Organizational conditions for evidence-based policing: a proposal from the international literature

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Abstract

Many areas of study, particularly the field of public administration, have demonstrated how shared evidence has gained relevance in academic research. Against this backdrop, police organizations – responsible for sustaining the political order and being the body with legitimacy to use force – are characterized by supporting their decision-making processes in traditions and conventions. Faced with the various problems of legitimacy, which result in trust issues with its different audiences, the notion of evidence-based policing (EBP) has gained notoriety. Although Brazil has traditions in the field of public security studies, this debate is incipient. In this sense, this theoretical essay aims to reflect on the organizational conditions necessary for implementing EBP based on international experiences. We present a history of EBP and discuss a matrix that enables its practical application. We propose a framework regarding implementation requirements based on four fields: assessment, leadership, technology, and networks. Finally, we consider the need to centralize intelligence activities in the decision-making contexts of these organizations to establish professionalism that takes place through planning actions based on the use of science as ballast for organizations of police agencies.

Keywords: Evidence-Based Policing. Organizational conditions. International literature.

Condições organizacionais para o policiamento baseado em evidências: uma proposta a partir da literatura internacional

Abstract

Resumo

O embasamento em evidências compartilhadas é um movimento que tem ganhado força nas mais diversas áreas, em especial no campo da administração pública. Pertencentes a esse campo, as organizações policiais, responsáveis pela sustentação da ordem política e detentoras da legitimidade para o uso da força, caracterizam-se por sustentar seus processos decisórios em tradições e convenções. Diante dos diversos problemas de legitimidade que elas têm encontrado, que resultam em questões de confiança dos diferentes públicos com os quais se relacionam, a noção de Policiamento Baseado em Evidências (PBE) tem ganhado notoriedade. Muito embora o Brasil apresente tradições no campo de estudos da segurança pública, nota-se a incipiência no debate assinalado. Nesse sentido, o objetivo central deste ensaio teórico foi refletir sobre as condições organizacionais necessárias para a implementação do PBE, com base nas experiências internacionais. Para tanto, apresentamos um histórico do PBE, bem como discutimos uma matriz que possibilita a sua aplicação prática. Propomos um quadro a respeito das exigências à implementação fundamentado em quatro campos: avaliação, liderança, tecnologia e redes de contatos. Finalmente, consideramos a necessidade de centralização das atividades de inteligência nos contextos de tomada de decisão dessas organizações, a fim de constituir um profissionalismo que se dê por meio de ações de planejamento fundamentadas no uso da ciência como lastro para a organização das agências policiais.

Palavras-chave: Policiamento Baseado em Evidências. Condições organizacionais. Literatura internacional.

Condiciones organizativas para la vigilancia policial basada en la evidencia: una propuesta desde la literatura internacional

Resumen

La fundamentación en la evidencia compartida es un movimiento que ha cobrado fuerza en los más diversos ámbitos, especialmente en el de la administración pública. Pertenecientes a este campo, las organizaciones policiales, encargadas de mantener el orden político y legalmente autorizadas para el uso de la fuerza, se caracterizan por sustentar sus procesos decisorios en tradiciones y convenciones. Frente a los diversos problemas de legitimidad con los que se han encontrado, que derivan en problemas de confianza de los diferentes públicos con los que se relacionan, la noción de policía basada en evidencia (PBE) ha ganado notoriedad. Aunque Brasil tiene tradición en el campo de los estudios de seguridad pública, se nota que el debate aún es incipiente. En este sentido, el objetivo central de este ensayo teórico fue reflexionar sobre las condiciones organizativas necesarias para la implementación de la PBE, a partir de experiencias internacionales. Para ello, presentamos una reseña histórica de la PBE, así como discutimos una matriz que permite su aplicación práctica. Proponemos un marco de requisitos de implementación basado en cuatro campos: evaluación, liderazgo, tecnología y redes de contactos. Finalmente, consideramos la necesidad de centralizar las actividades de inteligencia en los contextos de toma de decisiones de estas organizaciones, con el fin de establecer un profesionalismo que se lleve a cabo mediante acciones de planificación basadas en el uso de la ciencia como respaldo para la organización de los cuerpos policiales.

