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## CHAPTER 2 – OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE AND POLICING

### INTRODUCTION

When we direct our attention away from public sector occupational cultures *per se* and towards police occupational cultures perhaps one of the first facts that needs to be acknowledged is the level of interest that they continue to generate. The subject area has attracted substantial academic attention over a relatively sustained amount of time and, as Westmarland (2008) notes, has achieved the relatively distinguished position of being one of the few terms in police studies used by academics and lay audiences alike. Amongst academics, suggest O'Neill and Singh (2007, p.1), it has become, 'an inescapable, controversial, surprisingly stubborn and recurring theme'. That police occupational or organizational culture (the two terms can be used interchangeably in most respects), seemingly above all other such cultures, still generates new literature, debate and disagreement indicates that police behaviour and values, and the drivers behind these, remain contested and of significant social interest. This chapter will highlight the social and political undercurrents that have informed much work into police culture before identifying three key eras of police culture research. For each of these eras of research a small number of key works will be discussed and the main themes outlined. Whilst presenting some definitions of police culture in this chapter a selection of works will be drawn on to highlight the difficulties associated with defining this complex area.

### THE SHIFTING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF POLICING

To fully recognize the powerful draw that police culture exerts, it is important to understand the ways in which policing impacts on a number of different areas of academic, practitioner and public interest. Changes within and beyond the policing institution have, especially in recent decades, compelled us to re-assess what we mean by the term. Likewise, policing has become increasingly sensitive to the vagaries of competing and conflicting political agendas since the mid to late 1960s and this has impacted on what the police do, how they do it and, increasingly, how they present both themselves and the information that they generate.

Policing continues, at a symbolic level, to articulate the relationship between state and individual particularly in regard to provision of security. At a more practical level, since the inception of the 'new' police, their enforcement of the law has been grounded not only in mandated intervention but in the application of subjective discretion, a theme that has been fundamental to our understanding of police decision-making and its consequences.

Furthermore, recent years have seen the police subjected to ever greater degrees of scrutiny by government, media and academics alike and this has continued to fuel our interest in the police institution, its role, its relation with the public and the behaviour of its officers.

One important factor, therefore, that may explain the enduring interest in the police as a cultural location, is the politicization of crime and crime control which has seen policing and penal policies vie as equals with the more traditional policy issues such as education, health and housing during recent years. Morgan and Newburn (1997) see this emergence of policing as a political issue as a relatively recent phenomenon with President Richard Nixon articulating popular and growing concerns regarding social issues in the United States during the mid to late 1960s. Similarly, according to Garland (2001), the election successes of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States could be attributed less to the resonance of their economic policies than to their ability to provide a

voice for broad popular discontent with the post-war social democratic consensus that was increasingly being seen as a cause, rather than a cure, for a multitude of social problems. Increasingly, therefore, the police became accountable in a political sense for what became known as ‘the crime problem’. This notion that the politicization of policing is a ‘new’ occurrence that has emerged over the last 40 or 50 years does come with a minor caveat, namely, that policing has, at some levels, always been political. For example, to Brogden (1982, p.1), the police institution is inextricably connected to the political world when he states that, ‘Nowhere, however, is the confusion over the deposition of the police institution more opaque than in its political relation’. Policing, therefore, becomes political at two different levels. The process to which Morgan and Newburn refer is the politicization of policing at a popular level and focused upon the demands of the electorate, whilst Brogden refers to the political dimensions of accountability within the policing context.

Increased popular concern surrounding crime and order issues, the politicization of policing at the public level and the contemporary tendency towards heightened awareness of risk provide an amalgamated discontent for which the public seek intervention. Interestingly, as Walklate and Mythen (2008, p.213) highlight, we find it increasingly difficult to separate fear of crime from the broader ‘tapestry’ of contemporary (and non-crime) insecurities that impact upon our lives. Therefore, changes to the ways in which we frame or perceive our security needs and our increased propensity to seek additional or alternative remedies to these feelings of insecurity provide one explanation of the public’s continuing fascination with order, security and the work of the police. These processes have coincided, in some areas, with a marked shift in the public’s positioning of their security needs in respect to the ability of the state to provide for them. Mike Davis, in *City of Quartz*, his thought provoking assessment of the social history of Los Angeles, states,

‘In the once wide-open tractlands of the San Fernando Valley, where there were virtually no walled-off communities a decade ago, the ‘trend’ has assumed the frenzied dimensions of a residential arms race as ordinary suburbanites demand the kind of social insulation once enjoyed only by the rich’ (1992, p.246).

The increasingly contested view of security as either a right to be fulfilled by the state or as a commodity to be bought in as a service according to one’s own needs provides some explanation of the increasing pluralized terms in which we view policing. Furthermore, it suggests some potentially interesting exploratory avenues regarding comparisons between public and private police cultures, a subject that will be addressed in a later chapter of this book.

Westmarland (2008) describes a number of factors that may explain some of our sustained interest in the culture of policing and discretion can be seen as central to these. It is considered important for two key reasons. First, that the amount of discretion bestowed upon police officers (particularly, those of relatively low status) exceeds that enjoyed by those of similar rank in other occupations and, second, that the discretion of police officers can have far-reaching consequences. Brogden et al (1988, p.95) allude to this when they note that the discretion granted to the police officer necessitates them, on occasion, to make ‘subjective judgements’ regarding whether or not a crime has occurred or whether there is a substantial likelihood that one might occur. Furthermore, they continue by suggesting that the discretionary nature of much police work allows for an undermining of the equalitarian principles espoused within legal rhetoric through the facilitation of discriminatory practices, for example, within the context of stop and search. Similarly, discretion in the policing context is

seen by Black (1980, p.58) as of great importance as, 'Discriminatory decision making by citizens to a degree cancels itself out in the citizen mass, while discriminatory behaviour by legal officials mirrors their own biases, and these are apt to flow in only one direction'. Police discretion therefore represents the measure by which we differentiate between the law as it stands in theory and the law as it is applied by police officers and the idea that police discretionary powers should lead to biases in the application of the law has long been a topic of debate for police scholars. In his book exploring police accountability, *'The Police: Autonomy and Consent'*, Brogden (1982) suggests that the police institution has successfully undermined the practical application of judicial practice in three particular ways through the exercising of quasi-judicial functions by officers. First, the decision regarding the application or non-application of a particular law is effectively a judicial decision. Second, legislation such as that pertaining to stop and search (and repealed UK legislation such as Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act) negates the legal principle that assumes the innocence of the accused individual. Finally, Brogden highlights how, historically, the police have successfully applied pressure to the judiciary through a variety of means.

