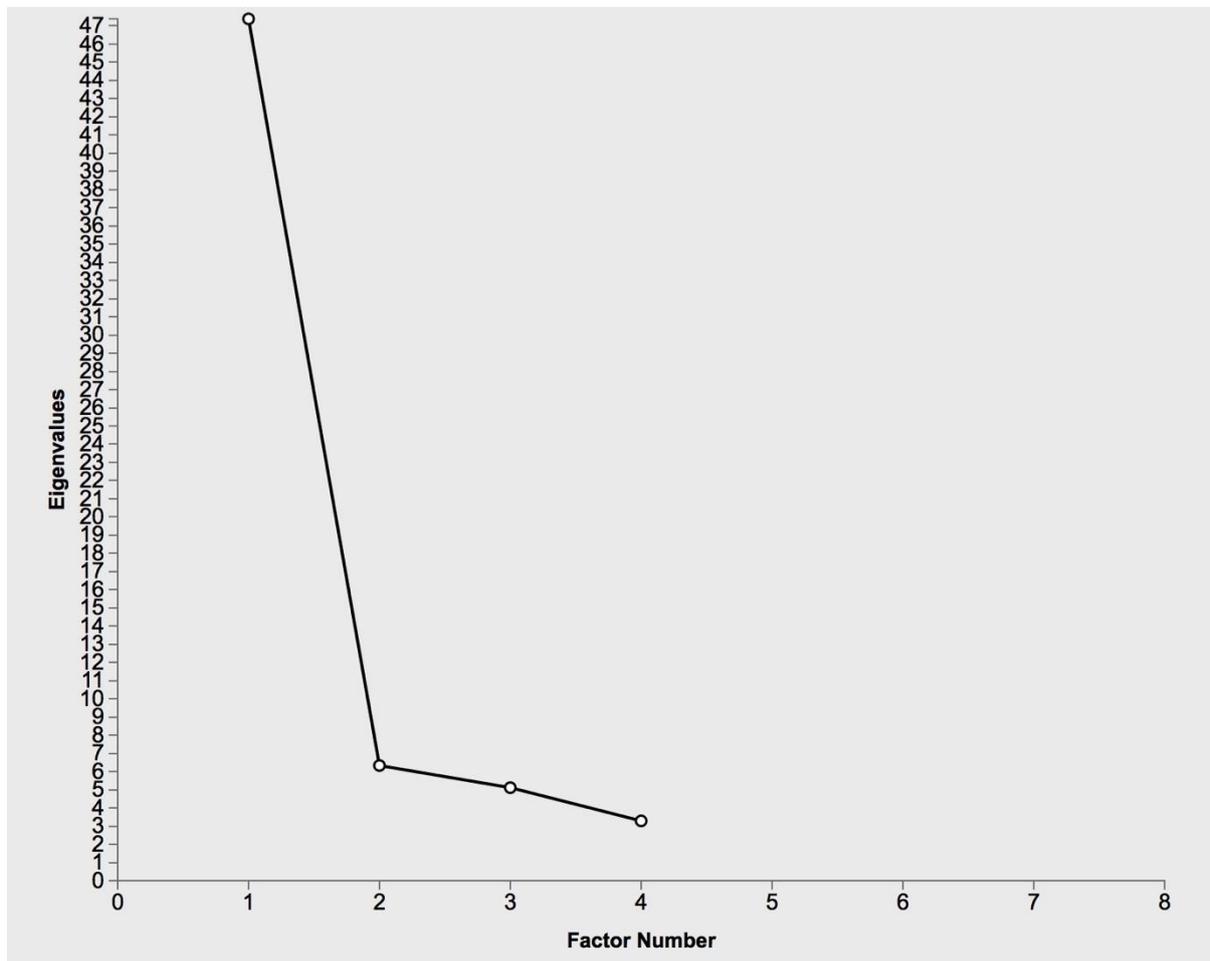
An extract of the factor matrix is shown below.

Table 3: Factor Matrix

Respondent	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
001	0.4721	0.0533	-0.1759	-0.0953
002	0.4382	-0.2991	-0.1357	-0.1991
003	0.3891	0.3411	-0.1335	0.0561
...
123	0.6625	0.5338	0.11	0.0285
124	0.6315	-0.034	-0.3461	-0.1724
125	0.6658	0.364	0.0319	0.0788
Eigenvalues	47.3849	6.3313	5.1157	3.2874
% Explained Variance	38	5	4	3
Cum % Explained Var	38	43	47	50

The researchers also undertook a scree plot as another way to check the importance of factors in the data. As clearly illustrated in the scree plot (**Fig. 5**), the strength of the factors diminishes considerably after the first factor. This suggests that the first factor is by far and away the most important factor and explains the data most fully.

Fig. 5: Scree plot showing strength of factors



The four factors are then 'rotated'. Again, this is a statistical method that is used to maximize the variance explained by the factors identified (Watts & Stenner, 200). The research team used varimax rotation, as the technique which has been widely adopted not only in Q studies. By rotating the factors, it does not change the data, but changes the angle at which the data is viewed (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Once the varimax rotation is applied, the individual sorts goes through a flagging process against the factors identified. Put simply, all this will do is mark the sorts that significantly align (loads) to an identified factor (Donner, 2001).

Following the varimax rotation, the Q analysis showed the emergence of four particular views people had about what policing should prioritise. The researchers examined what made each perspective distinctive (looking at the placement of items across the board) and have labelled each view as follows:

- 1) Personal Harm (Reducing serious personal psychological and physical harm)
- 2) Engagement (Reducing community harm and creating a fearless society)
- 3) Crime-fighter (A focus on crime itself)
- 4) Good Cop (Policing being committed to serving the public)

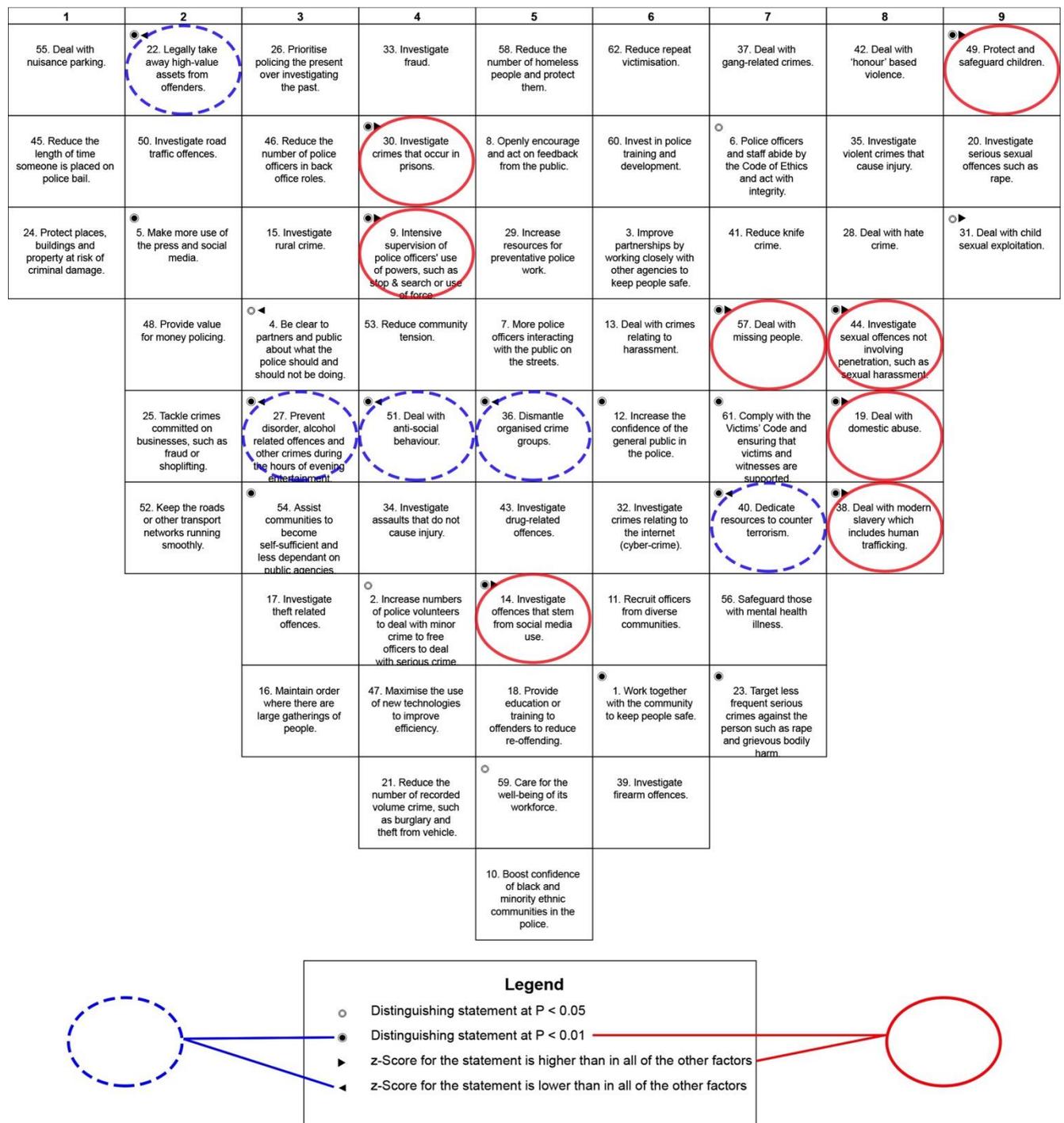
Statistically, there was a high degree of correlation between the four factors (**Table 4**), meaning that although the four views are statistically unique, they contain a number of similarities and overlaps. However, on closer inspection of the Q sorts for each of the factors, there were subtle differences, which substantially changed how the factor could be interpreted. This is a reminder why knowledge of the subject matter is vital because Q is able to reveal these nuances.