Palabras clave: Policía basada en evidencia. Condiciones organizativas. Literatura internacional.

INTRODUCTION

The police are a type of organization with the ultimate goal of supporting political order through the application of force (Manning, 2005). Their decision-making processes are usually based on traditions and conventions (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Manning, 2005; Robinson & Abt, 2016; Sherman, 2013). To some extent, they have a problematic nature regarding the lack of trust from the various audiences they tend to relate to (Goldsmith, 2005). For gaining trust and achieving legitimacy, police increasingly need a shared-evidence base (Lum & Nagin, 2017).

In addition, police organizations do not usually evaluate their results, and just replicate internal indicators of efficiency and effectiveness (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Sherman, 2013), mainly based on the ability to reduce crime by arresting perpetrators and increasing street surveillance (Moore & Braga, 2003; Schlittler, 2016). Such a perspective is defined as traditional policing, as opposed to other models, such as community matrix, problem-oriented policing, and evidence-driven policing (Batitucci, 2011; Ribeiro, 2014).

The search for more objective answers to organizational problems has become crucial for police operations (Sherman, 2013). We highlight two essential factors that are interrelated: technology and evidence. Regarding the first, we can mention the influence of management philosophy based on mediation by computers, such as Compare Statistics (COMPSTAT), of the New York Police Department, in 1994, which gained notoriety and was replicated in most police organizations around the world, and still in use (Eterno & Silverman, 2010; Magers, 2004; Moore & Braga, 2003; Weisburd et al., 2003). The idea is to allocate policing to the areas with the highest number of crimes. As for evidence, the last 30 years were marked by its increasing relevance and centrality, not only for the police, but in different social, organizational, and political spaces (White, 2019).

Therefore, designing criminal justice policies and police interventions have become processes assisted by experts and more grounded in relevant evidence (McGuire, Evans, & Kane, 2021; Oliver et al., 2014; Robinson & Abt, 2016). Conceptual and organizational action frameworks for police management, based on information systematization, were created, like intelligence-driven policing (Ratcliffe, 2002; Ratcliffe & Guidetti, 2008; Ratcliffe et al., 2011), and evidence-based policing (Sherman, 1998, 2013; Sherman & Murray, 2015).

Although Brazil has a long tradition of debating public security (Lima, 2019; Lima, Ratton, & Azevedo, 2014; Ribeiro, 2014; Costa, Zackseski, & Maciel, 2016), and the substantial increase of studies and interest in evidence-based policing abroad, its application in the country is still limited (Kopittke, 2019). We highlight studies on Dry Laws (Biderman, Mello, & Schneider, 2010), and practices for homicide reduction (Kopittke & Ramos, 2021). The field of "police sciences" is growing in Brazil, much less as science, but rather as an attempt to claim the "place of speech" of police officers as legitimate exclusive agents to participate in the public debate on police and public security in the country (Lima et al., 2010).

Given this scenario, which matches the growing search for legitimacy of police organizations and the incipient field of studies in the Brazilian context, this theoretical essay aimed to reflect on the organizational conditions necessary for implementing evidence-based policing, grounded on international experiences. We intended to show that evidence-based policing is a way to develop "police sciences" (Vecchio, s/d) in Brazil, in order to fight the obscurantism of parts of this field, and to point routes for higher professionalization of our police and their practices.

EVIDENCE- BASED POLICING

In the 1970s, Anglo-American police organizations were marked by a multicenter work, from which emerged the 3 Rs model of policing: random patrol, rapid response, and reactive investigations (Sherman, 2013). In that same decade, an article that discussed prison reform questioned in its title "what worked" in that field of study; it became seminal, influencing the whole field of criminology (Martinson, 1974). At the time, it established the narrative that "nothing would work" to reduce crime, which affected both the organizations and public security policymakers (Weisburd, Farrington, & Gill, 2016).