The importance of the symbolic interactionist tradition to early work in the area of police culture, asserts Westmarland (2008), is also worthy of note and, in part, this can be attributed to the influence of Becker's seminal work *'Outsiders'*. This sociological orientation, when focused upon the arena of crime and criminal justice, views crime and disorder as being socially constructed, with 'crimes' being the outcome of interactions between members of the public and agents of social control (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). To commentators such as Tierney (2006, p.131) the impact of these ideas was to break criminology away from its traditional 'absolutist' moorings and to reinvent crime within a 'relativist' context. This 'relativism' introduced a number of complexities to our understanding of crime and

institutional reactions to it. For example, Sumner (1994) surmises that the previously accepted relationship between 'norms' and 'deviance' had been cast into doubt with a growing willingness to accept that the latter was more likely, in practice, to be defined not so much by societal norms but by the occupational norms of those tasked with the police role. Sumner illustrates this point in terms of police practices as follows,

'crime is more of a verb than a noun. In some British police forces, that is actually the nature of the usage. Officers decide whether to 'crime' a case or 'cuff' it (cuff, as in the old bobby's cuff round the ear, rather than formal sanctions). Working police officers recognize that to make something into a crime requires work' (1994, p.218).

The shift away from traditional approaches of framing crime and crime control and towards those that stress the socially constructed nature of order was articulated, in the UK, through the National Deviancy Conference which provided a focal point for radical criminologists. The importance of this 'relativist' paradigm was not lost on those scholars seeking to explore the reality of what Manning and Van Maanen (1978b, p.215) refer to as 'interaction episodes' between police and policed, given that it lent itself perfectly to the use of ethnographic approaches to generating and understanding data. Interestingly, and despite Noaks and Wincup's (2004) suggestion that British radical criminologists had failed to convert their championing of the ethnographic method into a sustained body of ethnographic work, the methodology has proved integral to research into police culture across the world. Whilst existing police ethnographies continue to stimulate debate and sustain interest in the cultural world of policing, it has to be noted that the tradition of the classic police ethnography largely belongs to a long gone era (Westmarland, 2008).

As radical sociologists began a concerted critique of the nature, and distribution, of power within society their gaze unsurprisingly fell, during the 1960s, upon a British police institution whose status and authority, as Holdaway (1983) notes, were perceived as beginning to weaken. The same decade saw the inappropriate behaviour of some quarters of the Metropolitan Police Force come to light through the infamous Challenor case where Detective Sergeant Harry Challenor was brought to trial on corruption charges in 1964. According to an obituary in *The Telegraph* newspaper (15 September 2008), Challenor's behaviour had become increasingly 'violent and unorthodox' with one arrested Barbadian purportedly being punched repeatedly by Challenor as he sang, 'Bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't want to leave the Congo'. The late 1960s also saw conflict between public and police flaring up during demonstrations such as the Grosvenor Square 'Riot' of March 1968 which resulted in 90 police officers being injured and over 300 members of the public being arrested signalling a very evident watershed in British police-public relations. This is not to suggest that the 1960s saw any demonstrable worsening of the behaviour of either individual officers or police forces. For example, Emsley's (2005) analysis of the 1929 conviction of Sergeant Goddard explains police corruption not in terms of factors endemic to any particular historical era but as a result of the criminalizing characteristics associated with particular London areas. Ultimately, the 1960s provided a protracted turning point, if not in police behaviour, then in the scrutiny of police behaviour by academic and media commentators. In terms of the latter, Chibnall (1979) provides an enlightening overview of the relationship between the Metropolitan Police and the print media during the 1960s which depicts the Dixon of Dock Green iconography of the police as rapidly appearing out of touch with the irreverent mood of the time. In an apparently simultaneous (and ironic) twist, Chibnall (1979, p.137) describes the way in which, in the aftermath of publicized scandals, policing *per se* became a fair target for 'critical scrutiny' by newspaper journalists. When such scrutiny transformed into newspaper exposes of police scandal by *The*



*People* and *The Times*, the Metropolitan police responded in a robust manner. In terms of the former, the article was met with a libel writ and, in terms of the latter, the journalists responsible were subjected to interrogation, trailing and threatening phone calls.

Police culture remains a subject area of interest for a number of reasons which relate to the state and its shifting position and agendas, public perceptions of police function and efficiency, the powers needed to execute the role of the police and the paradigms which academics invoke to make sense of the world around them. The politicized nature of formal social control impacts upon police numbers, roles and responsibilities. Public fear of crime and concerns over personal and community security impact upon their behaviours and their expectations of, and relation to, the state. The discretion that provides the lubrication for the police machinery provides a delicate balance for officers to engage in common sense or compassionate policing or, alternatively, to engage in behaviours that undermine the legitimacy of their work. The emergent theoretical model of symbolic interactionism therefore provided academics with the theoretical tools required to explore police decision-making and its role as the negotiable buffer between the letter of the law and the need to resolve human conflict.

In a reflective account about his own motivations to undertake a piece of research on police occupational culture, John Van Maanen (1978c) provides an account that might strike a chord with many who have undertaken their own research in this field by providing an overview of the motivations for academics to undertake such work. He noted that, despite the array of ethnographic work in the field of policing, none of these pieces of work managed to fully debunk the mystique of police work. He comments,

‘It is as if the field worker, as he is presented in the published works, simply vanished for a period of time into an obscure an often-unnamed police world; became involved in the activities that took place there; attained something akin to a state of grace with the observed; and, then, presto, emerged with the data in hand. Clearly, important contacts were initiated, roles were carved out, and certain kinds of events were (and were not), observed while the researcher was out of view, but we know not how such things were accomplished’ (1978c, p.310).

One suspects that the rich tradition of research into police culture continues to engage and inspire researchers to fill in the gaps that they perceive in the descriptions of others’ fieldwork experiences. Van Maanen continues by suggesting that the language of academia is used as a ‘doctrinal or ideological canopy’ (1978c, p.311) that conceals the true motives explaining why police research is undertaken and, to him, the ideological canopies erected by researchers fail to contextualize the position (or, it might be implied, the particular importance) of police research within the social sciences. Furthermore, he suggests that much police research fails to either appreciate or account for the individual biography of the researcher and their impact on the ethnographic experience. In short, Van Maanen exhorts us to answer the potentially troubling question of why some individuals choose to research the police and suggests that generally most are perceived as being motivated by either an engrained affinity or distrust of the subject matter of their research. By doing so, he reminds us that police research, like policing itself, is subject to politicized agendas.

