

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

Background:

Forensics has been a science that has been around for many years but has only been used in British policing since 1986 (West Midlands Police Museum, 2025). With fingerprinting being the first to be implemented and the first to convict a person of a crime (The word, 2021). The focus is to explore how forensics has evolved in British policing over the years and the vast opportunities it has to further develop in the future especially with the advancements of artificial intelligence.

The focus will also be to explore how forensics has falsely incriminated people and how that can affect how the public views the reliability of forensics and policing. To gain the general public's and police opinion on forensics being used in policing, a survey will be used to collect data and evaluate what the general opinion of the survey is and whether the public find forensics reliable, or believe there needs to be further development to ensure accidental imprisonment is not possible. This topic is relevant because forensics is still very much used today in policing and whilst forensics is very much a useful tool, there are its downsides that need to be explored.

Research Focus:

The focus will be about the confidence the public has with forensics and if it affects how effective they see the police. To evaluate this the objectives will be to understand forensics and its importance in policing, evaluating reliability of forensics, the potential issues with forensics and how forensics could develop in the future. These objectives

will help narrow the focus down onto what the public confidence is in forensics and policing.

With the time period, mainly the present and future will be looked at but the past will be lightly touched upon at the start to fully show how far forensics has developed in policing in such a short amount of time from when it was first used in British policing.

For the survey, it will be mainly aimed at the general public but police officers who are serving or not will also be encouraged to join in on the survey as this could allow to see if there will be a difference in opinions between those who serve or who have served in the police and the public.

Aims and Objectives:

Aim: Critically evaluate fingerprinting through exploring forensic science:

Objective 1: Understanding forensics and its importance in policing. The objective is to explore what forensic science is and its different branches that specialise in specific areas like fingerprinting and using credible sources that will allow the ability to critically evaluate fingerprinting in the Police. Whilst also displaying its importance.

Objective 2: Evaluating the reliability of forensics and why it is irreplaceable. The objective for this aim is to demonstrate how valuable the use of forensics in policing is and to show this, real-life cases will be used. For example, fingerprinting caught its first murders 'just two years after it was introduced it caught and convicted its first murders as a result of fingerprinting'. (The Word, 2021)

Objective 3: The potential issues with forensics. Forensics can sometimes do harm rather than good like, falsely incriminating people. An example of this would be the

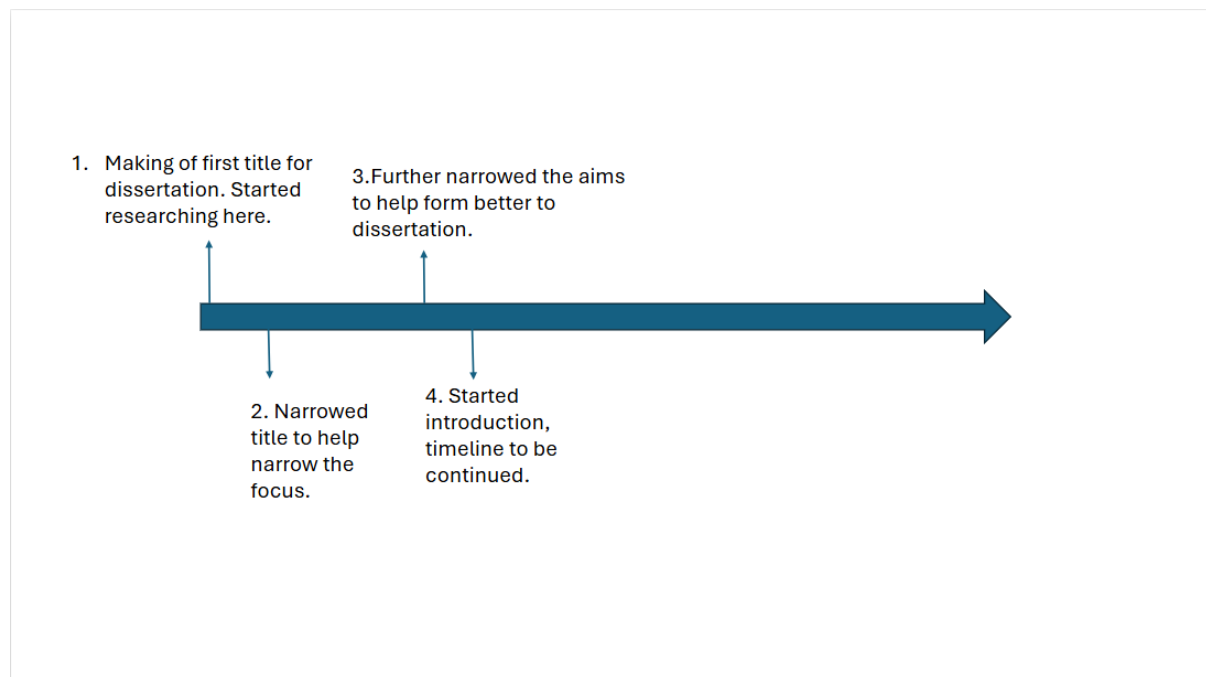
“Cinderella murder” where a man named Michael Shirely was wrongfully convicted for the murder in 1986 due to the wrong DNA evidence and was eventually found innocent in 2003 (Birmingham Live, 2012).

Objective 4: Concluding how forensics can develop in the future: There is already AI analysis being used for forensics (Police Foundation, 2025) and with how much AI is advancing and being used in day-to-day life, it would not be a surprise if it would get implemented more in forensics in the very near future.

Outline research methods and timescales:

The participants will be those in the general public and police officers who have either served or are still currently serving, this will allow to see what the general opinion is on forensics and whether there is any difference between those in the police and the public. The qualitative research will be the survey as it gives open ended questions making it so the participants can answer more freely, and the quantitative research will be done through the use of established articles.

There will be many ways in which the research methods will be used. The main research methods will be gathering information from credible sources like books, and reports or online websites like The Police Foundation but there will also be personal research from using an online survey personally made to gather information from the public and police officers who are serving or who have served.



Value of research:

Because there will be around 100 participants that will be able to fill out the survey the information will not be as rich as what it would if it was for example, 500 participants filling it out. Having it online will make it easier to expand the research area though, which could also change the results compared to if it was people from the same area.

The relevant literature that will be used is Blackstone's Handbook for Policing Students 2023. This is a great source of information to use as it is centred around policing and brings up a topic that some of the general public can feel negatively about "If an arrested suspects tenprints are already in the IDENT1 system, then their identity can be confirmed in 10 minutes" (Blackstone's Handbook For Policing Students, 2023). The online survey that will be created will have a question centred around this to see what the publics' and polices views are on this subject. Another piece of key literature that will be used is from The Police Foundation. The Police Foundation shows that 'AI is being used to perform repetitive tasks of a human worker' (The Police Foundation, 2025). This opens up the conversation that AI can be used for other things in policing like forensics, which the article does go further on to clarify that it is actually already being used in forensics.

This research will benefit anyone who will want to read an unbiased view on forensics in policing, but it could also help those in the police as it could help them realise that whilst forensics can be undeniable in placing someone at the scene of a crime, it has been found to falsely incriminate people and so they should tread more carefully and not to take what is Infront of them at face value as it could just be confirmation bias.

The research is also worth doing because it shows what the public perception is of forensics and the police is and if they have a lot of confidence in them or not, which could allow to see where the main problem areas are but also provides an unbiased view on forensics which allows the reader to form their own opinions on the different topics that are involved in this dissertation.

Reference List:

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