The criminal justice system is a complex institutional set, isolated but interconnected, controlled by formal and informal mechanisms, which operates collectively to reduce and control criminal behavior (Robinson & Abt, 2016). This format contributes to embedding traditions, reflecting that police organizations often base their decisions on conventions and traditions (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Sherman, 1998, 2013; Sherman & Murray, 2015). Police practices, even if very costly, usually do not test their effects scientifically (Sherman, 2013). Scholars and practitioners began to argue that information from scientific research or systematic crime analysis should be used for strategic and tactical decision-making in police organizations (Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011). Such a movement was confirmed by relevant studies that had impacts beyond academia, changing the political scenario (Robinson & Abt, 2016).

Sherman was responsible for creating the term "evidence-based policing" (Sherman, 1998, 2013; Sherman & Murray, 2015). It is considered a paradigm that assists in decisions on what will make up policing, with information generated through empirical scientific methods that support leaders in applying actions based on the best evidence (McGuire et al., 2021). In addition, it brings a skeptical attitude toward traditional ways of doing police work, especially those that lack systematic evidence of effectiveness (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). Thus, it adds objectivity to questions usually answered subjectively, considering police officers' experiences and skills already developed, which contributes to change public perceptions about the legitimacy of police organizations, increasing it internally and externally (Sherman, 2013).

Following this perspective, and also as a result of this same movement in search of objectivity for police organizations' actions, intelligence-driven policing has emerged (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], 2017; Ratcliffe, 2002, 2005; Ratcliffe & Guidetti, 2008; Ratcliffe et al., 2011). It is a conceptual and organizational framework for managing police through systematization of information and a proactive attitude (Ratcliffe & Guidetti, 2008). As an interconnected set of standards, methods, and principles based on structured intelligence, it fosters continuous improvement and supports strategic (long-term) and operational (short-term) decisions (Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, 2017).

In this context, criminal justice practitioners and policymakers have not only become more open toward partnerships, but have also begun to consult scholars more frequently, before making important decisions (Robinson & Abt, 2016). The adoption of the evidence paradigm, among other factors, has led to increased levels of education of the police and its leaders, and professionalized the sector (Sherman, 2013).

In order to reform police organizations, principles supported by research and evidence were adopted (Lum & Nagin, 2017; Robinson & Abt, 2016). However, although there was much development in recent years, there are still open questions in this field of studies and practices (Boaz et al., 2008).

Considering evidence as a central element for decisions on intervention strategies was a paradigm originated in the medical field (Davidoff et al., 1995; Sackett, 1997). In general, movements toward increased clinical research and greater accessibility of research results have contributed to shifting from a traditional model based on intuition-driven practice to Evidence-based Practice (EBP) (Rosswurm & Larrabee, 1999). While we notice this shift, to some extent, the terms regarding what would be credible evidence for establishing practice are still not entirely clear (Schalock et al., 2017).

More specific studies showed that although health professionals are familiar with EBP, have positive attitudes, and believe in improving the quality of care and outcomes by adopting the technique, they did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to employ it on a daily basis (Saunders & Vehviläinen-Julkunen, 2016). Later, several fields addressed this discussion, for example, education (Davies, 1999) and psychology (American Psychological Association, 2006). The model also spread to the field of management and created its own perspective, the "evidence-based management" (Reay, Berta, & Kohn, 2009; Rousseau, 2006).

Public decision-making also adopted the evidence-based paradigm, as did several other knowledge fields (Bunn & Sworn, 2011; Kayabu & Clarke, 2013; Lorenc et al., 2014). Organizations and scholars observed that practices of public decision-making needed to be rigorously and systematically evaluated, to achieve a better cost-benefit ratio (Head, 2016). A broader political agenda was designed, which attracted more interest from governments and from academia, for building evidence to support public administration decisions (Boaz et al., 2008; Head, 2016; Oliver et al., 2014; Rousseau, 2006). Access to relevant and strong evidence, and collaboration among policymakers were the most important elements that influenced the use of evidence for public decision-making (Oliver et al., 2014).