WHAT IS POLICE CULTURE?

In the introduction to O'Neill *et al*'s (2007) collection of work in the area of police occupational culture, two of the editors wisely choose to refrain from attempting a definition of police occupational culture beyond that of,

'police occupational culture can best be considered as 'the way things are done around here' for the officers, not always 'by the book', but not always without it either. Police, both public and private sector, have socially constructed ways of viewing the world, their place in it, and the appropriate action to take in their jobs' (O'Neill and Singh, 2007, p.2).

There is, of course, a very good reason to exercise caution when attempting to define police occupational culture. For a start, police culture goes by a number of aliases including, according to Westmarland (2008), canteen culture, patrol culture, street culture and police subculture. Furthermore, recent developments in the area have made it increasingly common practice to refer to *police cultures* as opposed to *police culture* and it has become difficult in recent years to provide a straightforward definition of police occupational culture that suitably encapsulates all the key concepts and themes that have been identified by authors in the field. This is due, perhaps, to one key reason. Quite simply, like many concepts within the social sciences, the concept of police culture has developed overtime and mutated to cover new ways of thinking about police culture and, crucially, the changing police world. Waddington, who has robustly critiqued the ways in which we conceptualize police culture, (most notably in a 1999 article entitled '*Police (canteen) subculture: an appreciation*') has provided the following workable general definition,

‘Police culture (or subculture) refers to the mix of informal prejudices, values, attitudes and working practices commonly found among the lower ranks of the police that influences the exercise of discretion. It also refers to the police’s solidarity, which may tolerate corruption and resist reform’ (Waddington, 2008, p.203).

Such a succinct definition is helpful as a means of introducing one to the general themes of police culture, but cannot describe the evolution of police cultural studies over the previous half-century nor alert the reader to the contested nature of many of its core terms of reference. In terms of explaining the gradual progression of work in this area, it is helpful to draw on Westmarland (2008) who has identified three main periods in its development that might be classed as the early/classic, middle and late. Before identifying and exploring in more depth the themes and concepts of occupational culture, it might be appropriate to address, briefly, some examples of the ways in which police cultural research has developed throughout each of these stages.

#### EARLY/CLASSIC PERIOD WORK

Part of the confusion surrounding the definition of police culture comes from the fact that much of the classic early work in the field, that laid the foundations and provided the reference points for future work, did not use the term police culture. Probably the first piece of published academic work to explicitly engage with one of the more popular issues to later become associated with police culture was Westley (1953), in a short paper entitled ‘*Violence and the Police*’, which presented research that would later form the basis of his 1970 book ‘*Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom, and Morality*’. Westley, in the following passage, outlines the key thrust of his research,

‘The social definition of the occupation invests its members with a common prestige position. Thus, a man’s occupation is a major determining factor of his conduct and social identity. This being so, it involves more than man’s work, and one must go beyond the technical in the explanation of work behaviour. One must discover the occupationally derived definitions of self and conduct which arise in the involvements of technical demands, social relationships between colleagues and with the public, status and self-conception. To understand these definitions, one must track them back to the occupational problems in which they have their genesis’ (1953, p.34).

To Westley, therefore, an individual’s occupational relationships and roles had a substantial impact on their sense of self. The hostility with which officers were treated by members of the public, in turn, led officers to adopt essentially negative responses such as overt secrecy, the belief that public respect can be gained through intimidation and that almost any means of securing an arrest is legitimate. Greene (2010) in a profile of Westley’s life and work suggests that the most vital impact of Westley’s research into policing was to transform the study of police work from mere descriptive studies of the police role to sociological analyses of the police identity.

The work of Michael Banton provides a fitting contextual comparison to the work of Westley in that, primarily, it presents a comparison between the administration of policing and the work of officers within Scottish and North American contexts. Banton’s work interestingly charted not only the differences in policing between these jurisdictions (for example, in terms of the ideological distance between the police and the public, the formality of police officers’ manner in encounters with the public and the formal differentiation between rank) but also,

unusually for a sociological text on the work of the police officer, saw the police as an effectively functioning institution.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Banton's work to the theoretical development of the area of police culture was to highlight some areas of convergence in occupational experience and outlook between officers in these different environments, most significantly in respect of their use of discretion. To Banton (1964) police on either side of the Atlantic adopted the role of 'peace officer' and, in a legal sense, pursued a general policy of 'under-enforcement'. This observation converged neatly with the work of Wayne LaFave, a legal scholar whose work found favour with a number of early police cultural theorists like Jerome Skolnick in the United States and Maureen Cain in the United Kingdom. LaFave, in two separate papers for the Wisconsin Law Review, pioneered scholarly investigation into the appropriateness of discretionary law enforcement by police officers and concluded by advocating that it was critically important for the police to continue to use discretion in the enforcement and non-enforcement of the law, but that the latter should be subjected to the same level of legal control as the former. The discretionary nature of law enforcement, according to Banton, was further rooted in factors pertaining to both the local administration of the police resource, the police relationship with the public and the moral context of police work. The balance between law and morality in the interactions between police and public were considered incredibly delicate given that officers in both the United States and Scotland spoke to Banton of their reluctance to initiate the ultimate sanction of depriving a member of the public of their liberty. Banton went on to show how it was police policy in one American city which he visited, when using speed limiting equipment in a 35 mph zone, to only cite motorists driving in excess of 44 mph. Conversely, Banton learnt that, in one Scottish force, any police officer unfortunate enough to be witnessed by a superior officer failing to help an elderly female

requiring assistance crossing roads would automatically be reprimanded. Banton's work is of interest, therefore, not just as a comparative piece of police research, nor just for its focus on the use of discretion but in its ability to highlight the moral, as opposed to legal, basis of much police work. Overall, despite Banton concluding the book with a note of caution regarding what he saw as future changes to both wider society and the role of policing within it (one might interpret his conclusion as anticipating the advent of late modernity, the growing specialization of the police and the increased reliance on community generated intelligence), his work remained optimistic and upbeat about the legitimacy of the police and their work. This, in itself, represents something of a unique approach within the canon of police cultural literature, and paints a very different view of both police practice and the police occupational culture from Westley's work. To Westley, the discretion of the police led to brutal behaviour as a means of satisfying legal and occupational needs, the former through what he calls the, 'pursuit of duty' (p.41) and the latter as a means of defending the values of the police identity against an untrusting and unsympathetic public. Banton, however, perceived the discretion of the police world as allowing officers the opportunity to engage in moral as opposed to legal policing, a factor that he attributed to the police officer retaining his or her status as a member of the community.

