

**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**3RD MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE**  
**RESEARCH PROJECT ON USE OF FORCE BY THE POLICE**

**Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany**  
**April 22-24, 2004**

**Organizer: Thomas Feltes, Ruhr University**

Financial and in-kind support from the Ruhr University, Bochum, is gratefully acknowledged.

**Antecedents**

This was the third meeting of the international research project on “Normative Frameworks for the Use of Force by the Police.” The first meeting was held at the Universidad de Los Andes, Venezuela, in March 2001, and was attended by researchers from Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Canada, the United Kingdom and Trinidad and Tobago. At that meeting, it was decided that an international comparative research project focusing on the normative frameworks (justifications) for the use of force by the police would be developed (see Summary Report of the first meeting on this website). It was decided that such research could best be pursued through focus groups reflecting a variety of different groups and perspectives in each country.

The second meeting was held at Simon Fraser University, Canada in April 2002, and was attended by researchers from Brazil, Venezuela, Germany, Argentina, Canada and the United Kingdom. At that meeting, the group formulated a research question and defined the scope of the research; ratified the use of focus groups in data collection; established the criteria for selecting the focus groups; and designed a hypothetical scenario that describes an encounter between police and citizens and which would be used as the topic for discussion in the focus groups conducted in each country (see Summary Report of the second meeting on this website). The group provisionally agreed to meet in Rio de Janeiro in August 2003, to review progress with data collection, but that meeting was cancelled because of difficulties in organizing a meeting room and complementary logistical support.

The third meeting of the research group was designed to review progress with data collection and begin the planning for data analysis and publication.

## **Meeting Participants:**

The following members of the international research project team attended and participated in the public and private meetings:

**Dr. Otto Adang**

Police Academy of the Netherlands  
Apeldoorn, Netherlands

**Prof. Dr. Thomas Ohlemacher**

Lower Saxony University of  
Administration, Faculty of Police  
Hildesheim, Germany

**Professor Christopher Birkbeck**

Universidad de Los Andes  
Mérida, Venezuela

**Profesor Eduardo Paes Machado**

Federal University of Bahía  
Salvador, Brazil

**Prof. Dr. Thomas Feltes**

Ruhr University  
Bochum, Germany

**Professor Philip Stenning**

Victoria University of Wellington  
Wellington, New Zealand

**Professor Maria Haberfeld**

John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
New York, United States

**Professor P.A.J. Waddington**

University of Reading  
Reading, United Kingdom

**Professor Peter K. Manning**

Northeastern University  
Boston, United States

**Professor Michael Walker**

John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
New York, United States

Also attending the meetings was **Professor Maurice Punch** of the London School of Economics; and the following members of the Faculty of Law at the Ruhr University: **Astrid Klukkert; Holm Putzke; Felix Schultz, and Peter Stegmaier.**

## **The Public Forum**

On Thursday April 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., a public forum was convened at the Ruhr University to allow faculty, students and local police officers to hear about different aspects of police research or training conducted by members of the group of visiting professors.

**Professor Thomas Feltes** gave the welcoming remarks and made a brief introductory presentation.

**Professor María Habermeld** spoke about supervisory leadership for police services.

**Professor P.A.J. Waddington** spoke about policing hostile encounters.

**Dr. Otto Adang** spoke about managing dangerous situations.

**Professor Philip Stenning** spoke about the disadvantages and advantages of private policing.

**Professor Peter Manning** spoke about a theory of democratic policing.

**Professor Maurice Punch** offered some general comments on the five presentations, and the forum concluded with questions and discussions from the floor.

The five papers presented at this public forum will be available on this website.

### **Private Meeting of the Research Group**

The group met privately between Thursday April 22 and Saturday April 24 to discuss in detail various aspects of the international research project on “Normative Frameworks for Use of Force by the Police.” These meetings were held at the Faculty of Law, Ruhr University.

The private research meeting was chaired throughout by Professor Stenning. Professor Birkbeck was designated to take the minutes of the meeting.

Professor Stenning reported that the papers presented during the public forum at the group’s previous meeting in Vancouver (April, 2002) had been formatted and should have now been published by Simon Fraser University. He would follow up with SFU about providing copies to group members. Professor Birkbeck handed out copies of the book *Policía y Fuerza Física en Perspectiva Intercultural* (Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 2003) which was recently published in Spanish with the papers presented at the first meeting of the group in Mérida, Venezuela, 2001.

