

**David Bayley – 1933–2020: a personal tribute**

Author

Shearing, Clifford, Stenning, Philip

Published

2020

Journal Title

Policing and Society

Version

Accepted Manuscript (AM)

DOI

[10.1080/10439463.2020.1779271](https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1779271)

Rights statement

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of an article published in Policing and Society, Volume 30, 2020 - Issue 4, Pages 479-482, 18 Jun 2020, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1779271>

Downloaded from

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/395891>

Griffith Research Online

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

**Shearing, C. & Stenning, P.**

**David Bayley - 1933-2020: A personal tribute. In submission to Policing & Society June 2020**

We both knew and loved David Bayley for almost 50 years. Throughout that time he was recognized as the world's leading international comparative policing scholar. Since his death many tributes from fellow academics have been published, in which the highlights of his academic career, his prolific publication record, and his significant contributions to the development of policing scholarship have been recounted. And in 2015, an exceptional chronicle and appreciation of his life and career to date was published by an English police officer, Richard Heslop<sup>1</sup>. So we do not feel that we need to go over all that ground again here. Rather, in what follows, we explain what were David's particular qualities that we experienced that made him such a cherished colleague, mentor, inspiration and personal friend for all those years that we had the privilege of knowing him.

We first met David when he visited the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto, where we were both at the outset of our own academic careers. It was then that we first noticed three of David's particular qualities that we came to recognize as his distinctive hallmarks as a scholar and colleague. First, he was able to present ideas and thoughts with an ease and fluency that was rare; when he gave talks, he presented informally, in language totally free of technical jargon, with the aid of nothing but a few handwritten notes on 5" x 3" record cards. Of course, in those days the closest thing to a modern Powerpoint presentation was an acetone slide. But David eschewed audio-visual aids and lecterns in favour of a very personal style of presentation in which he seemingly effortlessly engaged with his audience. And we soon came to realize that he adopted the same presentation style in the classroom as when giving invited talks to fellow academics. It was a style of presentation which had his

---

<sup>1</sup> Heslop, R. (2015) "The contribution of David H. Bayley, policing research pioneer" *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal* 16(6): 512-526, DOI: 10.1080/15614263.2015.1079402.

audience's undistracted attention, and which we both strove to emulate throughout our own emerging academic careers, and credited him with having inspired us to do so. Imagine Philip's shock and disbelief, then, when he came to the School of Criminology at Griffith University in Brisbane in 2014, at the age of 81, to give the bi-annual Fitzgerald Lecture, with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation, and from behind a lectern!<sup>2</sup> On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, in what may have been David's last presentation, entitled 'A New Look at the Politics of Policing' -- David was still pushing boundaries at 86! -- at the School of Criminology, at the University of Montreal, to an enthralled group of students and faculty, Clifford watched, as usual spellbound and in awe, as David weaved his characteristic cloth of rigour, insight and charm.

The second quality that impressed us from the outset was that David *loved* robust debate and discussion. Indeed, he regarded these as the essential ingredient of good scholarship and intellectual development, and he never shied away from controversy or critique of his views. It was a very important example for young scholars who in some cases had watched in horror as established scholars trashed each other in public in conferences. David viewed such performances with contempt. Our own continuing debates and discussions with him throughout the almost 50 years that we knew and worked with him, greatly enriched our intellectual lives as fellow policing scholars, and cemented our lasting personal friendships with him.

And thirdly, David loved engaging with early career scholars, be they PhD students or neophyte lecturers. We are among a whole host of scholars who came to regard David as one of their most valued voluntary life mentors.

There have been very few scholars trained in political science who have been attracted to criminology and criminal justice studies, and of those who have been, many have

---

<sup>2</sup> You can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUOaPh6Zgwl> (from 7:05 onwards)

involved themselves in studying police and policing. David has held a foremost and highly respected position among these over his 60-year academic career. So one of the most significant aspects of David's academic journey is that he started out on that journey through the disciplines of philosophy and politics. As Heslop noted, David's father had been a philosophy professor, an expert on the philosopher David Hume, and indeed until reading Heslop's account of David's career, we had not appreciated that that is how David acquired the middle name Hume. More importantly, however, is that David won one of the first Fullbright Scholarships to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at Oxford University. As Oxford University itself expresses it: "PPE was born of the conviction that study of the great modern works of economic, social, political and philosophical thought would have a transformative effect on students' intellectual lives, and thereby on society at large."<sup>3</sup> This was most certainly true in David's case, and together with his subsequent PhD in political science at Princeton University, accounts for his unique approach to the study of policing throughout his career.

As a political scientist, David was committed to the view, that he expressed many times in his writings, that police who were both effective and democratically accountable were an essential precondition for effective liberal democratic governance. In fact, he argued that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two. He believed that understanding police and policing provision around the world, required not only good theoretical insight, but also painstaking empirical investigation (including investigation into how police themselves understand and think about their work), but also, and very importantly, appreciating the political, social, economic and cultural context in which policing is done. All of David's published work, and his commitment to international comparative research, reflects this view of what good policing scholarship requires. In this respect, we believe that his contribution to

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/philosophy-politics-and-economics#>

this field has been truly unique. We have both learned this from having had the privilege of working and writing with David over the years.