Jerome Skolnick's *Justice Without Trial*, originally published in 1966, was a broadly comparative piece of research into the policing of two American cities. His work has proven to be of sustained interest to police cultural theorists, not least for his depiction of the police officer's 'working personality' (1994, p.41) which can be conceived as an occupationally derived framework through which police understand and engage with their environs and its inhabitants. Integral to Skolnick's work was the idea that police officer's perceptions of their occupational world were the product of three unique and converging factors that represented

key aspects of their role – danger, authority and efficiency. Skolnick did recommend, however, that these explanatory factors of the police ‘working personality’ should not be considered as tantamount to a universal police culture. Instead, he contended that individual and group differences will emerge between police officers, units and forces but that overall these three factors will coalesce to form, ‘distinctive cognitive and behavioral responses in police’ (Skolnick, 1994, p.41). Like most pieces of early research into what would later become known as police occupational culture, Skolnick focused on the specific police role of beat policing as the prime source of cultural knowledge regarding police work given that it represented the primary role of the police and provided, whatever their later specialisms, a grounded set of common experiences for all officers.

Skolnick underlined the core factors of danger, authority and efficiency to explain the ways in which police officers become socialized into the cultural world of policing. Danger and authority were considered as the two main sources of momentum behind the cultural identity of the police and these occurred against a backdrop of institutional pressure for efficiency. Danger (potential or realized) was crucial to the working world of the police officer as the resultant suspicion provided a ‘perceptual shorthand’ to categorize certain members of the public as ‘symbolic assailants’ (1994, p.44). ‘Symbolic assailants’ are, quite simply, members of the public whose appearance or language prompts police officers to expect violence and these ‘aggressors’ are perceived, not in terms of their actual propensity for violence or past history, but solely in superficial terms of appearance.

Under Skolnick’s model, danger combines with authority to create a pronounced segregation of the police from the public and potentially encourages illegitimate police behaviour.

Authority, in particular, serves to separate the police from the policed causing social isolation



that can lead to the resultant cultural response of police solidarity. Simultaneously, the danger inherent to police work serves as a unifying force within the police whilst exacerbating the cultural gulf between them and the public. Skolnick draws a comparative point regarding police working personalities in the United States and the United Kingdom by suggesting that, assuming that police in the latter face a lesser degree of danger in their working lives, there will be less propensity for their authority to be undermined.

Following the comparative approach used by Banton in *'The Policeman in the Community'*, Maureen Cain in 1973 published *'Society and the Policeman's Role'* which drew on her earlier research comparing the work of police officers in rural and urban areas. Cain's stated aim was to explore the organization and behaviour of the police and to explain the latter in relation to the definition of the police role and the pressures associated with it. In an interesting departure from other early works in this area, Cain's theoretical framework owed more to the traditions of role theory than the more fashionable interactionist theories of the time and employed a variety of research methods including participant observation, interviews with police officers and questionnaires conducted with officers' wives. One significant feature to Cain's work was her introduction of the concept of 'easing' behaviour. This term refers to parts of police life that facilitate officers' lives such as, in rural ones, the accepting of gifts of refreshments and foodstuffs from members of the public. In the urban context, Cain described one eight hour patrol where only one formal piece of police business needed to be undertaken with the rest of the time spent indulging in 'easing behaviours' be they trips to police stations or cafes for cups of tea or stopping at pubs to enjoy a drink with plain clothes colleagues. These behaviours were similar to perks but, apart from providing some benefit to officers, they represented a way for them to become accepted by the community as well as offering opportunities to share or pass on information. The significance

of these 'easing behaviours' lies in what they tell us about the ways in which acceptable work practices are transmitted through subcultural norms (Brogden, *et al.*, 1988).

Also of interest in Cain's work are the different styles and features of police work that could be distinguished between rural and urban settings. In the rural settings there was an altogether closer relationship between the police and the public not least because of the reliance on the public, rather than informers, for information. Despite this, however, the rural officer remained somewhat insulated from the public (with whom officers would be friendly but not friends as such) and, during working hours, from their colleagues. City officers, on the whole, dealt with a more fragmented public and encountered fewer opportunities to develop shared values within their communities because they were less dependent on them. Similarly, their work was more likely to be considered, 'both unpleasant and monotonous' (1973, p.229) because the urban officer had a less varied role than his or her rural counterparts and was less likely to become involved in criminal investigations. Despite this more limited role, their work environment did offer some opportunities for 'easing' including the apparently arbitrary arrest of vulnerable members of the community for public order offences, a practice which provided a means of enhancing officers' status as thief-takers. Another means of relieving the mundanity of much day-to-day work was to 'work up' (p.229) a beat by developing relationships with people who lived there. This strategy, however, would be more successful as a means of accruing status in rural locations where peace-keeping rather than thief-taking was more central to the police role. Finally, officers in urban settings could resort to 'official' means of job easing by using centrally provided resources for leisure pursuits. Probably the most important way, however, in which the styles of rural and urban officers differed from each other was in the, '*much narrower definition of 'work'*' (1973, p.230, italics in original) of the latter.

The above sketches present nowhere near an exhaustive view of sociological research undertaken during the 1950s and 1960s into police work. However, what I have sought to do is to give a brief overview of some of the key works conducted at this time by police scholars. Cain (1973) provides a welcome and concise summary of early work in this area and sees its focus of attention as threefold. First, it tends to highlight the rights of citizens in respect of how the police operate and how they utilize discretion. Second, it concerns the reasons why police officers tend to act in certain predictable ways. Third, and finally, the work focuses on the *effects* of police actions.

Despite the term police culture having not, at this stage, become a part of the academic language of police studies, undoubtedly the themes being addressed by these writers were concurrent with what would now be taken as key themes within police occupational culture. Westley's primary aim was not just to describe police use of violence but to explore the ways in which such behaviour was legitimated by the role of the police and their relationship with the public. Banton took probably the most positive view of policing and provided an interesting, semi-comparative approach which highlights the importance of discretion, and the balance between legal and moral considerations, to police work. Skolnick probably comes closer than the other writers whose work has been briefly explored in this section to describing police culture when he proposed the idea of the police officer's 'working personality' which suggests that police officers share a common outlook and that these inclinations are the result of the unique combination of three factors of the police world – danger, authority and efficiency. Cain (1973), by contrasting the work roles and relations of officers working in urban and rural locations, highlighted the impact of different

environments on the methods and styles of policing used there. Similarly, she underlined the importance of those facets of the police world that bring small but welcome improvements to the officer's working day ('easing' behaviours) and their importance in facilitating our understanding of those norms that underlie police work. Fundamental to all of these four accounts, however, is the idea of 'discretion' which will be more fully addressed later in this book.