Table 4: Factor Correlation

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 1	1	0.6174	0.6929	0.6117
Factor 2		1	0.4887	0.6083
Factor 3			1	0.525
Factor 4				1

Factor 1: Personal harm

Figure 6: Composite Q-Sort of Factor 1



The first factor, which we have labelled “Personal harm”, and representing the dominant perspective among the participants, (accounting for 38% of the total variance in the data) is that police should focus on reducing intense psychological and physical harm to individuals.

The composite or ideal Q Sort for this viewpoint illustrates this (**Fig. 6**). The people in this factor believe that dealing with child sexual exploitation, investigating serious sexual offences such as rape, and protecting and safeguarding children (statements 31, 20 and 49) are high priorities for the police, in their view. This theme of substantial personal or psychological harm was also echoed in the next most important police activities: dealing with modern slavery, domestic abuse, sexual offences not involving penetration, hate crime, ‘honour’ based violence and violent crimes that cause injury (statements 38, 19, 44, 28, 42, 35). Dealing with missing persons was slightly lower in their priority but was higher compared with the perspectives of the other three groups. This adds to the picture of this grouping being concerned about personal and psychological harm to individuals.

Although they were less concerned about crimes in prison, they rated this higher than other groups, again reinforcing the picture of concern about personal harm.

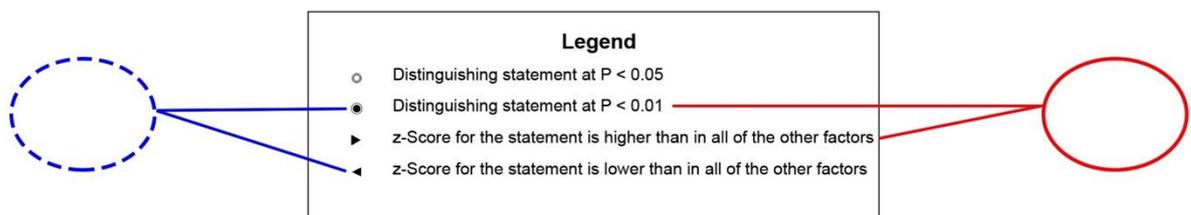
Participants who load onto Factor 1 displayed a tendency to focus on crimes that are emotive and cause the greatest personal harm. They want the police to focus on reducing or eliminating these types of crimes. At the other end of their prioritisation, these participants cared least about protecting personal and business possessions from criminal damage (places, buildings and property), reducing the length of time someone is placed on police bail and dealing with nuisance parking (statements 24, 45 and 55). Compared with other perspectives (factors), they were less concerned about crimes which created societal harm (e.g. counter-terrorism, organised crime groups, preventing disorder or dealing with anti-social behaviour, again reinforcing the emphasis on personal harm. Compared with other groups, they placed lower priority on the police being clear to partners and the public about what they should and should not be doing, and we speculate that this is because they trust the police to do what is right, this is less an issue for them than for some other groups.

Participants whose views loaded most onto Factor 1 made comments such as: *“thinking about me personally and what I was fearful of and what I do as a job and what I know more about”*; *“I found the offences I know less about harder to sort, as I put them lower down but they may still be important if I knew more about them”*; *“very difficult, kept changing my mind, all important for different reasons”*; *“the most valuable statements I chose are ones I believe only the police can deal with, [whereas] the least valuable ones were where education and partner agencies can help with the most”*; *“what I think is most serious, implications on the person and family”*.

Factor 2: Engagement

Fig.7: Composite Q-Sort of Factor 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
55. Deal with nuisance parking.	24. Protect places, buildings and property at risk of criminal damage.	52. Keep the roads or other transport networks running smoothly.	6. Police officers and staff abide by the Code of Ethics and act with integrity.	42. Deal with 'honour' based violence.	54. Assist communities to become self-sufficient and less dependant on public agencies.	8. Openly encourage and act on feedback from the public.	37. Deal with gang-related crimes.	40. Dedicate resources to counter terrorism.
30. Investigate crimes that occur in prisons.	45. Reduce the length of time someone is placed on police bail.	34. Investigate assaults that do not cause injury.	11. Recruit officers from diverse communities.	44. Investigate sexual offences not involving penetration, such as sexual harassment.	4. Be clear to partners and public about what the police should and should not be doing.	28. Deal with hate crime.	12. Increase the confidence of the general public in the police.	1. Work together with the community to keep people safe.
25. Tackle crimes committed on businesses, such as fraud or shoplifting.	14. Investigate offences that stem from social media use.	15. Investigate rural crime.	17. Investigate theft related offences.	18. Provide education or training to offenders to reduce re-offending.	22. Legally take away high-value assets from offenders.	41. Reduce knife crime.	56. Safeguard those with mental health illness.	7. More police officers interacting with the public on the streets.
	9. Intensive supervision of police officers' use of powers, such as stop & search or use of force.	46. Reduce the number of police officers in back office roles.	26. Prioritise policing the present over investigating the past.	43. Investigate drug-related offences.	53. Reduce community tension.	51. Deal with anti-social behaviour.	20. Investigate serious sexual offences such as rape.	
	48. Provide value for money policing.	16. Maintain order where there are large gatherings of people.	62. Reduce repeat victimisation.	19. Deal with domestic abuse.	60. Invest in police training and development.	35. Investigate violent crimes that cause injury.	49. Protect and safeguard children.	
	50. Investigate road traffic offences.	61. Comply with the Victims' Code and ensuring that victims and witnesses are supported.	57. Deal with missing people.	2. Increase numbers of police volunteers to deal with minor crime to free officers to deal with serious crime.	10. Boost confidence of black and minority ethnic communities in the police.	36. Dismantle organised crime groups.	31. Deal with child sexual exploitation.	
		21. Reduce the number of recorded volume crime, such as burglary and theft from vehicle.	27. Prevent disorder, alcohol related offences and other crimes during the hours of evening entertainment.	32. Investigate crimes relating to the internet (cyber-crime).	29. Increase resources for preventative police work.	3. Improve partnerships by working closely with other agencies to keep people safe.		
		33. Investigate fraud.	13. Deal with crimes relating to harassment.	23. Target less frequent serious crimes against the person such as rape and grievous bodily harm.	59. Care for the well-being of its workforce.	39. Investigate firearm offences.		
			58. Reduce the number of homeless people and protect them.	5. Make more use of the press and social media.	38. Deal with modern slavery which includes human trafficking.			
				47. Maximise the use of new technologies to improve efficiency.				



