

Literature review for Dissertation:

(How has forensics evolved in policing and in gaining public confidence?)

Introduction:

This literature review will research and analyse different studies on forensics and help format further research. For example, the resources used will be focused on forensics and the public opinion, as the title is; 'How has forensics evolved in policing and in gaining public confidence?' Studies will consist of research et cetera and will revolve around forensics policing, and public opinion on police. When it comes to the evaluation of public opinions, studies would have to be used rather than journals as they would be more straight forward and understanding of the academic literature on a specific topic' (Institute for Academic Development, 2024).

What are some of the problems with literature reviews and how to avoid/ overcome them? When it comes to literature review writing, some problems may arise that can stunt progression. Some of these problems could be unreliable sources, lack of sources and maybe unknowing of where to look for sources (some can also be hard to obtain or do not exactly cover topic at hand or too old). There can be a few problems that can be run into when it comes to conducting a literature review. One of them can be that sometimes, trying to find a source that exactly covers the chosen topic at hand can be quite challenging due to how specific it needs to be, due to this it can cause whoever is writing the review to turn to any source that revolves around their topic even if that source is not the most reliable.

There are good and bad features too, as written above, some of the bad features can be that there can be a lack of resources when it comes to more specific topics. Because literature review writing needs to be non-biased it can be easy to forget that the writer needs to critically evaluate the sources used, which means acknowledging whether the writer or writers of the source are biased towards the topic. It would be good to try and bring in a mix of sources for and against the topic chosen as it broadens the ability to evaluate what is being said by different sources and whether there are any staggering difference due to this. It also allows it to be easier to critically evaluate.

Main Body:

When it comes to the topic of forensics, there are plenty of sources to use due to have informationally rich forensics naturally is, of course it does narrow down a bit when trying to find studies that involve forensics and policing but there are still plenty to look at. One thing that is being said about the chosen topic area is that 'previously been considered too expensive or too high tech has changed... police are under great deal of media pressure to do everything possible to solve the case.' (Surface and Interface Analysis, 2010) what this quote shows is that even though this article was written over ten years ago, even then the police would be under scrutiny, much like police today, which is what another source shows with 12% of the public asked by the IOPC has stated that they have reported the police to complain about 'the handling of an incident and 4% reporting failure to do their job/ neglecting duties.' (IOPC, 2025). Further down it will be seen that another popular trend is the use of artificial intelligence for forensics.

To start off, the importance of forensics in the police will be researched and how it can affect how the public views the police. There are sources that confirm as to why forensics is so important to policing and even how it can positively affect how the public can view the police. Forensics can help police 'link a suspect to a crime scene and help interpret a scene' (College of Policing, 2022). Whilst this source is from the police, it is not as biased, as it simply states how forensics plays an important role in policing. The source is most likely one of the best that can be used due to it having such a close connection and knowing to the police, therefore, it has a deeper understanding that can be portrayed more effectively to those reading.

Another source that explains why forensics is important in policing is The Home Office. The report explains in depth how important forensics is, especially in the criminal justice system stating, 'forensics delivers an important and largely positive contribution to the criminal justice system' (Home Office, 2022). The Home Office does also further confirm that there is a 'growing base of research for the use of forensics in policing' but that there is a gap in research for forensics in the criminal justice system that needs to be further investigated. Whilst the Home office is closely connected to the police, the Home Office more over sees the police services in England and Wales assuring that the police are doing their job effectively and in the right way and actually conducts analyses on the police services to scrutinise operational choices.

The use of forensics in policing can possibly also greatly help the public perception of the police and of forensic science 'Chief Constable Nick Dean argues that forensics is vital for enabling crime investigation and prevention, and sets out a raft of changes which could help policing restore public trust' (Forensic Capability Network, 2022). The article goes on to further state that it is imperative the police get forensics right as it is crucial to policing as well as to the victims and the public. Aiming to do forensics right

will ultimately help with how the public views the police, and that they can place their trust in them and forensic science.

When it comes to the reliability of forensics, there are many sources out there that are for and against in a way. 'Some have equated the current lack of statutory enforcement powers for the Regulator with an assumption that compliance is voluntary.' (Forensic Science Regulator, 2021). What this states is that even though there is a code of conduct when it comes to the handling of forensic evidence, when there has been misconduct including forensic evidence, because of the lack of enforcement powers, some forensic practitioners sometimes do not comply with the regulator. This shows that even though forensic evidence is very much important and can play a very big part in finding a suspect and possibly prosecuting the suspect, there could be a chance that where the forensic analysis came from, misconduct happened damaging the reliability it would have held. Forensics, as a whole is very reliable, it would not be used in court as a big talking point if it was not, and there would not be as much code of conducts as there is if forensics was not as reliable. The code of conduct is there to assure that the forensic evidence stays reliable as it can be the difference of a non-guilty verdict or a guilty one. 'Forensic Partners' provided significant support to one of the most complex murders our constabulary has investigated, all of the defendants were convicted, and we wouldn't have achieved this without their expert analysis' (Forensic Partners, 2025). What this shows is that, yes, forensics does have its flaws, especially when it comes to the mishandling of the forensic evidence, but when those rare cases do happen, it does prove itself to be reliable and useful in successfully finding and convicting its suspects.