Within the scope of policing, this movement has translated into budget allocation for producing evidence (Boaz et al., 2008), in view of a critical situation for police to improve the effectiveness of the service provided, and pressure for greater transparency in their actions (Groff et al., 2015). These external pressures reflected internally in the police, so that new patterns of police management and training of its members were required, as a synonym of professionalism and source of legitimacy before society. Hence, police officers should act based on evidence to direct scarce resources to the places of highest concentration of crime and disorder, as well as to evaluate their results, including public perception and the legitimacy of the agency involved. To that end, police leaders should listen to public demands, no matter the size of the group or how justifiable they were (Sherman, 2013).

Some agencies have developed management and information technology systems for sharing evidence (Boaz et al., 2008). The National Intelligence Model (NIM), applied to police forces in England and Wales, was an important example of evidence-based policing (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). The Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy [CEBCP] sought to turn scientific research into a key element in decisions on crime and justice policies (CEBCP, 2008). In Brazil, we found studies that can be considered part of this movement, whose goal is to estimate the impact of certain actions and public policies on homicide reduction (Kopittke & Ramos, 2021) and violent behaviors (Biderman et al., 2010).

Daily examples of these practices are rankings and comparisons of data associated with places, schedules, people, and situations that would be targets of legal approaches; evidence-based testing to ensure that there is no increase in crime or waste of money; and tracking decisions made by leaders (Sherman, 2013). This evidence can be organized according to categories for application: specific individuals; groups; small places; neighborhoods; jurisdictions, or nations (Lum et al., 2011). It considers four main sets of factors for increasing scientific evidence and data in criminal justice: demand growth for scientific evidence; higher research production by criminologists; changes in the political climate regarding crime issues; and government support for innovative and evidence-based approaches (Robinson & Abt, 2016).

While there is a search for efficiency and economy, evidence-based has driven policymakers, researchers, and practitioners (Blomberg et al., 2016). However, there are barriers for implementing evidence-based actions, as well as assessing those done by particular units, as this type of practice is not usually considered real work (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Sherman, 2013). Therefore, managers can see the adoption of evidence-based management as a threat, since they are not free to define the directions of their organizations as they please (Rousseau, 2006).

EVIDENCE- BASED POLICING MATRIX

Figure 1
The crime prevention matrix
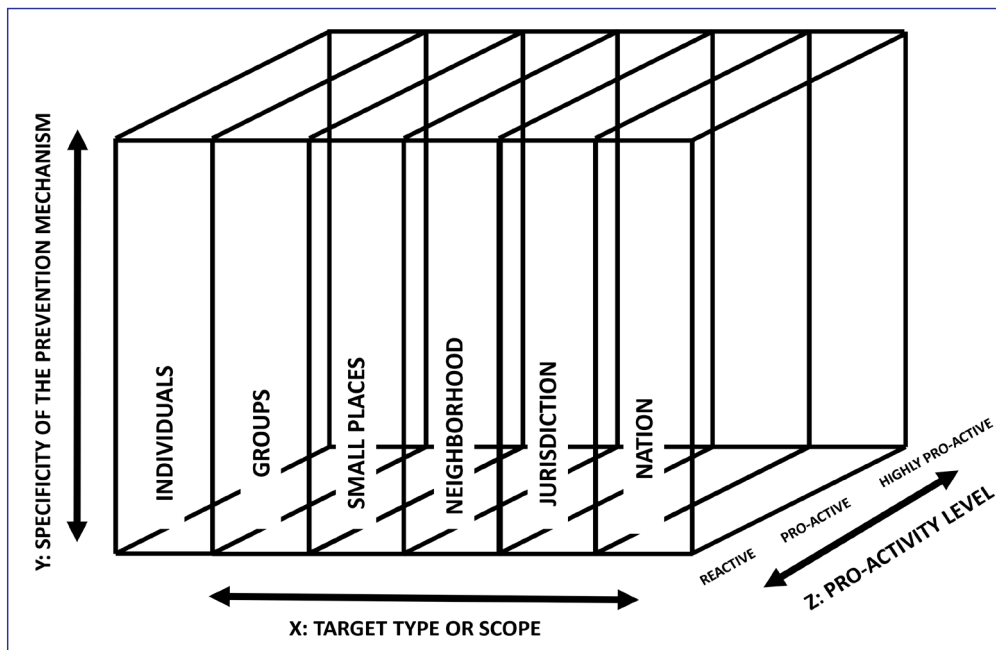
Source: Adapted from Lum et al. (2011, p. 10).