## MIDDLE PERIOD WORK

If police use of discretion was the core feature of police work that was commonly explored by those writers addressing police culture in the early period, the issue of cultural variation was probably the central theme to much work in the middle period. Whilst earlier works had tended to acknowledge that variations occurred between groups of officers, the main thrust of the work had been on emphasizing core similarities in police work. To middle period writers, not only was policing more likely to be approached in terms that explicitly acknowledged the idea of culture and its use as an analytical concept, but also that cultural variation was a notable element of the social world of the police.

In a book chapter entitled '*Street Cops and Management Cops: The Two Cultures of Policing*' Elizabeth and Francis Reuss-Ianni (1983) provide one of the clearest declarations that, rather than sharing a homogeneous occupational culture, specific and different police *cultures* could be identified within the police world. They began by drawing upon organizational research to suggest that the, 'informal social and behavioural systems' (p.251) of immediate circles of colleagues have a greater impact upon behaviour than the wider organization. This presents a particular problem for the administration of police agencies where resolution of employee demands is increasingly finely balanced with the organisation's

need for efficiency and citizen focus. Utilizing a mixed methodology comprised of participant observation and event and network analyses they found that, within their research environment of New York City, they could discern two opposing and incompatible police occupational cultures. The first, characterized as a 'street cop culture' (p.253), was based on ideologically driven ideas of a police world where officers of all ranks could be trusted, the public supported the police and local politicians left officers to their own devices. In many respects, this highly idealized cultural view of police work represents an amalgamation of a nostalgia driven view of 'good old days' policing (1983, p.253) with strongly and commonly held beliefs regarding the ways in which it should be performed and coordinated. Street officers that Reuss-Ianni and Ianni interviewed and observed subscribed to the prevalent view that, 'social and political forces have weakened the character, performance, and effectiveness of police work and that as a result the policing function is under strong attack' (1983, p.254). These officers highlighted the lack of respect from the public, combined with a growing restriction and control from police managers and local politicians, that made the police job more complex, more perilous and less efficient. The 'management cop culture' was seen as generating bureaucratic responses that were then superimposed upon the 'street police culture' increasingly causing conflict, stress, and inappropriate police behaviour, and which then subsequently fortified the importance of the precinct culture to the officers. Reuss-Ianni and Ianni then explored the reasons for this apparent bifurcation of police cultures within the New York City police. Previously, the 'street cop culture' had provided a coherent and consistent set of values that drew together and unified all levels of the department. Reuss-Ianni and Ianni described the benefits and drawbacks of this cultural homogeneity where, 'The mutual dependence provided a level of morale and esprit de corps; this same mutuality and the secrecy it produced contributed to the institutionalization of widespread organized graft and corruption in the department' (1983, p.256). They also drew attention to the factors

(internal and external to the police) that they saw as causing the apparent fragmentation of the police culture. These included, the Knapp Commission (based to some extent on the revelations regarding corruption within the force made by Frank Serpico and others), a growing interest in the rights of marginalized and disenfranchised groups, a decline in the amount of leisure time socializing undertaken by officers (enforced partly by wage increases leading to police officers living outside the city), calls for greater minority representation within the force and a growth in the numbers of officers who had completed programmes of higher education.

Ultimately, Reuss-Ianni and Ianni viewed both cultures as sharing the same broad goals of providing safety and security to the city's inhabitants but, significantly, noted a variation in their definition of these concepts and the strategies by which these may be realized. The 'street cop culture', for example, highlighted the notion of the 'professional' cop using his or her discretion as the basis for making decisions at the local level. On the other hand, the 'management cop culture' took a broader geographical remit and concentrated on its key role of prioritization of limited resources within a complex array of external financial, political and social constraints. The authors concluded by stating that the bifurcation of cultures detailed above is not unusual in any organization that has experienced pressure to change the way in which it coordinates and executes its work. As a response to these new demands, two cultures emerged. One remained loyal to the traditional way of doing the job and the other focused less upon the practical and symbolic world of the front-line practitioner but was more sensitive to local political contexts and media interest. The symbolic icon and language of the 'officer' found itself increasingly lost amongst new management discourses that prioritized 'organization' and these, 'incongruent values systems' (p.272) led subsequently to disaffection and stress. Interestingly, Reuss-Ianni and Ianni saw the decline of a unifying

singular police culture as a major cause of stress within policing, suggesting, like other organizational scholars have previously, that occupational cultures do have notable positive impacts.

Another key publication associated with this middle period is Malcolm Young's (1991) '*An Inside Job*' written by a police officer turned academic who provides an engaging account of police work in the UK between the 1950s and 1970s. In many respects, the true fascination of this book is the author's reflection on his own transformation of occupational identity as he moved between law enforcement and academic cultures. Simultaneously, however, Young used an anthropological approach to make sense of the, 'nuances and specificities of police reality' (1991, p.63) as he progressed within the police institution. As a new police officer within one of the three divisions of the Newcastle upon Tyne City police, he described the process of becoming aware of the cultural world of the city police officer and the distinctions between 'thief takers' and 'uniform carriers', 'polis' and 'civvies'. The cultural divisions that separated those officers in the North Shields and South Shields Divisions reinforced the idea of a physical and social environment where boundaries were clearly marked. Minor differences in uniform, accommodation policy and height regulations between neighbouring forces reflected 'alien' and despised styles of policing. As Young progressed to being an aide to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and subsequently a detective constable, he charts how he had effectively crossed a boundary from his previous cultural position. To his former uniformed colleagues, his new position was disparaged for its freedom of movement, its apparent lack of control and the failure of most detectives to detect crime. Interestingly, Young's move to CID marks his introduction to what he terms, 'the primacy of the statistical world' (p.82) and a departure from the world of the uniformed officer where an arrest was seen as an end in itself. To Young,

‘The detective has therefore moved from the centrally important activity of seizing the villains into a manipulated world where the paper exercise of statistical detections is used to assuage politicians, the media, and a public obsessed with the moral panic of increasing crime rates’ (1991, p.83)

Whilst, to the uniformed officers of Young’s recollection at least, officers working for CID were seen as falling prey, sartorially, to individuality, Young shows how even detectives were still constrained, in some respects, by social strictures regarding appearance,

‘To walk into a pub function room as I have often done during the ten years I was collecting fieldnotes and see two or three hundred detectives in their ‘uniform’ of modern suit and tie, neat haircut, and the fashionable moustache of the times, is to be visibly reminded that there is a narrow symbolic range of bodily correctness within which all policemen can properly operate’ (1991, p.83).