The participants with this viewpoint represent 5% of the variance (note the sharp drop from the first factor with this variance level). We have labelled this fact “Engagement”. Their statement priorities indicate that they feel that policing should be concerned with working with the community to keep people safe and with more officers interacting with the public on

the streets. They want the police to encourage and act on feedback from the public and to work closely with other partnerships to keep people safe. This speaks of a perspective which is about keeping people informed, interacting and learning from them. Compared with other groups they place more priority on the police making more use of the press and social media. (that is a medium priority for them but distinctively higher than other groups). The focus is at community and interaction. The composite Q Sort for this viewpoint illustrates this (**Fig. 7**). This was followed by dealing with child sexual exploitation, protect and safeguard children, investigate serious sexual offences such as rape, safeguard those with mental health illness, increase the confidence of the general public in the police and deal with gang-related crimes (statements 31, 49, 20, 56, 12 and 37).

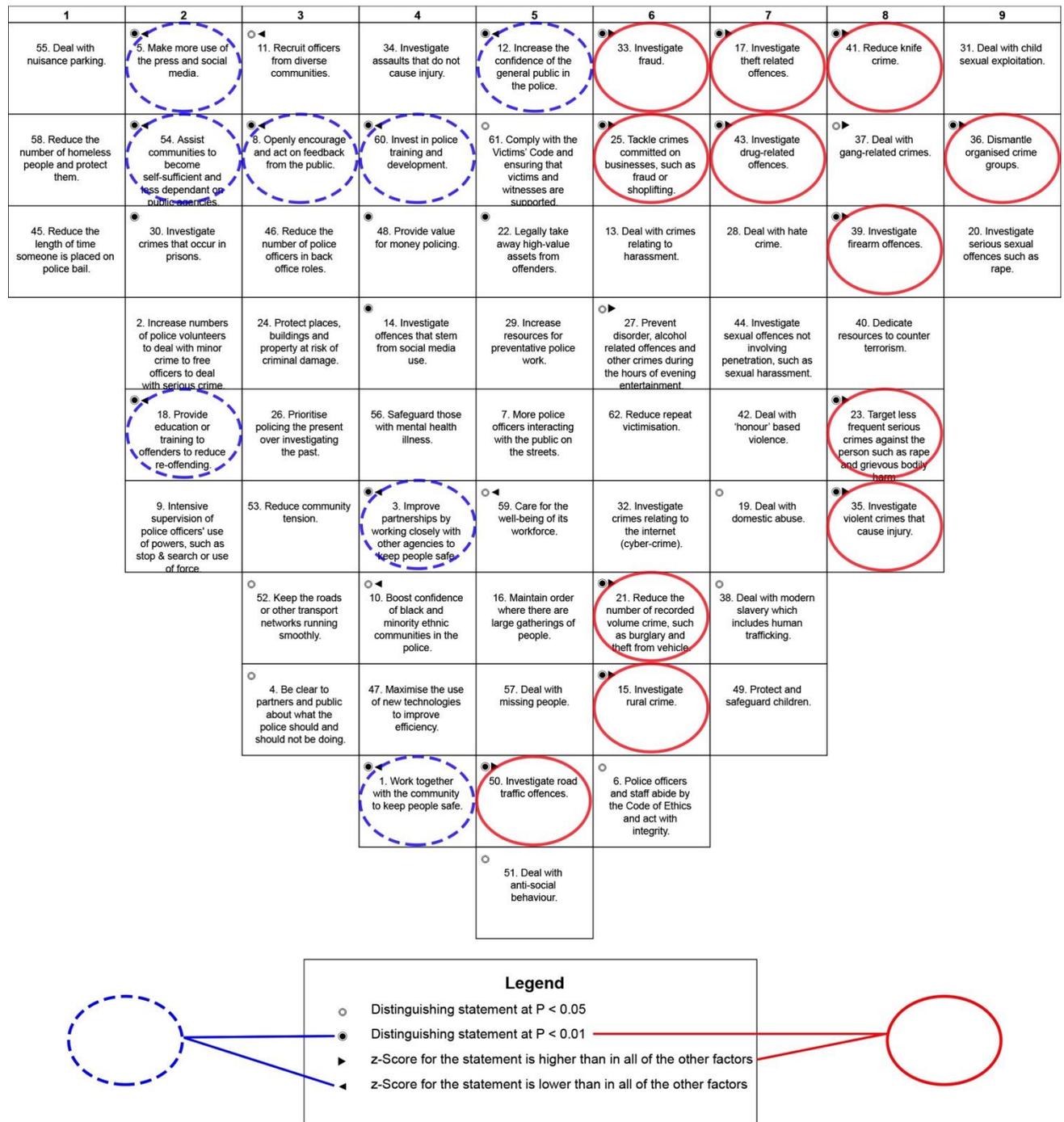
The viewpoint expressed in Factor 2 involves people who report that they care about serious crimes but tend to emphasise those that affect the wider community and they want the police to engage and interact with the public.

At the other end of the scale, these participants cared least about crimes committed on businesses, crimes that occur in prisons and dealing with nuisance parking (statements 25, 30 and 55). Compared with other perspectives, they put less emphasis on some aspects of personal harm (e.g. domestic abuse and sexual harassment). Compared with others, they were less interested in the police abiding by the code of ethics and to some extent the Victims Code, suggesting that they trust the police and are less procedural in their approach to policing.

Participants whose views loaded most onto Factor 2 made comments such as: *“I believe in community working”*; *“other agencies can keep the roads running smoothly, the police don’t need to do”*; *“very interesting to see what the police do, I won’t be complaining about the police again”*; *“prioritised those that provide long term benefits”*; *“the public need to come forward, if not, the police are working with an incomplete picture”*; *“cannot put value on policing, it costs what it costs”*; *“security is most important to me”*.

Factor 3: Crime-fighter

Figure 8: Composite Q-Sort of Factor 3



The participants with this viewpoint represent only 4% of the variance but they have a different emphasis for some priorities. Their priorities indicate that they feel that the police should focus on the crimes themselves, particularly violent and organised crime as well as sexual crimes. The composite Q Sort for this viewpoint illustrates this (Fig. 8). People

expressing this perspective believe most that police officers should investigate serious sexual offences such as rape, dismantle organised crime groups and deal with child sexual exploitation (statements 20, 36 and 31). This was followed by investigating violent crimes that cause injury, target serious crimes, dedicate resources to counter terrorism, investigate firearm offences, deal with gang-related crimes and reduce knife crime (statements 35, 23, 40, 39, 37 and 41). Participants who load onto Factor 3 appear to have what has been more of a traditional view of policing where they value a police service that concentrates on dealing with criminal offences.

Compared with other groups they prioritise more a number of relatively straightforward crimes such as burglary and theft from vehicles, rural crime, drug-related offences, and traffic offences though they also emphasise more than others fraud and crime on businesses. This includes volume crime such as burglary and theft, rural crime and traffic offences.