To translate from the research field to practice, scholars have developed tools to structure and systematize the methods used, such as the Evidence-Based Policing Matrix (Lum et al., 2011), which organizes police interventions through three common dimensions: nature of the goal, proactivity/reactivity, and specificity/generality of strategies (CEBCP, 2008; Lum et al., 2011; McGuire et al., 2021). Hence, the matrix is part of the efforts for overcoming specific questions on evidence, in order to get information that can be used strategically to build generalizations from research to practice.

The first group of studies, in the first columnof the matrix, permeates certain types of problems of specific individuals, pointing to particular policing strategies (Casey et al., 2007; Exum et al., 2014; Sherman & Berk, 1984). In this space, there are studies on some practices for addressing specific types of individuals, such as those on probation (Knoxville Police Department, 2003; Worrall & Gaines, 2006), and the creation of special police units focused on individual specificities (Exum et al., 2014; Jolin et al., 2002).

The second column comprises studies that address specific groups to guide policing (Lum et al., 2011), where problem-oriented policing (Braga et al., 2008) stands out. This type of strategy is considered the largest source of examples of evidence-based policing and shows several potential applications (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Sherman, 1998). It can present different goals (Braga et al., 2014) and associate with other approaches, such as community policing (Braga, 2008). There are also cases of strategies with non-significant effects, such as simply adding more police officers, without specific orientation, to reduce gang crimes (Fritsch, Caeti, & Taylor, 1999).

The third column shows analyses done in small territorial spaces (Lum et al., 2011). Studies mention the importance of the joint work of analysts and patrol officers for crime prevention (R. G. Santos & R. B. Santos, 2015). To this end, they usually adopt technologies and techniques for territory analysis (Bichler, Schmerler, & Enriquez, 2013; Kennedy, Caplan, & Piza, 2018), together with information collected from systems of automatic vehicle localization (Weisburd et al., 2015).

Hot spots are elements studied to define policing strategies (Groff et al., 2015). In addition, there are other approaches, such as problem-solving policing (Kochel, Burruss, & Weisburd, 2015), and various types of patrols (Ratcliffe et al., 2011; Telep, Mitchell, & Weisburd, 2014). Due to the particularities of hotspots, certain strategies were not effective (Rosenfeld, Deckard, & Blackburn, 2014; Weisburd et al., 2012).

Strategies designed for territories like neighborhoods and communities (Lum et al., 2011) appear in the fourth column. For these places, there are studies on the work of commissions to address specific problems, such as police lethality (Azrael, Braga, & O'Brien, 2013); initiatives involving task forces based on multi-agency structures (Bynum, Grommon, & McCluskey, 2014; Koper, Woods, & Isom, 2016); and approaches for preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency (Weisburd, Morris, & Ready, 2008), in addition to predictive models to identify hot spots where previous crimes took place (Hunt, Saunders, & Hollywood, 2014).

Evidence was also analyzed at the level of political jurisdictions, such as cities, counties, and districts, presented in the fifth column. Relationships between organizations located in the same jurisdictional space are studied based on the effectiveness of information sharing among several institutions and agencies (Florence et al., 2011; McGarrell et al., 2010), and in programs that comprise strategies for law enforcement, neighborhood restoration, and community management (Lilley, 2015), besides initiatives to support local communities in their efforts for preventing and controlling gang crimes (McGarrell et al., 2013).

REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING

A first requirement for developing Evidence-Based Policing practices is to implement an assessment apparatus, which could benefit police activities (Ribeiro, 2014). Such a mechanism would allow monitoring not only criminal rates, but intelligence activity indices, which also contributes to operation's governance and accountability rates, affecting public opinion and the worn out scenario of police organizations' legitimacy (Lima, 2019). Therefore, the incorporation of these practices has the potential to foster both the prestige of criminal analysis and the evaluation of operational costs and organizational deficiencies, bringing rationality to decision-making and legitimacy to actions (Sherman, 2013).