**i. Update on Progress with Data Collection in Participating Countries**

Four researchers, or research teams, have begun or completed definitive data collection (Brazil, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela). Six other researchers, or research teams, have completed pilot tests of the methodology or are planning focus groups during the remainder of 2004 (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, United States).

Following the updates, two points were discussed:

- a. Additional countries would be welcome in the sample. Professor Haberfeld will explore the possibility of conducting focus groups in Poland and (through a colleague) in Hong Kong. Professor Feltes will look at the possibilities in Bosnia Herzegovina. It was agreed that, in order to ensure a relatively standardized application of the focus group methodology (including the sequential presentation of the scenario), data collection in these additional countries will only proceed if it can be conducted by a current member of the research group or by researchers in those countries who have been carefully trained by a current member.
- b. Data collection should be completed by December 31, 2004, in order to proceed with data analysis during 2005.

**ii. Considerations Regarding the Scenario**

Professor Waddington reported that he had developed a version of the original scenario that was adapted to the realities of British policing (most officers unarmed). (This scenario was circulated to project members in 2003). The British scenario retains the descriptions of citizens' behavior that are found in the original scenario, but modifies the description of police actions in accordance with the organization of British policing (where Armed Response Vehicles are deployed for potentially violent encounters).

Professor Birkbeck (Venezuela) and Dr. Adang (the Netherlands) both reported changing the scenario to include references to actions taken by the police. The objective was to reduce the amount of discussion by focus group participants of actions that the police might take and direct attention to the justification or criticism of uses of force. In both countries the change was judged to have been positive, because the resulting discussions in the focus groups included a larger proportion of conversation devoted to normative frameworks for the use of force. (The modified version of the scenario used in Venezuela was circulated to project participants in 2003. Dr. Adang will translate his version of the scenario into English and circulate to project members.)

The group spent some time discussing the implications of these variations in the scenario for the comparative analysis of the focus group materials. In general, it was felt that the variations would not pose major problems. Specific arguments were as follows:

- a. The research is designed to be exploratory rather than confirmatory. Therefore, it is not necessary to consider the scenario as a standardized stimulus against which responses are to be compared. The scenario is simply designed to encourage and organize discourse about the use of force.
- b. The project is not designed to look at comparative dispositions to use force, but rather at the discourse which justifies or criticizes the use of force.
- c. Justifications for the use of force may well have a structure (and possibly some content) that is common across different types of encounter between police and citizens. Thus, slight variations in the content of the scenario should not matter. The role of the scenario is to provide a near uniform case for discussion, which will greatly facilitate the comparative analysis and presentation of results.

Finally, the general opinion among project members who had already conducted pilot or definitive focus groups was that the scenario had worked well.

### **iii. Considerations Regarding the Focus Groups**

Selection of Participants. At no site were participants selected randomly. In the U.S., convenience samples were used. In Brazil and Venezuela, participating officers were pre-selected by the police agency, although participation was voluntary and a few officers did not show up. In Germany, the Netherlands and the U.K., participants were drawn from training sessions. It was agreed by the group that the focus groups cannot be considered to be representative of the police in each participating country. Terms such as “the Venezuelan officers” or “the Dutch focus groups” merely designate the location at which data was collected, and although differences may well emerge between the results from different sites, it would be an error to assume that focus group participants are entirely representative of the police in their respective countries.

Research Team. Some focus groups were conducted by one researcher; others by two or more. It was felt that with two researchers present the focus groups are somewhat easier to conduct. At most sites, the facilitator was a member of the international project. In the Netherlands, the pre-test focus groups were conducted by instructors from the police academy.

Participants' Behavior/Perceptions. In the U.S., Professor Haberfeld noted some lack of trust between participants in the focus groups. In Venezuela, Professor Birkbeck

reported that it proved impossible to leave the differences in rank at the door, but discussion was fluid and juniors would beg to differ from their senior partners. The possibility of asking participants to evaluate individually the focus group after it ended (including an attempt to ask them “what they really thought” about the topic) was briefly discussed but no decision was reached.

