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University of Dundee

'Missing' Procedural Justice

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Overview of Presentation

- Missing persons primer
 - UK context
 - Who goes, who reports and who finds (incl. who initiates contact) – (Skogan, 2006; Murphy, 2007)
- PhD focus – Success in Missing persons police work
- Missing persons Procedural Justice (After Bottoms & Tankebe)
 - 2 Worked examples of stakeholder voice and findings on police perceptions
 - 2 Good practice examples
- Some reflections on lessons for wider policing



Missing Persons in the UK

Missing - “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another”
“not at a place where they are expected or required to be” (Absent)

- (ACPO, 2013, pp. 5)

377,000 calls to police about missing people in 2015/2016

4% had suffered harm (as recorded by police on return)

NCA publish UK periodic data sets – See NCA, 2017 for most recent figures.



Missing in UK

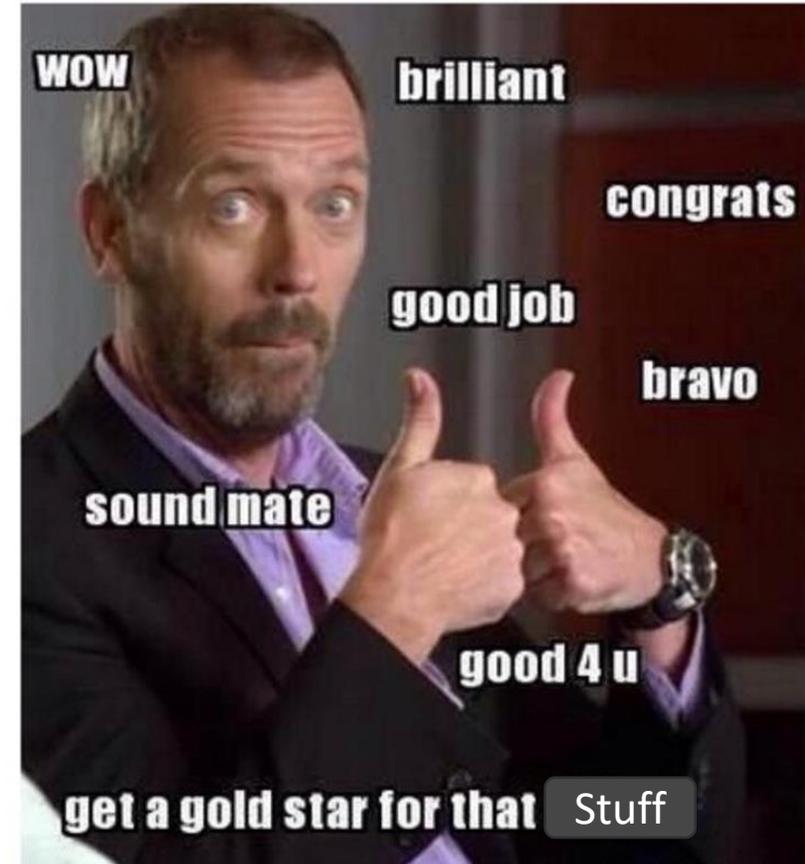
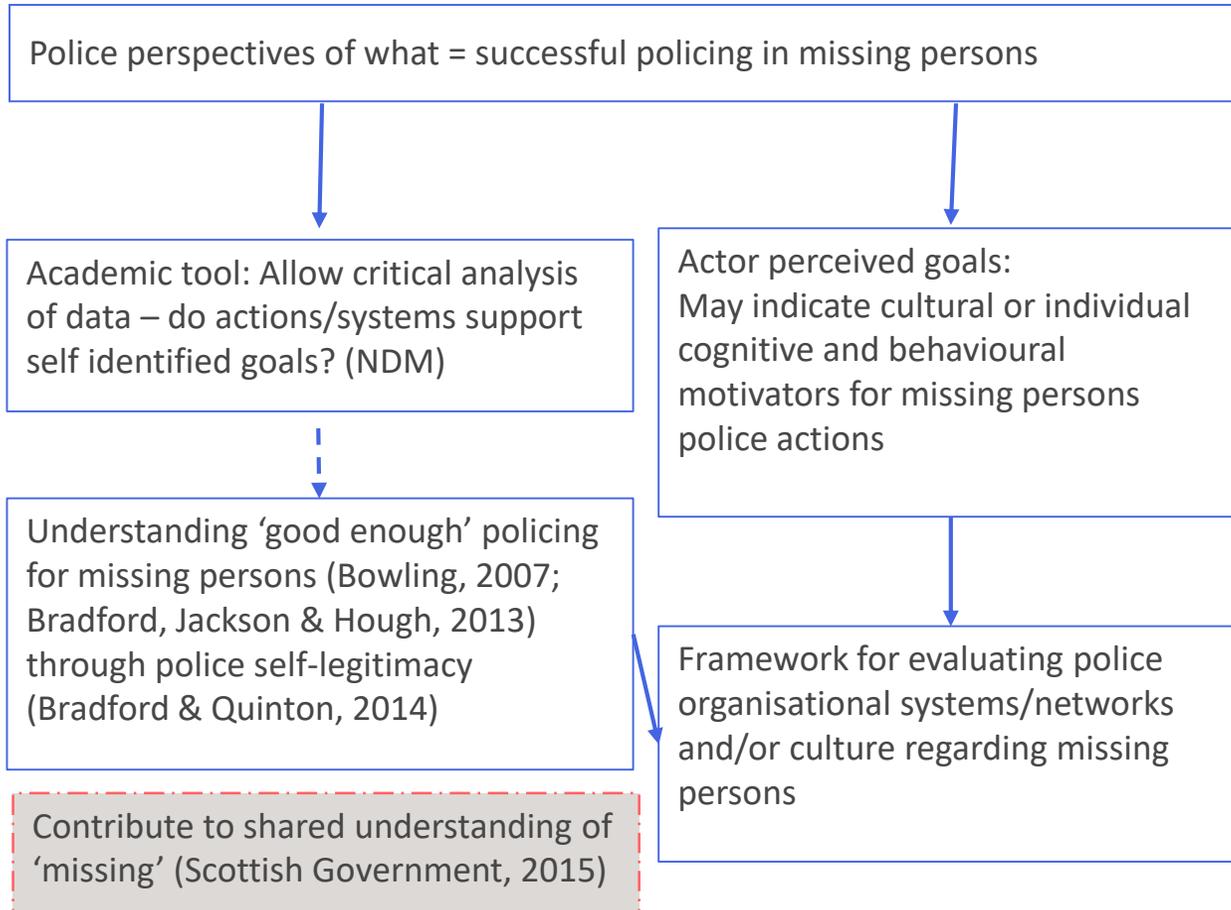
Those who are missed often do not perceive themselves as missing, as they themselves know the where, when and why of their situations (Wade and Biehal, 2002; Parr & Stevenson, 2013).