Corporations have created organizational arrangements for allowing police leaders to dedicate part of their work analyzing internal studies and actions, and rewarding them with eventual promotions (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Sherman, 2013), or with a wide recognition of their good practices (Sherman, 2013). This type of proposal aims to systematize procedures, based on the experiences already established in the science of police investigation, moving away from case-by-case analysis and approaching the pattern of dynamic and systematic intelligence analysis, by measuring results in light of indicators (Ribeiro, 2014).

At the police internal level, one of the measures mentioned in the literature was the development of a technology that enabled evidence dissemination in policing strategies (Boaz et al., 2008; Groff et al., 2015). Just as COMPSTAT was essential for the diffusion of an evaluation culture in the New York Police Department (Sherman, 2013), different technological tools have emerged in other corporations, expanding the reach of the research carried out by expanding the availability of the actions conducted internally, whose difficulty of contact was a barrier to overcome (Rousseau, 2006; Bullock &Tilley, 2009; Oliver et al., 2014). These practices tend to contribute to actions' agility and dynamism, designing an administration model whose activities are based on technology investment, thus leading to new ways of working and increasing the number of crimes solved (Azevedo & Vasconcellos, 2011).

Regarding information knowledge and dissemination, the improvement of several aspects in the structure of operation and services of police organizations is a subject of great interest in studies on this topic (Tomkins & Bristow, 2021), such as enhancing information flow to increase success rates in investigations, and the performance management of technological tools, by measuring their results. For example, intelligence-led policing practices emphasize crime analysis in order to assist investigative law enforcement agencies (Ratcliffe & Guidetti, 2008). Regarding the performance management of technological

tools, at the current stage of development, several police forces have sophisticated intelligence tools; however, information flow and the use of such resources need to be scaled, to provide the decisions of the investigative activity, aiming to increase inquiries that lead to finding crime authors (Ribeiro, 2014). Measuring the rate of solving investigations is essential to know the effectiveness of the police work, a central demand from civil society that is a crucial pillar of police legitimacy (Lima, 2019; Sherman, 2013).

Sudies show that most cases are cleared up based on evidence presented by the victim or by those who first attend the occurrence (Sherman, 2013). As an example, the adoption of working methods that emphasize the information activity could be part of a group of tools for measuring the proportion between inquiries opened by flagrant and those solved, compared to those cleared up through the investigation resolution rate, adopting protocols from successful cases. Studies with this goal could assess if, in fact, investigations cleared up originate from the mentioned situational conditions of police duty or from effective investigative activity; therefore, they could serve as a basis for modeling strategies to honor police activity resulting from investigation and intelligence based on resolution factors (Costa et al., 2016), overcoming the case-by-case model of investigation and analysis, which shows a low resolution (Lum et al., 2011).

However, while internal changes were relevant for the adoption of evidence-driven policing in some contexts, all initiatives examined showed police agencies and universities together (College of Policing, 2021; Knoxville Police Department, 2003; Sherman, 2013). This means that the dialogue between these institutions and their members is essential for adopting this model, which enables the development of internal capabilities and competencies for the police (Boaz et al., 2008; Rousseau, 2006), in order to oppose aspects of organizational culture that assign little value to evidence in their practices (Rousseau, 2006), thus stimulating the production of analyses on police strategies, a field with scarce literature (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Oliver et al., 2014).

Hence, evidence-based policing contributes for establishing a network between researchers and police officers (Rousseau, 2006). In turn, this relationship favors researchers to produce studies useful to police officers (Rousseau, 2006), who recognize their expertise in carrying out these analyses (Head, 2016). As examples, we mention New Zealand, with the Evidence-Based Policing Centre (EBPC), created in 2017 as a body linked to the New Zealand Police, with the participation of the University of Waikato, the Institute of Environmental Science and Research, and the company Vodafone (New Zealand Police, 2021).