#### **iv. Preparation of Case Studies**

Project members spent a considerable amount of time discussing the format for the preparation of the case studies, giving particular attention to the content of the final reports. The following points of content and guidelines for analysis were provisionally identified:

##### **a. The Context**

Most project members felt that it is important to provide information about the country, the organization of the police, and the department(s) participating in the focus groups. Some discussion of the formal guidelines for the use of force and public debate about the use of force would be valuable. Additionally, information about local or national political events (e.g., scandals, official inquiries) bearing on the police would be important. While acknowledging the importance of contextual information, some project members expressed concerns that this section of the report could get very lengthy and might distract attention from the main focus of the project (normative frameworks for the use of force). It was therefore agreed that the section describing context should be kept reasonably short.

##### **b. Data Collection**

A description of the number and composition of the focus groups, their average length, and the method of recording. Impressions of the general “tone” of the conversations and the interaction between focus group participants. Information about the kinds of question participants asked researchers.

##### **c. Normative Frameworks for the Use of Force**

Presentation of the content analysis of the focus groups, paying particular attention to:

- Rules (either formal or informal) for the use of force.
- Attitudes about police work, crime, citizens, the use of force, etc. that have a bearing on the justifications/criticisms for the use of force.
- Perceptions of the scenario (especially of the youths).

- Justifications/criticisms of the use of force based on references to: the situation; the objectives in using force; something else?

#### **v. Final Product**

Project members agreed that the final product will be a book containing 9-11 chapters (depending on the final number of project participants), each chapter describing a specific case study. The book would also include an introduction about the origins and objectives of the project and a conclusion with a comparative analysis of the case studies. In order to facilitate a homogenous style of data analysis and presentation, project members broached the possibility that draft reports be circulated among members, but no final decision was taken in that regard.

Project members agreed that a further meeting will be necessary, at which individual reports would be presented *in extenso* and discussed by all present. Given that data collection would be completed by December 31, 2004, the next meeting should take place in late April 2005. Submission of a completed book manuscript could probably be scheduled for early 2006, with a likely publication date of Spring 2007. Professors Waddington and Birkbeck agreed to serve as editors for the book. Several possible publishers were mentioned – Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Sage, Willan. Willan might be a good first option because of the shorter turnaround between submission and publication.

Professor Birkbeck also expressed interest in getting the book published in Spanish.

It was also agreed that the proposed book will be the primary product from this project, such that all contributions must contain original, unpublished, material. Should project members need or desire to publish chapters or articles based on their case studies before the book appears in print, those materials must be clearly differentiated from the chapter appearing in the book.

#### **vi. Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held in late April 2005, and devoted to the presentation and discussion of individual case studies based on the focus groups. Several possible sites were offered and prioritized in the following order: Boston, U.S.; New York, U.S.; Apeldoorn, the Netherlands ; Wellington, New Zealand. The definite location will be decided over the next few months.

## **vii. Miscellaneous Matters**

The Website. Professor Feltes reported that he had no problem continuing to maintain the project's website. The group agreed that the presentations made at the public forum in the Ruhr University could be placed on the website. Professor Stenning volunteered to ask Simon Fraser University whether it would be willing to allow a copy of the papers from the public forum in Vancouver to be published on the website.

Funding. Project participants agreed that, should funding be left over from prior meetings, this should initially be split in the following way: 60% to support attendance at the next meeting(s) by participants from Latin America; 40% to cover tasks associated with editorial work for the book, or translation.

Group Coordinator. Professor Birkbeck pointed out that the group needs one of its members to coordinate certain activities (e.g., selection of next meeting site; selection of meeting date; asking all project members for an annual update). He proposed that Professor Feltes be designated as coordinator for the next year, and Professor Feltes graciously agreed to take on this role.

## **viii. Conclusion**

In closing the meeting, Professor Stenning, speaking on behalf of the group, gave sincere thanks to Professor Thomas Feltes and his research/administrative team at the Ruhr University for the thoughtfulness, organization and generosity shown in organizing the meeting. Apart from the Ruhr University researchers who participated in the closed meeting (and mentioned previously in this report), thanks are also due to Sylvia Marek, Havva Avci, Brigitta Goldberg, Melanie Kretzer and Schirin Salem.