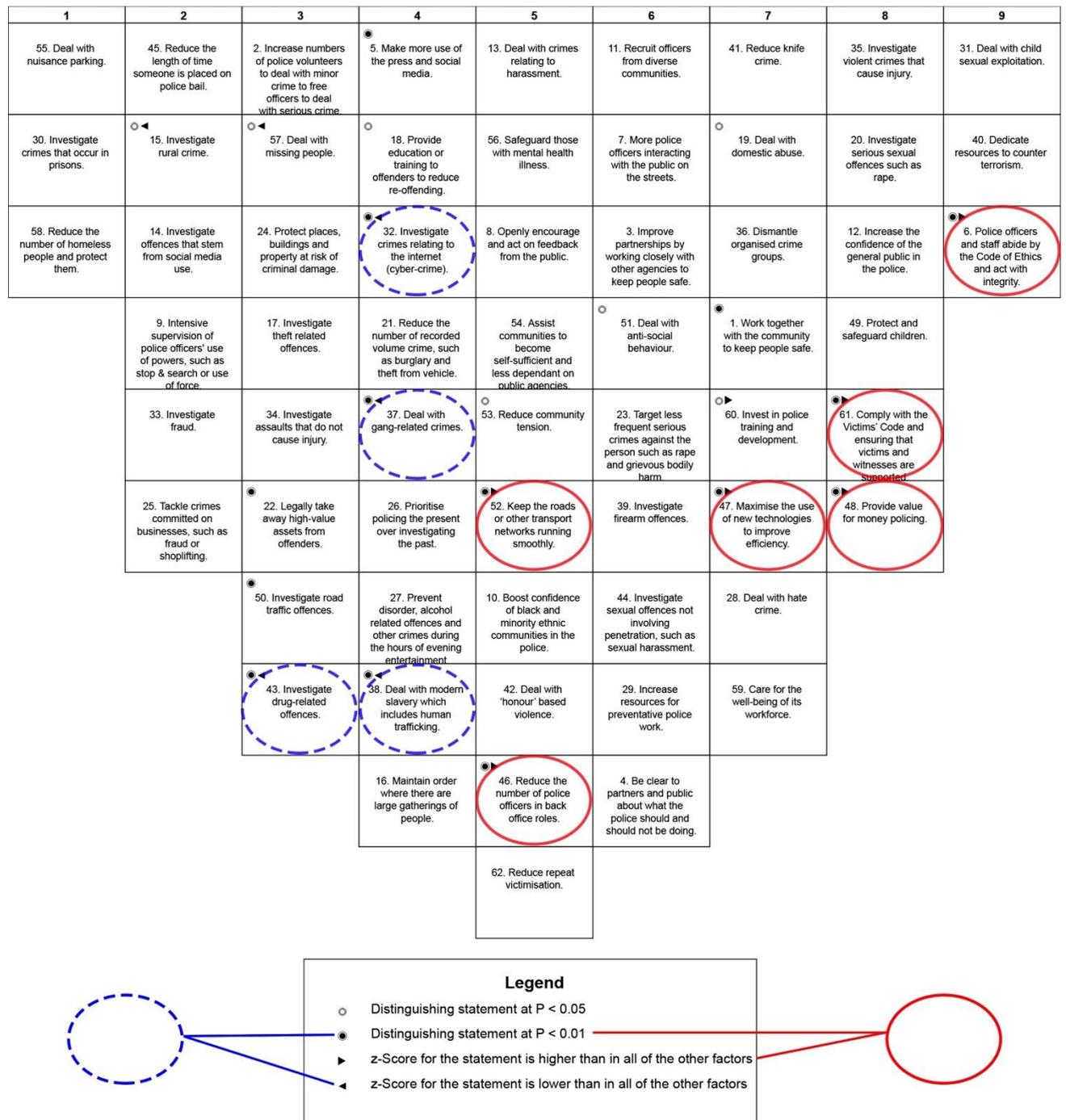
At the other end of the scale, these participants gave much lower priority to police activities which were not about crime - reducing the length of time someone is placed on police bail, reducing the numbers of homeless people and protect them, and dealing with nuisance parking (statements 45, 58 and 55).

Compared with other perspectives they put less emphasis on how policing was achieved – they gave relatively less priority to working with the community, increasing public confidence, improving partnerships, investing in police training and development, providing education to offenders to reduce re-offending and police using social media. There is a strong sense of just getting on and tackling crime.

Participants who loaded most onto Factor 3 made comments such as: *“based on impact on public, can make or break people’s lives”*; *“violent crime is important to me”*; *“I believe all crimes should be dealt with and investigated”*; *“[I prioritised dealing] with awful crimes to young people”*; *“the police have too many priorities”*; *“[prioritised] based on seriousness of crime and how frequent it is”*.

Factor 4: Good cop

Fig.9: Composite Q-Sort of Factor 4



The participants with this viewpoint represent 3% of the variance and feel that the police should focus on serving the public with a high degree of professionalism, ethics and efficiency. The composite Q Sort for this viewpoint illustrates this (**Fig. 9**). People grouped in this factor believe that police officers and staff need to abide by the Code of Ethics and act

with integrity, dedicate resources to counter terrorism and deal with child sexual exploitation (statements 6, 40 and 31). This was followed by providing value for money policing, complying with the Victims' Code by ensuring that victim and witnesses are supported, protecting and safeguarding children, increasing the confidence of the general public in the police, investigate serious sexual offences such as rape and investigate violent crimes that cause injury (statements 48, 61, 49, 12, 20 and 35). Participants who load onto Factor 4 demonstrates a view that it is not just what the police do, but how they go about doing it which is equally important.

Compared with other perspectives, participants gave greater emphasis not only to ethics and codes but also to value for money and the need to maximize the use of new technologies to improve efficiency. They put about the middle of priorities – but higher than other groups – keeping transport networks running smoothly, and reducing the number of police officers in back office roles. So overall, this factor has an emphasis on ethics and being effective.

At the other end of the scale, these participants gave the lowest priority to reducing the number of homeless people (and protecting them), investigating crimes that occur in prisons and dealing with nuisance parking (statements 58, 30 and 55).

Compared with other perspectives, the view in this grouping about lower priority matters included dealing with gang-related crime, modern slavery, drug-related offences, and cyber-crime. This is perhaps harder to interpret as a grouping of police activities but it is possible that these are seen as either not a police matter or else as relatively unwinnable. With the high priority emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, these may seem more resource intensive for what is achieved.

Participants who loaded most onto Factor 3 made comments such as: *“I focus on community confidence and serious crime categories”*; *“confidence and integrity are key to successful policing”*; *“these are national issues that can undermine the fabric of society; “[I prioritise based on] impact of offence and then public confidence factors”*.

Factor analysis by type of participant (police, partner and public)

The same factor analysis procedure (as described above) was completed for each group separately: 1) Police; 2) Partners; and 3) Public. This was to see if different viewpoints

would be revealed when each group was treated in isolation given how sensitive Q could be to reveal such viewpoints. Interestingly, for the police group, five factors were revealed compared to only two factors each for partners and the public. This suggests there may be a greater variety of views within the police than among the public (though further research is needed to confirm this).

The five police factors accounted for 53% of the variance within that group:

Police Factor 1: “*A focus on crime and safeguarding*”. The factor accounted for 39% of the variance. Participants who align to this viewpoint prioritise criminal offences, but also wider safeguarding such as: “safeguard those with mental health issues” and “deal with missing people”. These officers appear to be also in tune with emerging crimes since statements relating to cyber-crime and social media were selected and ranked higher compared to the other factors.

Police Factor 2: “*An efficient and productive police service*”. The factor accounted for 4% of the variance. Participants who align to this viewpoint have distinguishing statements such as “provide value for money policing”, “care for the wellbeing of its workforce”, “reduce the number of police officers in back office roles” and “invest in police training and development”.

Police Factor 3: “*A focus on really serious crimes*”. The factor accounted for 4% of the variance. The participants who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “dismantle organised crime groups”, “investigate firearms offences” and “deal with gang-related crime”. Other statements ranked highly were “dedicate resources to counter terrorism” and “deal with modern slavery which includes human trafficking”. These officers had distinguishing statements of “invest in police training and development” and “provide value for money police” which were of a low priority compared to the other factors.

Police Factor 4: “*Community focus and an engaged police service*”. The factor accounted for 3% of the variance. The officers who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “work together with the community to keep people safe”, “reduce community tension”, openly encourage and act on feedback from the public” and “make more use of the press and social media”. These officers placed “provide value for money policing” at the bottom and this statement was also distinguishing from other

viewpoints.

Police Factor 5: “*An accountable and professional police service*”. The factor accounted for 3% of the variance. The officers who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “police officers and staff abide by the Code of Ethics”, “recruit officers from diverse communities” and “intensive supervision of police officers’ use of powers, such as stop and search or use of force”. Other statements which were prioritised highly include: “increase the confidence of the general public in the police”, “boost confidence of black and minority ethnic communities in the police”, “more officers interacting with the public on the streets” and “work together with the community to keep people safe”.

The two factors for the partners group accounted for 46% of the variance in that group:

Partners Factor 1: “*Protecting the vulnerable*”. The factor accounted for 41% of the variance. Participants who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “protect and safeguard children”, “deal with domestic abuse” and “safeguard those with mental health illness”. Other statements which ranked highly were: “deal with honour based violence”, “deal with child sexual exploitation” and “deal with hate crime”.