In the United Kingdom, there is a network of institutes responsible for gathering evidence on what works (What Works Centre), within a broad understanding of security and fighting violence, such as: local economic growth; quality of life of senior citizens; crime reduction; homeless people; and juvenile delinquency. In particular, the College of Policing, through British government funding, provides police officers with content for performing their duties. Through practical guides, it develops methodologies on how to conduct neighborhood policing, how to reduce crime, and, above all, how to implement and carry out impact evaluations of police strategies by its officers. The College of Policing describes 250 ongoing studies conducted by different British universities. Of particular importance to the ostensive police, the study conducted by Northumbria University seeks to understand how to build police ostensiveness for deterring crimes, considering as background the emergence of virtual environments (College of Policing, 2021).

In view of all these issues and perspectives, four fields of study and practice are required for the implementation of evidence-based policing. In short, the first is assessment, since literature mentions that police organizations do not have elements of organizational culture that enable assessing the effectiveness of their actions, and much less their public scrutiny. The second field is leadership, as raising awareness and training organizational leaderships in evidence-based practices is a central element for the development of devices and mechanismsto use in organizational contexts. The third field is technology, because cooperation between organizations is needed. Such an initiative must be based on the dissemination and exchange of information, through a specific technology. Thus, it is possible to highlight the practices that have worked in different organizations and police units. Finally, we mention the constitution of contact networks between actors in the scientific field and police organizations, as a support for evidence-based policing practices. Box 1 shows these fields.

Box 1
Requirement fields for implementing Evidence-based Policing

Fields	Requirements and Context
Assessment	To promote actions for creating an organizational culture founded on evidence-based assessment.
Leadership	To form and develop organizational leaderships concerned with organizational performance, measured and analyzed through evidence-based parameters.
Technology	To develop technology for spreading evidence-based information and practices among the different police organizations, in order to enable the circulation of information and decision-making with less chance of errors.
Contact networks	To develop institutional networks between universities, research centers, and police organizations.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

FINAL REMARKS

Evidence-driven policing is the result of political pressures external to police agencies, which have established internal constraints to these corporations, changing patterns of organizational culture and management. We emphasize the urgency of mapping this scenario, in order to trace paths for adopting this route for Brazilian police forces. This set of practices would provide the development of organizational cultures to centralize intelligence activities for decision-making, and not consider them as marginal analysis tools. Therefore, the design of police strategies would no longer be structured only by cyclical convenience, but would contribute to breaking down the natural resistance to change in this type of organization.

More specifically, regarding the Brazilian civilian police, traditional tools of police organization based on evidence tend to emphasize the improvement of action strategies on a territorial base, more related to the activity of the military police, ostensive by nature, such as problem-oriented and community patrolling, and the geographic mapping of criminal activity. It is clear that these methodologies are poorly oriented to the challenges and problems experienced by civil police, which are mostly of investigation. An important perspective to consider is that a significant portion of the crimes concerning the investigative profile are of an unreported nature, that is, do not take place in plain view of the street and the public. Therefore, the impact of civil police action on the criminal scenario is difficult to measure by public opinion, since the scope of operation of the investigation agencies is made up of an underworld experience, which makes it even more necessary to gather evidence for discussing this organization's actions.

In the Brazilian scenario, there is a strong social pressure for the police not to act in a professional manner and as "law enforcers", employing unrestrained and uncontrolled violence and working outside of any planning. Hence, evidence-based policing can serve as an instrument for a police action centered on rationality, and not on the desire for social revenge as a demagogic tool. The defense of a rational police action necessarily involves the use of science, and not of irrational emotion as a parameter for decision-making.

Considering that, in a democracy, no society can do without the police, the horizon of professionalization and the use of science as a basis for formulating guidelines is the only possible way to organize police agencies for being pillars of the democratic rule of law, and not a factor of instability and weakening of the body of rights. Likewise, we cannot forget that evidence-based policing is a body of knowledge subject to criticism and with problems, as well as managerialism also presents serious issues (Tomkins & Bristow, 2021) for discussion. Hence, although the mere adoption of evidence-based policing is far from being a magic solution to the problems of our police forces, it can be a path for the improvement of Brazilian police agencies.

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