Figure 1-1 Biehal et al (2003) The Missing Continuum

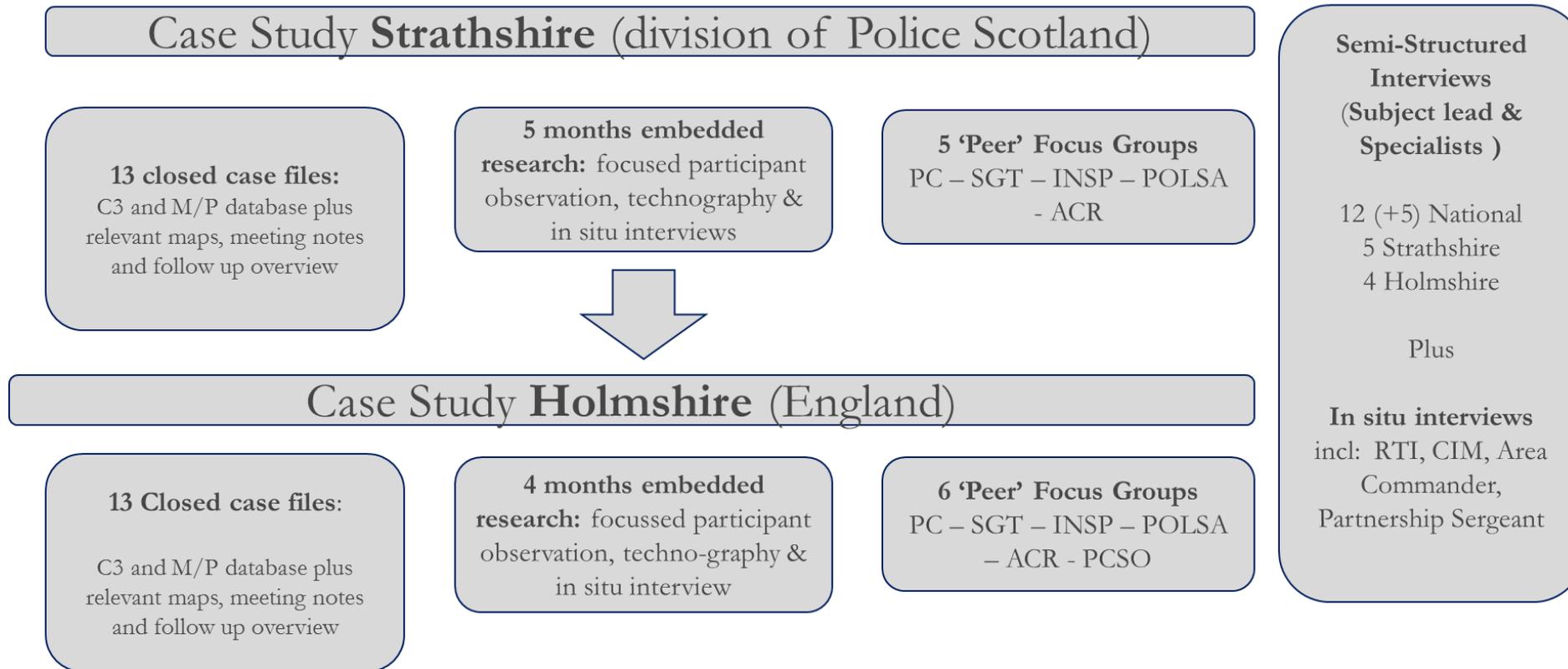
NOT just a police issue - Missing is a complex, multi-agency concern: Social Work & Social Care, NHS, 3rd Sector, Search and Rescue....