Partners Factor 2: “*A focus on really serious crimes*”. The factor accounted for 5% of the variance. Participants who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “dedicate resources to counter terrorism”, “deal with gang-related crimes”, “investigate firearms offences”, “dismantle organised crime groups”, “target less frequent serious crimes against the person such as rape and grievous bodily harm” and “reduce knife crime”.

The two factors for the public group account for 40% of the variance in that group:

Public Factors 1: “*A focus on really serious crimes and safeguarding the vulnerable*”. The factor accounted for 32% of the variance. Participants who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “target less frequent serious crimes against the person such as rape and grievous bodily harm”, “investigate serious sexual offences such as rape”, “deal with gang related crimes”, “reduce knife crime”, “deal with

domestic abuse”, “deal with honour based violence” and “deal with missing people”.

Public Factors 2: “*Community focused policing*”. The factor accounted for 8% of the variance. Participants who aligned to this viewpoint have the following distinguishing statements that ranked highly: “work together with the community to keep people safe”, “increase the confidence of the general public in the police”, “openly encourage and act on feedback from the public”, “more police officers interacting with the public on the streets”, “improve partnerships by working closely with other agencies to keep people safe”, “assist communities to become self-sufficient and less dependent on public agencies” and “ increase the numbers of police volunteers to deal with minor crime to free officers to deal with serious crimes”.

DISCUSSION*

This research study aimed to ask three questions: first, to identify the views of police officers and staff, of public service partners working with the police, and with members of the public on policing priorities. Second, to examine the similarities and differences in the policing priorities (representing of public value) of these police stakeholder. Third, to assess the value of Q methodology as a means by which to examine public value (and policing issues more generally).

In this paper, the discussion reverses these these questions, because the contribution of the study to understanding public value is dependent on the quality and robustness of the methodology. Hence, we commence by examining Q methodology.

Q Methodology

Q methodology is increasingly used in aspects of public policy and public management in a variety of ways (e.g. Jeffares and Skelcher, 2011; Jeffares and Dickinson, 2016; Baker and Jeffares, 2014) as a means to explore aspects of subjectivity and to explore variations in viewpoints held by particular citizens or groups. It has not been applied to any great extent to policing and, of those small number of studies which do exist, most are in the USA, which has a radically different context for its policing. Therefore, this study breaks new ground, being a study of UK policing.

The creation of the universe of statements (the Q concourse) was a detailed and lengthy activity. An analysis based on a ranking system (or in this particular case, primarily ranking by grouping across the 9 columns, so not ranking of all the items strictly against each other) must ensure that the population of statements fully covers the field otherwise the ranking could be based on a missing dimension, which invalidates all the rankings made by a participant. So, it is time-consuming compared with designing, for example, an attitude questionnaire. On the other hand, the universe of statements has been robustly created, and can be used for a variety of research and also public engagement purposes. So, once it has been created it has a multitude of purposes and is likely to be “future-proofed” unless policing objectives radically change.

The design of the Q-sort statements and shape enables different participants to express their views in a wide variety of different ways. It enables the researcher to capture some of the subjectivity of the participant – how they see the world. This can be discerned both from the different factor-like patterns in the Q data itself and also from the associated post-sort interviews. It is therefore a method which provides both qualitative and quantitative analysis, enabling some degree of comparison across individuals, which is not directly possible in qualitative analyses. We suggest that it can have many uses in policing and other public services research.

How far is Q methodology an appropriate method for examining public value? This paper has taken the highly regarded conceptualisation of public value as developed by Benington (2011), which builds on but goes beyond the Moore (1994) conceptualisation. This is about what the public value and also what adds value to the public sphere.

Q methodology is particularly suited to analysing public value in terms of what the public themselves value, because public value, in this sense, is built on the concept of trade-offs and this method forces the participants to make trade-offs. There are sufficient choices in the Q sort to represent a full range of choices for trade-offs. Several participants said the exercise was “difficult” because they had several policing activities that they regarded as highly valuable and therefore worth prioritising. However, no-one complained that the task was impossible or unrealistic. They all completed the exercise, no-one stopped doing it, though they were clearly told they were volunteers. This suggests that, while the task is difficult and mentally taxing it is not an unrealistic task. Some of the comments repeated often by different participants include: “*challenging*”; “*interesting*”; “*unique*” and “*thought-*

provoking”; some even said the experience was “*fun*”.

The Q sort mirrors the difficult choices which society has to make in choosing what to prioritise and how much resource to allocate to each policing priority.

There are differences between participants in their priorities, which shows that the Q sort is sensitive to difference, thereby making it a good instrument for public value analysis. The centroid factor analysis (a version of factor analysis) shows that there is one strong factor, across all participants, but then closer analysis shows some subtle differences. One might question why there are not larger differences between people and/or between police/partners/public because the results show more similarity than difference and the factors are highly correlated. It is not possible to say exactly why this may be happening, but one thought is that policing activities cover such a huge range of different objectives and different activities with some activities designed to prevent or address criminal activities that are deeply damaging to individuals and or society. It may be that these very serious criminal activities are widely recognised as key priorities for policing, compared with some other activities which have lower threat, risk or harm. It may also be that as a society, there are a combination of commonly held subconscious and conscious beliefs about what is most valuable about policing. These priorities when treated in isolation may give the impression of wide ranging and conflicting views, but once examined together and seen relative to one another, these common values emerge across individuals. However, the more subtle differences in emphasis and perspective show that the Q method is sensitive to difference, which means it is suitable for examining public value priorities in policing, as seen by various individuals.

How far is a Q-sort able to address the second element of public value, i.e. what adds value to the public sphere? There is a variety of ways in which this might be approached, including examining the concourse of statements about value and values in society. However, the research team chose to examine public value not in abstract but by operationalising it through policing priorities. The Q analysis has some useful insights into that as well. Some scholars would say that public service professionals have a duty to protect the public sphere, through their codes of ethics or professional conduct, and that they can sometimes pursue objectives consistent with legislation, political mandates and regulatory rules, which go beyond the immediate demands of members of the public (e.g. Flynn, 2007; Alford et al, 2016; Noordegraaf, 2015). The police, in particular, have a view about both strategic and

preventative work which is not visible to general members of the public, and they also see the full range of criminal and safeguarding activities again not seen by members of the public. Indeed, the public's view of policing priorities (and therefore their own sense of public value) may be shaped by television dramas and media reports which may sometimes be misleading. Therefore conducting Q sorts with public managers and professionals may access views which more fully represent "the public sphere". If one takes this view, then conducting the Q sorts with the professionals represents this second element of public value.

Not all scholars agree that professionals are disinterestedly working for the public good. The rise of public choice theory (e.g. Dunleavy, 2014) has suggested that public servants have their own interests at heart and other scholars have pointed to lapses in professional ethics (e.g. Adams and Balfour, 2009). Where this is the case, then professionals may not be acting for the public good, and their Q sorts may not be reliable as indicators of value to the public sphere. This cannot be determined from the Q sort on its own, but would, we suggest, require contextual analysis.

It is interesting that once police officers and staff were separated and factor analysed, five distinct viewpoints were revealed. There are more varied viewpoints from police compared to the other two groups. Why might this be? It could be that officers and staff who are equipped with greater knowledge about what police do and so this results in more varied opinions as to what the police should prioritise. People also have different reasons and motivations for joining the police and one use of the Q board in personnel work might be to align the allocation of roles to those activities which particular police prioritise. It is an area which merits further research.

However, there is another way in which a Q sort might contribute to "what is valuable to the public sphere". Benington (2015) discusses public value as "contested democratic practice", arguing that public value will only be determined within a particular public through debate, dialogue and exploration of alternative meanings, values and priorities. In this research, the team found, in a serendipitous way, that the Q sort was valuable for professional and public engagement and discovery about relative priorities. A number of police forces became interested through this research in the Q board (in its colourful glory) and experimented with its use, initially in internal discussions, but with later plans for using in public consultation activities (see **Fig. 10**). For example, two police forces have encouraged, in a workshop, police officers to complete the Q board as a group, using the resulting discussion before the

placing of the tiles on the board, to surface assumptions, views, opinions and values. This has reportedly helped police officers to review their own assumptions and to see that others may have different views and priorities. Benington might argue that this adds value to the public sphere by encouraging more informed debate. Furthermore, it has helped police officers to recognize that they cannot fully satisfy all the demands coming from the public to protect them from threat, risk and harm, because the activities of policing are so varied and so geographically (and digitally) spread. In addition, such a use of the Q board encouraged broader reflection on what value policing as a whole can add by allowing officers to remove themselves from their day-to-day departmental working environment which can encourage a “silo-thinking” mentality.