The next sources used were those that focused around the possible future of forensics. With artificial intelligence advancing by the day, the police and forensics have adopted this to help the process become quicker and more efficient. 'Advances in digital forensics using artificial intelligence, machine learning and better data science, have not been matched by those adopted in 'wet' forensics' (Accelerated Capability Environment, 2024). What this shows is that the use of artificial intelligence has been tested, and it was found that it very much does benefit the police and those who are part of forensic science, and can identify things that could be missed by the use of traditional methods, like complex biological samples. Many other sources confirm that the future of forensics is the use of artificial intelligence. For example, UK Parliament also touches on this, 'It will focus on the future of forensic science in the UK... especially in digital forensics and AI' (UK Parliament, 2025). Yet another source also confirms the possible use of artificial in forensics in the very near future stating, 'Improving our understand of AI and how it may assist forensic science' (Forensic Capability Network, 2023). A lot of sources that delve into the future of forensics mention AI somewhere, very much showing that there is a trend amongst this genre of the future of forensics.

The reason for the use of the chosen sources is because the title of the main topic being discussed is 'How has forensics evolved in policing and in gaining public confidence?' therefore the main sources that need to be used are those that closely follow this topic area. A lot of sources used are from UK governing bodies as they are very reliable and up to date. A wide range of sources have also been used like, journals, articles and online bodies from official sources to allow to gather the best type of information for the topic at hand. Unreliable sources would be sources like news website as they are generally more biased towards a certain view.

The main trends being found, is that when it comes to the future of forensics, most sources that are based around the future of forensics at least touch upon the use of artificial intelligence. With a lot of the sources main talking point actually being the possible use of artificial intelligence, and conducting research on how it can be very beneficial to use, as it can shorten the time it takes to examine patterns in the evidence and can also find things in the forensic evidence that traditional methods would miss.

When it comes to gaps in literature, it was very hard to try and find sources from 2025, at least UK based literature around forensics and policing, a lot of what was found was in the USA that was from 2025. This shows that it would be beneficial to conduct more research around the field of forensics and policing as it is clear that it is lacking a bit in that area.

Some major works that were found, were the works from UK Governing bodies like the Home Office and journals or websites that specialise in forensic science in the UK, like Forensic Capability Network. These are major works, because these would be the main sources that people would use for a range of different topics. They are also both very reliable, as they not only present the facts as they are but also provide sources for their findings of their work that the reader can further investigate, rather than certain sources like news websites that can sometimes twist a story in favour of their view. The main idea of a lot of the sources used, is that forensics is very important in policing and that there should be steps taken to make it even more effective with the use of AI as mentioned previously, as it is as a growing force within the police and potentially in forensics. To find these sources, a range of techniques were used to help locate them through using online libraries and searching keywords for reports, articles journal et cetera it led to the sources seen above.

Conclusion:

Overall, when it comes to the topic of forensics and forensics in the police many sources were found that help further the understanding of the importance of forensics and what lies in its future. The main findings that have been discovered, is that when it comes to the topic of the future of forensics, almost all sources that were found at least mentioned the use of artificial intelligence. With many of the sources main focus actually being about the use of artificial intelligence in forensics, and them conducting their own research, that found that it can be very useful due to how efficient and nit-picky artificial intelligence is.

Another main finding, was that forensics in policing is very important, and even though it is a niche part of policing, it can still affect how the public can view them which police Chief Constable Nick Dean, reiterated forensics' importance in policing, and that making it more effective in the police can greatly impact how the public views the police positively and how it can restore trust.

The gaps in literature that were found were manly the dates of the sources used. It was very hard to try and find a relevant source that was from the year 2025 and even a lot of the time 2024, and the sources that were found during that time were not relevant to UK Policing or forensics. As stated previously, these gaps in literature show that there does need to be more research done in this topic area, and why the topic that the dissertation is on is beneficial demonstrates these gaps and can also help fill a little bit of these holes, as it has an accumulation of different sources of this topic area that can help the reader or readers form their own opinions and perhaps go off and conduct their own research.

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