Research Focus: Why 'Success' in policing





Data Collection





Officers Interacting with Returned Children: Authority vs empathy

P4: I remember picking up a girl who'd gone missing off (southern neighbouring force), and was found probably a good 40 miles away from where she should have been and took her back onto that force area and met up with the Bobby there and his attitude was completely different, like it was such an effort

P2: yeah...

P4: like he'd come here, whereas we'd just been talking, you know about the price of fish or something, and you think you know

P3: I've got the same approach as you, going and talking to them and try and dial into them and try and find out, but sometimes you will still come up against that barrier

P4: yeah

P3: you know and they'll sit and insult you

P4: I think you will yeah but, like this girl was quiet probably for the first 20 minutes of the journey and then you know,... Just be normal... I don't know what it is, just be like a normal person, because they just see a uniform

P2: yeah

P4: don't they

[PC Focus Group – Holmshire]



Repeat contact in Missing persons

Repeat Missing – multiple incidents and potential for Legal Socialisation

- % go missing more than once (NCA, 2017)
- Legal socialisation (Fagan & Tyler, 2005) – many repeat missing people are under 18yrs, and most of those are care experienced.
 - Repeated missing reports can be noted in youth crim justice proceedings/childrens hearings and will trigger public protection and safeguarding measures involving police and other agencies
 - Construction of person as other.
- Over time, police knowledge of the person can be reduced to key facts and relevant background information... details of previous missing incidences and resulting interactions (Joe Apps – Invisibility in Missing), moving away from person to ‘constructed idea of person’
- So, contact is repeated, and each can influence the next
- Future research Q: is it cumulative or last contact or most memorable contact





Good practice example: Holmshire Care Home Pilot

Conversation between Holmshire lead (PC) and colleagues in an peer group focus group

Pilot started previous year in one home, housing c.10 adolescent girls identified as high Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) risk





Repeated contact – Loved ones

What do the family members of missing people feel about police interactions [From Boss, 2007; Holmes, 2012; Parr & Stevenson 2013]

- Reporting initially is difficult & empathetic response helpful
- Perceptions of quality of service can effect emotional wellbeing – Families already suffering trauma of ambiguous loss



Repeated contact – loved ones (continued)

- Perception of police influenced by:
 - Believing everything possibly being done
 - Service meets initial expectations
 - Personal manner of officers – empathy & respect
 - Quality and consistency of long term contact
 - Poor contact can decrease perception of competence
 - Being kept informed of developments
 - In consistent and systematic way (no surprises!)