Fig. 10: Q-Board used in public engagement at World Café Event by Thames Valley Police



A further police force has used the Q board in police officer training about demand management and policing priorities. There are plans to extend this use of the Q board to engaging with the public in “world cafés”, where the public themselves would complete the Q board, in small groups, to surface assumptions and priorities about policing.



Overall, it is possible to say that the Q sort, as used in this research project, is fit for purpose in terms of providing a robust and sensitive measure of public value, as operationalized for the policing sector as policing priorities. This is appropriate because it operationalises both to “what the public value” (given its focus on trade-offs) and also to some extent in terms of “what adds value to the public sphere” and potentially for the future as a contribution (with members of the public in workshops) to public value as a contested democratic practice.

Public value in policing

Having established the value of the Q methodology as a means to assess public value, what has the research told us about how police, public service partners, and public view public value in policing.

Looking at the most highly rated policing priorities, these were overall more similar than different across the three groups (see **Fig. 4**). The 62 statements had been thematically grouped, from PCC plans, as follows: 1) confidence; 2) crime; 3) safeguarding; 4) collaboration; and 5) efficiency, though these groupings were not made available to the participants in any way. The results show that some themes are more important than others, with crime (notably serious crime) having a predominant priority, with safeguarding and to a lesser extent confidence also being in evidence. Collaboration and efficiency did not strongly feature – either for police or for members of the public. These may be issues of more concern to more senior police managers, inevitably, than to members of the public or to front-line police or partners.

The research team explored similarities and differences across the three groups, but views

about public value were not predominantly by group (except for the police officers identifiable in factor 4 about professionalism). So, the groups held more convergence in views about public value than difference. This is interesting in view of the many activities of the police which attract either controversy and/or media attention. It suggests that the public and partners are broadly supportive of the priorities which the police are choosing. It hints at deeply held “normative values” underlying prioritising, as noted by Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007).

Of course, this analysis of public value is based on research asking participants about their general priorities in relation to policing. Values, like attitudes, may vary where the context is specific rather than generic. Priorities could change if people are frightened, intimidated, shocked, angry or vulnerable, and this research has not explored such settings. Scholars have emphasised how public value is dynamic not static (e.g. Moore, 1995; Benington, 2011) and so the sense of what constitutes public value may alter with community mood, external context and so on. Further research could apply the Q board in a variety of contexts (some will be more feasible than others) and over time.

However, the generic analysis of public value is useful, in practical terms, for police managers and elected officials (e.g. police and crime commissioners) in understanding generic views about policing priorities, which could be important for strategic planning, and also for explaining why and how changes in service prioritisations are made. To prioritise is to treat something as more important than others; to give it more effort, resources and focused attention. As a consequence, with at least 62 priorities available, currently the police could have many objectives but no priorities. Another issue is that many of literature published by the police for the public to read contain very broad strategic intent. These strategic intent captures a wide range of objectives and actions. The result: a police service with limited resources spread thinly to try and meet all these objectives; and the public who are confused as to what the police are here for, whose expectations are high and confidence knocked when the police cannot deliver on all the promises made. Q has revealed a potential opportunity for police officers and staff across all levels of seniority to seek out appropriate moments to educate the public and be honest about what the police do and of equal importance, what the police do not do. The factors revealed together with comments made by the public are an invitation for such discussions to seriously start. These discussions may not be as adversarial as first imagined. The public would much rather the police realistically manage their expectations, do the few highly valuable things right, than to promise the world and failing to

deliver. Ultimately, this fear in not wanting to say “*no, it is not what the police are here for because...*” may result in disappointment and greater loss of confidence than if the police were clear and upfront about what should be prioritised whilst carefully explaining why. Comments made by the public in this area include: “*interesting to think about how broad the scope of police activity is; it has made me more sympathetic to the police*”; “*it is not realistic for the police to try and please everybody*”; “*if the police disagree with the public, they need to be straight about it with the public*”. As Sara Thorton said in her speech as NPCC Chair (2015): “*Think about the value we are trying to create. What outcomes are we delivering for the citizen?...So what are the police for?*”. The Q results should help with this national and local debate.

Under the surface of the degree of similarity also lie some more subtle differences which are worth understanding. The major factor in the analysis, held by many people, is reducing serious personal psychological and physical harm. Interestingly, these were more about crimes against individuals than other types of serious crime such as gangs, terrorism or gun and knife violence (these latter were given very high priority but not the highest priority). A second group of people were differentiated in terms of putting a high value on reducing crimes which damaged local communities and they valued the police helping to support and develop a fear-free society. These are quite closely related but the people were distinguishable in the analysis. This should alert the police to take notice that the broad public view about serious crime is not the only rationale that the public have for police priorities. Fostering a strong society is also part of the analysis.

The third group is focused on crime itself. They appear to be less interested in the underlying mechanisms that underpin such crimes (damage to individuals, to communities) and seem more focused on law-keeping and law-breaking, where there may have been rationale for their choices, it could be based on what their subjective view on the “seriousness” of the crime together with any personal experiences of that particular crime type: “*as it doesn't relate to me, I put some things more to the left (least valuable); I deliberated on half but don't affect me personally*” (Participant No. 006); “*I just looked at each one (priority) and chose which I think are important to me*” (Participant No. 077); “*based on experience*” (Participant No. 003).

Finally, some police have placed a high value on professional conduct and behaving in an ethical way. This should not be used to infer that those not subscribing to this factor are not

ethical – that conclusion is entirely unwarranted. It means that they place how they do their work as having high priority alongside tackling crime and harm; an officer who aligned to this factor commented that they sorted based on their “*own moral values*” (Participant No. 058). The composite sort for this factor clearly illustrates this (**Fig. 9**), where statements number 6 (police officers and staff abide by the Code of Ethics and act with integrity); 61 (comply with the Victims’ Code and ensuring that victims and witnesses are supported); and 48 (provide value for money policing) were seen as distinguishing statements ($P < 0.01$) in addition to the Z-scores for these statements being higher than in all the other factors. A distinguishing statement is one has been placed in significantly different locations compared to the other factors (McKeown and Thomas, 1988); i.e. these particular statements are what makes this factor statistically different to the others.

Overall, we have found less conflict or differences between particular groups than might be expected in a public service which has a regulatory and even sometimes coercive element. The police have to act on behalf of the state, for the common good, and not everyone will find that their actions are consistent with their own values (criminals for one, may have different values). However, this research has shown that there is a strong convergence of priorities between police, partners and public. We have established earlier that the Q methodology is sufficiently sensitive to show differences where they exist, so we can be reasonably confident in this degree of convergence about public value. This should be reassuring to the police and be a finding which helps to foster trust between the police and the public, perhaps even in times of austerity.

There are many opportunities for further research. UK policing is particularly renowned for its Peelian approach to policing (involving the public) and there could be different findings in other countries (e.g. would this similarity be found between police and campaigners for Black Lives Matter for example?). There are also opportunities to examine the public value of policing as seen by young people (not covered in this research) or to examine public value in particular communities or geographical locations. Q sorts can also be used to examine changes over time (both of groups and of individuals). It could even be used to help understand the values that criminals hold and if there is a better way that has hitherto been overlooked to help bridge the divide between those who serve to protect and those who choose to do harm. This may help result in a mindset change that could reduce criminality, or at the very least allow officers to better understand those who offend. The Q board could also applied to help understand the values of criminals who have entered the Criminal Justice

System and comparing them against to criminals who have rehabilitated. It could be taken a step further by using it in a RCT to assess if a rehabilitation scheme has any effect on the values of those who complete it. Finally, research could be undertaken to examine whether and how there are changes in views about policing after public engagement or consultation exercises.