David's work with international organizations such as the United Nations, also convinced him of the value of such organizations as instruments of co-operation and peacebuilding following wars and domestic conflicts. In this sense he recognized that effective policing was not only a precondition for effective domestic governance, but was a precondition for international peace. He was the first, and most influential, scholar to promote this idea. In 2006 he published his book *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad*, and four years later, with co-author Richard Perito, *The Police in War: Fighting insurgency, terrorism and violent crime*.

David was a patriotic American who believed passionately in what he considered fundamental American values of liberal democracy and human rights, and his early education at Oxford taught him that these are proclaimed as British values too. He genuinely believed in knowledge transfer that promoted these values as the basis for good policing around the world. But he was no Anglo-American chauvinist, and recognised that police in both countries have all too often not reflected these values in practice, and have a lot to learn from policing practices in other countries that do. It was his belief that critical comparative policing research, and working with international organisations that provide and promote democratic, human rights-based and accountable policing, were what was needed to improve policing around the world, including in his homeland. And in his later years he became increasingly disillusioned, outraged by, and out-spoken about, the flagrant violations and disregard of these fundamental values by the American administration.

David had as much respect for and rapport with, and as many admirers among, police officers as among his academic colleagues. He believed that the great majority of the police officers whom he encountered were decent people who were genuinely committed to

providing an essential service to keep people safe and free from crime, and had real knowledge and expertise as to how best to do so within legitimate legal constraints. At the same time, he recognized that these are not universal qualities among police, and that police and the organisations that they belong to, frequently do not live up to the high standards and expectations that those they police have of them. He consistently took the view that while police deserve recognition for the good service that they provide to their societies, they must also be held fully accountable for everything that they do, and he never shied away from criticising police for their failings and impunity in this respect. A major preoccupation of his, therefore, was to document, and advocate for, the elements of good and effective governance and accountability of the police - a preoccupation which came naturally to him as a political scientist interested in the politics of effective governance more generally.

At the same time, David was among the first American policing scholars who recognized that understanding policing required more than research that focused only on the official public police, and that good and effective policing provision cannot be achieved by the public police alone. He became a leading exponent of ‘community policing’, which he understood to mean communities and non-state institutions and organisations working with state institutions and organisations, including ‘the police’, to achieve safety and security for communities and their members. The first paragraph of the first chapter of his influential 1994 book, *Police for the Future*, provocatively titled “The Myth of the Police”, became famous (and in some quarters controversial) for encapsulating this view:

“The police do not prevent crime. This is one of the best kept secrets of modern life. Experts know it, the police know it, but the public does not know it. Yet the police pretend that they are society’s best defense against crime and continually argue that if they are given more resources, especially personnel, they will be able to protect communities against crime. This is a myth.”  
(Bayley 1994: 3)

This quote provides a classic example of David’s ‘down-to-earth’, accessible writing style that is manifest in all of his published work. It is, we believe, a model of clarity and

readability for academic writing in the social sciences, from which many of us would do well to learn if we aspire to communicate effectively beyond our academic enclaves.

We have said little so far about our experiences of David as a close personal friend, not just as a professional colleague, mentor and collaborator. It has been our experience with David that there was never any clear boundary between personal friendship and professional relationships. We have both enjoyed visits from David to our homes, and visits to his, in which the conversation always combined personal as well as professional discussions, usually over good meals and good wine. On one memorable occasion we spent several days together at a ‘retreat’ at a lakeside cottage in Canada, in which we mulled over ideas for new research and writing. Indeed in both our cases, much of the work on the publications that we wrote with him was thrashed out in our homes rather than in our offices. In this way, we were able to mutually discern ‘the man behind the academic’, and this greatly enriched the writing that we did together, and facilitated co-authorship.

Beyond that, however, we shared and chewed over our experiences and challenges as husbands, parents, and later as grandparents. Later in our lives, the conversation occasionally turned to more philosophical ruminations about what we thought our lives were all about. Initially, the issue of religious belief, as far as we can recall, did not arise. But a few years ago David began to express profound disillusionment with religion, and revealed that he and his wife, Chris, had become paid-up members of the American Freedom From Religion Foundation, which describes itself as a “non-prophet non-profit” that “works as an effective state/church watchdog and voice for free thought (atheism, agnosticism, scepticism)”<sup>4</sup>. In a classic example of the interaction between the personal and the political, David expressed his concern about how blind faith and religious fanaticism were responsible for much violence, intolerance and injustice in the world. David was convinced that intervening to protect

---

<sup>4</sup> See <https://ffrf.org/>.

communities from such religious mayhem is an essential and under-appreciated role for the police.

A striking feature of David's that shaped every aspect of his life was that he always had his eye on the horizon -- to use a pithy phrase of Catherine Nomura and Dan Sullivan, he kept 'his future bigger than his past', while ensuring that his present was full of life and beauty. His final place of being was a lovely retirement community near his beloved *alma mater* Denison University in Granville, Ohio – a return to a past he had loved as he constantly reached out to an ever-evolving future. Philip had the pleasure of visiting him and his close friend Susan Richardson there in this special place, not very long ago. And they both spent time with Clifford, also very recently, in Montreal.

David was dearly loved and admired by so many people, including us. He will be missed terribly, for all he was, by all of us.

[Word count: 2,205]