Photos: Amy Humphrey, field work notes 2015/16



Police Scotland – Single Point of Contact

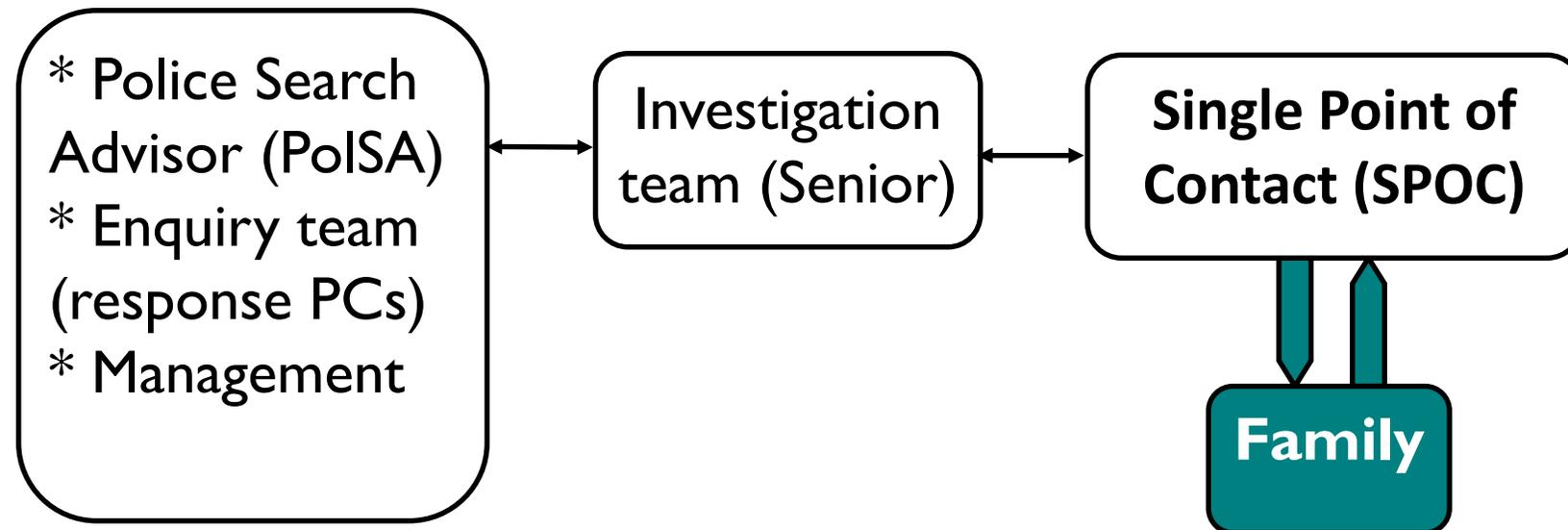


Figure from Humphrey, A. (Unpublished thesis): Police Scotland policy is to provide a SPOC to family and loved ones. A SPOC builds relationship with family, prevents over-intrusion, & gives consistent, familiar face(s) to enquiry.



Police Legitimacy and Missing Persons (or ‘other things to chat to me about today’!)

The ways in which legitimacy is actualised in Missing persons (e.g. Calling on the police and giving over control of search for loved one/cared for 370,000 calls 2015/2016)

What police expect from citizens – the ways in which their authority in area is exerted:

- E.g. Information provision/Access to private spaces
- E.g. Leaving it to the professionals (Search)

Remit and organisational boundaries: Self-Legitimacy (Bradford & Quinton, XXXX) – that police are the right people to be in that space

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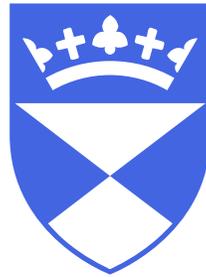




[Thank you for listening](#)

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Treated Fairly



One care home reported a child missing a couple of weeks ago and he was asleep on their front step.... You know...

Interviewer: Did they know he was asleep on the front step?

no, they just hadn't looked

- Holmshire Sgt

Org boundaries – reciprocal fair treatment –
reciprocal trust - remit (legitimate place)

I've just been in mine this morning, one of my care homes because we've got a youngster [...] been missing since last night now so we are obviously getting more concerned because it's been quite a few hours but I tend to go in, I sit down I have a cup of tea and have a natter with them but obviously I'm going in there for intelligence purposes which will be to find out the places they get to, when they have gone missing but I don't obviously sit and quiz them [...] you know they do filter bit out to us although it'll probably not be half as much as what we need, but I certainly think is a PCSO, with not being a police officer, [...] people tend to speak to you that little bit more so they do give us little bits of information – Holmshire PCSO

what might influence fair treatment?

- 'the right kind of missing'



anybody that's working on it, where it's run as a good enquiry you know, not your constant folk from young persons home or whatever they deal with day in and day out, but where it is a proper missing person enquiry that folk are concerned for this person, all the polis are just focused, the teams are working, they're running enquiry and they're wanting to get this person found. Its a joy to watch or listen to at times, the pure dedication of it.

I don't mind it because , it's just part of the job, but again for these folk, [...] whether you recognise that trigger as raising your concern, to say, no, this is a proper enquiry, it's not Friday night, they're not out down the town, doing this, that and the next. There is a concern, they might be with that registered offender down in (another town) or whatever

---- Strathshire Inspector