This paper makes a contribution to the empirical research on public value. Earlier it was noted that this was a surprising and large gap in the literature. This research contributes to understanding public value as a concept and as a practice through the use of Q methodology. It provides both content and a method for police officers to better understand why they do what they do, whilst at the same time allowing the public and partners to better appreciate the value the police add or might add to society. As demonstrated in this paper, it is not beyond the realms of impossibility for an agreement to be made as to what is most valued about policing across the spectrum of stakeholders. It may take time; communication needs to be much clearer and continued effort needs to be made to educate and engage the public. However, perhaps by focusing on the priorities that matter both in terms of what the public most value and what adds value to the public sphere (though normative values and professionalism), rather pursuing priorities that are valued by the few who shout the loudest may be the best way for the police to deliver the best public value and thereby reduce the greatest threat, risk and harm to society.

Strengths and Limitations

The report turns to consider the key strengths and limitations of this study from a methodological point of view. First, it should be noted that Q methodology is not appropriate to identify statistically the distribution of views across a population (Ellingsen et al., 2010) and the results cannot be generalised in this way. Instead, in Q, it is the differences or similarities between the views of the participants which matter (Eden et al. 2005). In other words, it is not how many believe this or that, but what and why they believe what they do (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). It is worth noting that in creating the concourse, partners and member of the public were not involved in the focus groups. It could be argued that as a result, the police and academics heavily influenced the concourse and final set of statements. However, by using the PCC Crime Plans, the study has attempted to indirectly include existing views of members of the public, as reflected in those plans, in the creation of the

statements representing the concourse. Focus groups with the public would have ensured direct views from the public but although this was attempted, it did not prove to be achievable. Though the study did make use of a relatively recent community survey where residents voiced their policing priorities.

Another limitation is the difficulty in assessing whether participants were completing the Q sort based on their grouping or on their personal views, i.e. did the police officer sort as a police officer or as a member of the public. This is a weakness inherent across many group studies and methods, not something that is unique to Q methodology. Q methodology is valuable to explore the range of perspectives on a given topic. The research instructions encouraged the person to do the Q sort based on their own and not 'official' or 'organizational' views. After all, Q is the study of people's subjectivities and all these factors play a vital role in informing such subjectivity. Finally, as can be seen, the police group in the study is over presented compared partners and members of the public, where members of the public by far the least represented relatively, though as the focus is on a range of views available and not on numbers per se this may be less relevant.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper reports on research which has used a novel methodology to explore public value. The context for examining public value is UK policing, which is a public service where there may potentially be different views about the value of what the police offer to society.

The public value theory and framework deployed in this research is that of Benington (2011) building on earlier conceptualisation of Moore(1995) and others (e.g. Alford & Hughes, 2008) 2011). Benington suggests that two dimensions underpin public value – what the public value and what adds value to the public sphere. The Q methodology was deployed because it enables values to be expressed in terms of trade-offs about policing priorities. The research shows that Q methodology is sufficiently sensitive to enable the police, public partners and the public to express trade-offs, and it therefore meets the first dimension of public value (what the public value). We argue too, that the police, as professionals, are able to provide a view on what adds value to the public sphere, because of their knowledge and experience of the full range of policing activities, and that in the UK they are widely regarded to be professional and expert in their approach. The Q board could also be used to debate

what adds value to the public sphere – a potential use from this research though not covered directly here.

In terms of content, the research found one main factor among Q participants, whether police, partners or members of the public. This suggests that views about policing priorities are closer than sometimes assumed, and this could form the basis for wider public engagement on policing priorities. However, close inspection shows some subtle differences in perspective, which are also revealing. The research also found that the police have a wide range of activities and objectives, not all can be prioritised. The real priorities are not what they police *say* they are, but in what they *do*. This is what the public judge the police on. Q board can be used to help educate and engage members of the public so that the police no longer feel the pressure to give the impression that many things are a priority.

The research represents a novel use of Q methodology to explore public value and a relatively novel use in policing. Both are avenues which can be explored in further research. The research provides a framework to think about how police organizations can add value to society, and the Q board also provides a toolkit to help police officers and staff strategically manage demand.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Final list of 62 statements (Q sample) for the Q sort (with their themes).

No.	Theme	Statements
1	Collaboration	Work together with the community to keep people safe.
2	Collaboration	Increase numbers of police volunteers to deal with minor crime to free officers to deal with serious crime.
3	Collaboration	Improve partnerships by working closely with other agencies to keep people safe.
4	Communication	Be clear to partners and public about what the police should and should not be doing.
5	Communication	Make more use of the press and social media.
6	Confidence	Police officers and staff abide by the Code of Ethics and act with integrity.
7	Confidence	More police officers interacting with the public on the streets.
8	Confidence	Openly encourage and act on feedback from the public.
9	Confidence	Intensive supervision of police officers' use of powers, such as stop & search or use of force.
10	Confidence	Boost confidence of black and minority ethnic communities in the police.
11	Confidence	Recruit officers from diverse communities.
12	Confidence	Increase the confidence of the general public in the police.
13	Crime	Deal with crimes relating to harassment.
14	Crime	Investigate offences that stem from social media use.
15	Crime	Investigate rural crime.
16	Crime	Maintain order where there are large gatherings of people.
17	Crime	Investigate theft related offences.
18	Crime	Provide education or training to offenders to reduce re-offending.
19	Crime	Deal with domestic abuse.
20	Crime	Investigate serious sexual offences such as rape.
21	Crime	Reduce the number of recorded volume crime, such as burglary and theft from vehicle.
22	Crime	Legally take away high-value assets from offenders.
23	Crime	Target less frequent serious crimes against the person such as rape and grievous bodily harm.
24	Crime	Protect places, buildings and property at risk of criminal damage.
25	Crime	Tackle crimes committed on businesses, such as fraud or shoplifting.
26	Crime	Prioritise policing the present over investigating the past.
27	Crime	Prevent disorder, alcohol related offences and other crimes during the hours of evening entertainment.
28	Crime	Deal with hate crime.
29	Crime	Increase resources for preventative police work.
30	Crime	Investigate crimes that occur in prisons.
31	Crime	Deal with child sexual exploitation.
32	Crime	Investigate crimes relating to the internet (cyber-crime).
33	Crime	Investigate fraud.
34	Crime	Investigate assaults that do not cause injury.
35	Crime	Investigate violent crimes that cause injury.
36	Crime	Dismantle organised crime groups.
37	Crime	Deal with gang-related crimes.
38	Crime	Deal with modern slavery which includes human trafficking.
39	Crime	Investigate firearm offences.
40	Crime	Dedicate resources to counter terrorism.

41	Crime	Reduce knife crime.
42	Crime	Deal with 'honour' based violence.
43	Crime	Investigate drug-related offences.
44	Crime	Investigate sexual offences not involving penetration, such as sexual harassment.
45	Crime	Reduce the length of time someone is placed on police bail.
46	Efficiency	Reduce the number of police officers in back office roles.
47	Efficiency	Maximise the use of new technologies to improve efficiency.
48	Efficiency	Provide value for money policing.
49	Non-Crime	Protect and safeguard children.
50	Non-Crime	Investigate road traffic offences.
51	Non-Crime	Deal with anti-social behaviour.
52	Non-Crime	Keep the roads or other transport networks running smoothly.
53	Non-Crime	Reduce community tension.
54	Non-Crime	Assist communities to become self-sufficient and less dependant on public agencies.
55	Non-Crime	Deal with nuisance parking.
56	Non-Crime	Safeguard those with mental health illness.
57	Non-Crime	Deal with missing people.
58	Non-Crime	Reduce the number of homeless people and protect them.
59	Staff Focus	Care for the well-being of its workforce.
60	Staff Focus	Invest in police training and development.
61	Victim Care	Comply with the Victims' Code and ensuring that victims and witnesses are supported.
62	Victim Care	Reduce repeat victimisation.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Schedule



Demands and Priorities in Policing **Police Focus Group Schedule**

*Note to the facilitator: Instructions to facilitators are in standard print. Questions to be read out are in **bold**. Prompts are also provided, to be read out if and when needed to help encourage further discussion.*

Date:			
Time:			
Location:			
	Name	Gender	Role
Facilitator 1:			Lead facilitator
Facilitator 2:			Note taker / monitor
	Name	Gender	Rank / Role / Position
Participant 1:			
Participant 2:			
Participant 3:			
Participant 4:			
Participant 5:			
Participant 6:			
Participant 7:			
Participant 8:			
Participant 9:			
Participant 10:			

Administration

Be punctual and professional, ensuring that everything needed is to hand and any recording equipment is working properly. It is advisable to have two recordings made to ensure that there is a backup and to place the recorders at different ends of the room.