Young’s next move within the institution was one that took him yet further from what he had been socialized into seeing as ‘proper’ police work and into more remote areas of police operations. As one of only two full-time members of a squad tasked with dealing with a new focus for the police, namely drug users, Young found himself in a position where the austere and prescriptive social conventions of the police world failed to hold either authority or relevance. In his ‘marginal universe’ (p.89), he enforced new offences, dressed differently, and lost respect for previously revered systems of the police hierarchy.



Dick Hobbs, in a fascinating ethnographic account of the cultural distinctiveness of the East End of London and its impact on crime and law enforcement, forwarded the argument that the form of entrepreneurialism endemic to this specific area represented, 'a specific economic and cultural order' (1988, p.197). To Hobbs, the East End of London and the CID of the Metropolitan Police represented distinct and different environmental and cultural phenomena yet shared key characteristics. Indeed, Hobbs' work draws attention to the role of CID officers and makes a strong case to distinguish them culturally from their uniformed colleagues. In an engaging overview of the history of the CID he details the impact of Sir Robert Mark (former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) whose unveiled animosity towards CID was a manifestation of his personal characteristics that embraced both conservatism and militarism. Hobbs concluded that the detective role is essentially 'entrepreneurial' rather than 'militarist' and that this distinction placed the two forms of police work in ideological and symbolic conflict.

The entrepreneurial basis of the local environs, coupled with the similarly enterprising nature of detective work, ensured that the local geographic and social culture provided shared symbolic meanings for both officers and villains. The primacy of market forces in the area also meant that relationships between police and local criminals were dictated, not by the formality of police bureaucracy, but through informal interactions based on the trading of different forms of commodity. Hobbs describes one such interaction,

'Consulting a CID officer was the legal equivalent of a 'cash only' deal – no VAT, no due process. However, unless the East-Enders had something to trade no deal was forthcoming. When one man's younger brother was arrested in connection with a robbery he consulted a detective, a drinking-partner of several years' acquaintance:

“What have they got? Nothing solid have they? He never did it. He’s not at the heavy; shooters not his thing. What have they got?” When this potential ‘client’ was asked to ‘put up’ names, he declined and the transaction was aborted’ (1988, p.198).

To Hobbs, the relationship between the police and their public was based on their mutual understanding of the rules that typified police CID relations with local criminals. Turn-taking was one rhetorical device used by CID officers to manage to articulate and sustain the CID mythology in ways which belie the departments’ relationship to the wider police organization. In such a way, investigations were portrayed in terms that emphasize their similarity to a game where both police and criminal took turns and were either successful or unsuccessful due to the intervention, or non-intervention, of luck. In doing so, the CID officer was recast as, ‘an autonomous entrepreneur of law and order’ (p.205) rather than a state sanctioned law enforcement officer, an important distinction for those whose livelihoods relied on their ability to ‘fit in’ with the local community.

More serious types of crime, such as murder, required a shift from working class local rhetoric back to the formal and unambiguous police codes of language where officers were quick to straightforwardly identify both themselves and their aims. Murder was conceived by detectives as a ‘real’ crime and therefore one that could, unlike most incidents, be dealt with in a manner detached from the symbolic and cultural dynamics of the East End. Such a division of presentational codes should not be taken as evidence that formal and informal codes of policing never actually converged and Hobbs described how CID officers used both verbal and non-verbal working class styles of communication to become more effective officers. The rhetoric of the CID therefore served as a means of transmitting knowledge regarding the rules of the game that both sides played thus highlighting the 'symbiotic'

relationship between the public and the police force in the area. The entrepreneurial basis for the East End culture was seen as pervading the occupational personalities of both the police officers and the 'villains' and both were seen as players in a game based upon, 'the trading of moral identities' (Hobbs, 1989, p.179) which tended to confuse the distinction between 'cop' and 'criminal'.

These three pieces of research from middle period studies of police occupational culture provide an altogether different take on police culture than that which emerged through early work in the area in that they describe the emergence of significantly different and separate cultures within specific police organizations. For the first time, research in this area was going beyond solely acknowledging variations in police values and behaviours as writers like Skolnick (1994) and Westley (1953) did. Where early writers did acknowledge such variations they were portrayed as aberrations of the dominant cultural themes that the literature described. The work of Reuss-Ianni and Ianni and Young describes the coexistence of cultures that appear to conflict with each other (in the case of Reuss-Ianni and Ianni), cultures that appear, in some cases, to be variations on a similar theme (Young's distinction between uniformed and CID cultures) and, in the example of Young's experiences working for a drug squad, an example of police officer's operating under no discernible police culture. To Young, he and his colleague had become 'aberrant policemen' (p.90) exposed to new ways of viewing the world and, as a result, began to drift away from the police institution's sphere of influence. Hobbs also succeeded in drawing out the cultural differences between CID and uniform work by highlighting the different occupational priorities such as high quality paperwork (that casts the reality of detective work in a more occupationally appropriate light) and performance in court (which Hobbs lightly refers to as 'repertory justice').

Of considerable interest here, however, is the way in which the middle period of police culture writing not only brought about an awareness of different cultures existing simultaneously within particular occupations but also, in Hobbs' case, of an awareness of the relationship between geography and occupational culture. Most significantly, the main difference between uniform and CID officers is that the latter are 'doing the business' (1988, p.196) in an environment founded on entrepreneurialism and within a framework of relationships that echo those of the trading heritage of the East End whilst the former are more tightly constrained by the culture of the police institution. The occupational culture of the police that Hobbs described competed with the indigenous cultural framework of the East End to provide a detective culture that succeeded in drawing substantially on the latter's unique geographical milieu. Hobbs describes the East End as a unique environment that can be viewed as a 'cultural community' in the fullest sense of the phrase due, in part, to its heritage of Huguenot, Irish and Jewish immigration. The Irish and Jewish communities left the most lasting impression on the area with the former contributing to the pre-industrial culture of the area, and the latter providing its entrepreneurial character. Working-class culture, according to Hobbs, represents a reaction to particular social and economic conditions and will vary between regions. Malcolm Young pursues a similar vein when he explores differences in policing styles between the city centre of Newcastle upon Tyne and the outlying divisions, but does so without really exploring the fundamental uniqueness of his chosen geographical area. To Young, the differences between areas were as much a reflection of police perceptions of differences between policing styles as a commentary upon social and cultural differences pertinent to the lives of all denizens.