Remember that majority and minority views are of equal importance so must be noted. The more comfortable you make the participants, the more you are able to get out of the focus group. Be mindful of any quiet or dominant participants and manage them in a way to get the most out of the group.

Time required from start to finish: 90 minutes (with 10 minutes buffer included)

START

Arrival of Participants and Introductions (10 minutes)

Once everyone has arrived and settled. Introduce yourself, establish rapport and provide a brief explanation of what a focus group is:

Hello, my name is Quoc Vo and I am a police officer for Thames Valley Police on secondment to the Open University. Thank you all for making the time to come here today and sending us your Participation Consent Form beforehand.

And my name is Jim Beashel. I am a Dorset Police Officer seconded to the Open University for 3 months to help with this research project. I've been in the Police for 20 years and have worked in a number of departments including CID, Operations and uniform policing.

Professor Jean Hartley is the Principal Investigator for the research, which looks more widely at what is referred to by academics as 'public value'. The research is being funded at the OU in collaboration with 16 UK police forces, through the Police Knowledge Fund. The 16 UK police forces are part of the OU Policing Consortium. It aims to investigate how public leaders perceive public value in what are often complex situations and how they use leadership to create and enhance value.

You've come here today to participate in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group is to investigate what people view as the priorities for policing and how any differences in these views are managed. There is only so much that can be gleaned from a survey or a questionnaire. A focus group allows us to find out much more about what people think and spending time discussing how people feel on a particular subject. It is absolutely okay for you to have contradictory views about some things and discuss them further.

There are four main questions that we will ask you to discuss with a small number of supplementary questions under each one. The session will last about 90 minutes and at times it may be necessary to end a particular discussion to ensure we do not over-run.

Go through health and safety such as fire exits, rest rooms, comfort breaks etc.

[FACILITATOR 2] Read out the statement of confidentiality:

The opinions expressed during this focus group will be treated in confidence and will only be seen by the research team. Notes will be made and the session is being recorded in order to accurately reflect your views. All responses will remain anonymous. We would also like to ask you to work today using the “Chatham House rule” – which is that you can talk outside this meeting about the themes and topics covered but that you don’t say who said anything.

Can I remind you that the discussion will be audio recorded so it can be transcribed after the focus group. This is to ensure we capture all of your thoughts accurately and will be used by the research team only. We will not be attributing any comments to individuals.

Offer refreshments.

Icebreaker (15 minutes)

Ice breaker to get participants to start talking. This section is important because amount of discussion that takes place will depend a lot on how comfortable the participants are.

Now that you know a little about me, I’d like to know something about you all and for you to get to know each other a bit before we start.

Please pair up with the person next to you. I’d like you to find out your partner’s name and their hobby. Also find out what job they wanted to do when they were younger and what they do now. Once you have this information, I’d like you to introduce your partner to the rest of the group. I’ll give you five minutes to talk to your partner first.

Once the five minutes are up:

Now it’s time for you to introduce your partner to the group. We have ten minutes to complete this. Who would like to go first?

Let the participants introduce their partner to the group one by one.

Start of Discussions

Remind the participants about the purpose of this focus group:

Again, I am grateful for you all being here today to talk how your thoughts on policing in terms what police should be doing and what the public expects during these austere and uncertain times. There are no right or wrong opinions. To get the most from this, I’d like you to say what you really think and how you really feel about the subject.

We will start off by brainstorming.

Activity 1 – Brain Storming (10 minutes)

The purpose of this is to start to get the participants to focus their minds and think about the topic being discussed today. They will be given post-it notes and will then place them on a chart in order of importance.

On the post-it notes (x5) that I have just given you I would like you to write what you consider should be a policing priority on each one and then rank them in order of importance on the chart.

Once complete I will ask some of you to explain your thoughts.

Discussion 1 – Priorities (10 minutes)

The brainstorming is designed to get you all to start thinking about the topic in general. I'd like to now explore what you have said in the brainstorming further. This is now an opportunity to discuss and debate.

Q1 – Think about the term “police priorities” in Gwent. What does that personally mean to you?

Prompt 1a: as a police officer, what is important to you?

Prompt 1b: as an officer, what do you need to deliver for Gwent?

Prompt 1c: how do you think the police as an organisation decides what is important to prioritise?

Prompt 1d: how do you personally think the police *should* decide what is important to prioritise?

Prompt 1e: how do you during your day-to-day work as an officer decide what is important to prioritise?

Prompt 1f: how do you treat anything that you personally consider less of a priority?

Give examples if necessary!

Discussion 2 – Shared Priorities and Benefits (10 minutes)

Q2 – We have discussed your priorities as a police officer and the priorities of Gwent Police, now let's extend this a little further. What do you think are the priorities of police stakeholders?

Prompt 2a: who are the stakeholders?

Prompt 2b: in what ways are your priorities similar or differ to these stakeholders?

Prompt 2c: in what ways do your personal views on police priorities similar or differ to your force or national agenda?

Prompt 2d: in what ways do your personal views on police priorities similar or differ to your family, friends or other members of the public?

Prompt 2e: how do you feel about all these differences?

Discussion 3 – Shared Benefits and Competing Priorities in Policing (10 minutes)

Q3 – We have discussed your priorities and the priorities of Gwent Police along with other stakeholder. Do the Police know what is best for the public more than the public themselves i.e. should we concentrate on what the public value or what is for the public good?

Prompt 3a: How can officers deliver shared benefits to society when there are competing priorities?

Prompt 3b: For example, in an environment where there are limited resources?

Prompt 3c: Think about different groups of society having different needs and wanting different things from the police?

Prompt 3d: How can police decide which priorities to pursue and which to neglect?

Prompt 3e: How can police maintain public confidence if they decide to neglect certain areas of policing some communities feel should be prioritised?

Prompt 3f: How much of what the police do should be open to discussion and negotiation?

Discussion 4 – Benefits of Policing (10 minutes)

Q4 – Now that you have expressed views on competing and shared priorities. What benefit to society can police officers specifically add that other organisations cannot?

Prompt 4a: In your opinion as police officers, what does the society care most about the police?

Prompt 4b: How do you know if you are adding value to society by pursuing these shared priorities?

Prompt 4c: How much value should be placed on benefits that are harder to see or measure?

Prompt 4d: Think about these intangible benefits such as prevention and safeguarding work. How should they be prioritised against other police work?

Prompt 4e: How can you justify preventative police work if the public and stakeholders find it difficult to measure such intangible benefits or they are not even aware it goes on?

Prompt 4f: In what areas should the police be doing more preventative work?

Ending the Session (5 minutes)

Summarise the session.

Is there anything else anyone would like to add to what has been discussed today?

I am going to hand a piece of paper to each of you. Before the session concludes, I'd like you to write on there anything which you did not mention and wish to reinforce or did not feel comfortable enough to discuss out loud.

I'll give you a few minutes to do this.

Collect piece of paper.

Finally, thank you again for your time today. The discussions and debates participated in has been very helpful to us and we will use many of your ideas and comments, unattributed, as we move to the next stage of the project. We will be developing a questionnaire, called a Q sort to give to police and members of the public. You can view the current research projects at The Centre for Policing Research and Learning website.

Collect everything up and tidy up the room.

Check the recordings to ensure it has recorded correctly.

Check your notes and update them as soon as possible whilst everything is still fresh in your mind.

FINISH

General Prompts:

- **Tell me more about that.**
- **Explain the situation to me.**
- **Are all of you agreeing on this?**
- **Do you have an example?**
- **Is there anyone with a different view?**
- **Say more about that.**
- **How did you feel when that happened?**
- **What gave you that impression?**
- **Did anyone else have a similar or different experience?**