Evident in the research of this era was an acknowledgement of the growing importance of managerialism to the administration of the police function and its inevitable impact upon the cultural world of the police. Although this phenomena is more explicitly addressed in Reuss-Ianni and Ianni's work, it is also highlighted within Young's depiction of the pressures that were brought to bear on new CID officers. He outlines the, 'tremendous semantic significance' (p.82) to officers of a 'quality' arrest, within a system that cares only for 'numbers' of detections. Likewise, Hobbs (1988) shows how one of the ways in which the entrepreneurial nature of CID is evidenced is by the way that they respond to the pressure for results that they face. The entrepreneurial CID officer does not just solve a crime, he or she turns small offences into big offences (by generating evidence for more serious charges) or turns a single offence into a number of charges.

## LATE PERIOD WORK

In this section, an overview of a limited number of later examples of police culture literature will be presented. These are not intended to present a definitive overview of the contemporary literature of this area, but merely to demonstrate the increasingly diverse and complex ideas that have become evident within recent work. For example, later work has tended to critique the relevance of earlier writings especially in respect of the substantial changes that both police institutions and 'policing' as a concept have undergone in recent years.

In *Changing Police Culture: Policing in a Multicultural Society* Chan (1997) proposed a new approach with which to analyse police culture prompted by her belief that the majority of research undertaken in the area was limited due to the use of an outdated conceptual framework. Her research, based on questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a content analysis of documents,

led her to forward four general criticisms of literature in the area. Her first criticism is that most research presents cop culture as too deterministic and inflexible a concept, a theme initially developed by middle period writers such as Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (1983). This is shown by the failure of most accounts to explain internal differentiation between groups of officers who hold different police functions and led Chan (1992) to suggest that cop culture was a more 'fluid' concept than previously acknowledged. Furthermore, any account of police culture should, she suggested, be flexible enough to describe differences *within* and *between* police forces.

Chan's second criticism refers to the process whereby police officers become socialized into the occupational culture. To Chan, existing accounts have failed to address the issue in sufficient depth and, accordingly, have painted the individual officer as a passive bystander in what she terms the 'acculturation process' (1997, p.66). Whilst acknowledging the undoubted potency of occupational cultures, Chan proposed that police cultures should not be seen as inevitably overriding the will of the individual. By way of contrast, she suggested that any theory of police culture should acknowledge the active role played by the individual officer in comprehending their institution and the cultural landscape within which that institution existed. Accordingly, Chan placed great emphasis on the importance of understanding the interaction between the occupational culture and individuals' existing attitudes.

Chan's third criticism of existing literature is that police occupational cultures are portrayed as operating in a vacuum that exists independently of external (non police) contexts. Thus, the fact that political change, the emergence of new social challenges and the impact of new legislation can have a profound effect on the culture of the police needs to be recognized by theories that purport to explain police culture. Under such a model, the culture within a particular station can be particularly affected by an external inquiry, a change in organization or by a new piece of

legislation. Chan's fourth and final criticism encapsulates her previous points and is that, to a large extent, the dialectic between social environment and policing has been ignored making it impossible for existing theoretical frameworks to account for changes to, or variations within, cop culture. Only when such a relationship is established will we be able to examine the phenomenon with any sense of objectivity.

Chan, in the light of these issues, proposes a re-conceptualization of police culture within three converging themes. The first is that of recognizing the active cultural role played by individual members of the police force. Secondly, she claims that there is a need to be aware of the fact that multiple cultures may exist within a single organization. Thirdly, she states that there is a need to situate culture within the ever-changing social and cultural contexts of police work. As a means of overcoming these weaknesses, she developed a framework which drew upon cognitive models and Bourdieu's concepts of 'field' and 'habitus'. Traditional models of police culture assume, suggests Chan (1997, p.73) that a linear relationship exists between 'field' ('the structural conditions of police work'), 'habitus' ('cultural knowledge') and 'police practice'. Such a formulation assumes that a deterministic and causal process exists whereby police work is solely responsible for the generation of cultural knowledge which, in turn, informs police practice. Chan (1997) criticizes this simplistic framework on two main grounds. First, it fails to articulate the extent to which individuals can actively contribute to cultural knowledge and, second, it suggests that the application of changes to the structural conditions of police work would *de facto* lead to changes in cultural knowledge and, therefore, police behaviour. In its place Chan proposes a model that acknowledges the potential for individual police actors to become the connecting factor between 'field', 'habitus' and police practice. Under this model, there would be no causal assumption that culture was solely informed by the structural conditions of police work and that all police practice was dictated by cultural knowledge. To Chan, therefore, a structural change

need not necessarily lead to changes in culture and practice, being dependent instead on the extent to which officers feel equipped to modify their practice to accommodate the change.

Waddington (1999a), in '*Police (Canteen) Sub-culture An Appreciation*' provided us with an equally thought-provoking critique of the literature of police culture in which he forwarded an 'appreciative' as opposed to 'condemnatory' reading of police culture and this represented a means of restoring balance in an area where, traditionally, police culture had been viewed as being an essentially negative phenomenon. Waddington wisely noted the reluctance of criminologists to 'appreciate' police culture despite the discipline's history of uncritical appraisals of 'criminal' or 'deviant' groups. Furthermore, the normative approach that we have traditionally adopted to understand police culture, he maintained, has had limited success in explaining the cultural aspects of police work. His work provides a thought provoking critique of approaches to understanding police culture and raises several key themes. The first to be presented in this brief overview is his suggestion that police officers belong to, and contribute to, two police cultures. In doing so, he draws our attention to a possible distinction between canteen and operational police cultures, a point of crucial importance to those studying, or researching, police work. His analysis suggests that the methodologies associated with police culture research (generally qualitative interview and ethnographic approaches) have dictated that much of the body of literature in this area reflects oral culture (that is, an analysis of police narrative) rather than physical culture (that is, an analysis of police behaviour). If Waddington's notion of a bifurcated police culture is correct, then an increasingly complex set of questions arise around the relationship between language and behaviour and, subsequently, around the relationship between operational and canteen culture. Perhaps one of the more crucial challenges in this respect concerns the extent to which the informal narrative of the canteen informs the operational culture of the street or merely reflects it.



In short, therefore, Waddington's point is an important one as it calls into question the relationship between what police officers do on the street and how they later recount such behaviour. This potential differentiation between the 'actuality' and the culturally appropriate 'presentation' of a given event is one that has received insufficient attention to date.

However, Waddington's work is of significance in that it invites us not only to speculate upon the existence of seemingly co-existent yet distinct cultures (which pertain to acted and narrated behaviour) but also to the essentially palliative rather than instructive qualities of police 'canteen' culture. Waddington (1999a, p.295) likens the police canteen to the 'repair shop' where the police go to make sense of their working lives in front of an understanding audience. To understand this fully one needs to realize that despite its image the police is a fragile institution. Police officers, like others in marginal (or marginalized) occupations, use the oral tradition of the canteen as a means of imbuing status to their work and skills, whilst simultaneously celebrating their core distinguishing factor - that of their legitimate claim to violence. To Waddington, the palliative as opposed to prescriptive nature of this canteen culture can be evidenced by the nuanced and intricate practices that police engage in that are rarely represented within the banter of the canteen. Assessing the true nature of the relationship between these two cultures (and the extent to which one informs the other) is of central importance therefore to our understanding of the complex cultural dynamics of police work.

Another substantial issue that Waddington develops during the course of the article concerns what he terms the 'interpretive over-reach' (p.291) of more linear accounts of police culture. Waddington suggested that, in part, this problem is a consequence of the sociological use of the term 'culture' as a means of distilling meaningful knowledge from a diverse array of values and

behaviours. The study of 'police culture' is predicated upon a range of generalizations about the cultural origins of police behaviour. These include, at a fundamental level, an assumption that a substantial cultural 'distance' exists between the police and the public and that this parallels a pronounced division between 'wider' culture and the occupational culture of the police.

Waddington unpicks this issue further by claiming that our normative approach to understanding police culture relies on a degree of comparison with other cultural benchmarks. Using the example of racism, an appropriate or inappropriate level of racism within a culture would be evidenced through comparison with either an ideal, if not realistic, level of zero racism or an occupational culture more familiar to the researcher. In the case of the latter, suggests Waddington, it is likely that the literature of police culture, as generated by academics, is as likely to help us understand the occupational culture of academia as it is that of the police. In short, in the absence of an appropriate benchmark besides which to assess the intensity of certain cultural dynamics, we assume that whatever it is that we are observing is a manifestation of the occupational culture that we are studying, rather than a product of wider societal forces.

Waddington illustrates this point more fully with reference to explanations of police brutality as a cultural norm amongst South African police officers which, research suggests, can be traced back not to the culture of the police but the wider culture of apartheid South Africa.

The work of both Chan and Waddington provides extremely useful angles with which to revisit our understanding of police culture. Both are critical of approaches that portray police culture (or cultures) in a linear and deterministic manner, but appear to disagree over the extent to which research should have a normative agenda. To Waddington, Chan's work is condemnatory rather than explanatory. Furthermore, Chan's description of police culture highlights its fluid nature and its chameleon-like tendency to adapt to its surroundings whereas Waddington's work suggests that many cultural reference points are remarkably consistent between and within

jurisdictions. Moreover, whilst Chan supports the existence of different discernible cultures, Waddington is opposed to what he sees as the, 'intellectual fashion that seeks to erode and relativize police sub-cultures' (1999a, p.295). Overall, the value of these two accounts lies in the way in which they redirect attention towards the relationship between police culture and wider societal culture.

## BARRIERS TO THE SUCCESSFUL DEFINITION OF POLICE CULTURE

Cockcroft (2007) provides an overview of some of the issues that arise when defining police occupational culture. For example, despite having already previously presented a seemingly satisfactory definition of police culture (see Waddington, 2008, preceding pages), we find that different police scholars tend to highlight different themes within their definitions. The following descriptions of police culture have been presented by Peter Manning, Robert Reiner and Janet Chan, respectively,

'accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied, and generalized rationales and beliefs' (Manning 1989, p.360)

'a patterned set of understandings which help to cope with and adjust to the pressures and tensions which confront the police' Reiner (1992, p.109)

'a layer of informal occupational norms and values operating under the apparently rigid hierarchical structure of police organisations' Chan (1997, p.43)

(cited in Cockcroft, 2007, p. 87).

These three interpretations provide us with a diverse selection of themes that identify, respectively, the importance of culture in promoting accepted ways of 'doing policing', a framework of meaning that helps officers to make sense of work based issues and, finally, a means of resolving the tension between formality and informality within formal institutional structures. All three of these help broaden our understanding of the cultural world of the police officer but are less successful in a definitional sense due to the fact that they are, by necessity, very broad and do not articulate the breadth and depth of the subject area.

That such definitions can be regarded as insufficiently specific to really convey our understanding of police culture is a result of a number of factors that are outlined by Cockcroft (2007). The first issue is that of the broad-based role of the police. Like many public sector institutions, policing encompasses a wide range of skills, locations, technologies and roles, and police scholars as far back as Vollmer (1936) have suggested that the police undertake a much wider range of functions than their official obligations would suggest. Similarly, Goldstein (1979) makes the distinction between that which the public believe the police do, enforce the law, and what it is that they actually do, solve problems. Furthermore, as Brogden (1991) reminds us, the role of the police varies between social environments and is contingent upon embedded patterns of industry, employment and economy within a particular area.

A second factor that tends to inhibit the clarity of definitions of police culture relate to the sociological orthodoxy of viewing it as a fundamentally negative phenomenon. The majority of sociological work into policing has been either 'reformist' (Narayanan, 2005) or 'condemnatory' (Waddington, 1999a) and reflects social sciences' concerns with distribution

of power within society. In contrast, scholarly work undertaken into occupational culture from an organisational perspective tends to highlight the more positive aspects to occupational culture, for example, in relation to stress reduction (MacAlister, 2004). One somewhat surprising champion for the values of police culture, the chaplain to an Australian police force, published a brief article entitled 'Thank God for Police Culture' (Beal, 2001) in which he suggested that the sense of community enjoyed by police officers was something to be welcomed in a world characterized by individualism. He concludes the piece by writing,

'The quality of community life one finds within the police culture should be valued and preserved. It mirrors much of what the Christian Church has been trying to establish for 2000 years: a supportive, honest and real community of people who are there for each other through thick and thin. I say, thank God for police culture' (2001, no page).

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), a body responsible for the oversight of policing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in a 1999 report, was equally sceptical of the suggestion that police culture led to inappropriate behaviours at the expense of appropriate ones. They wrote,

'The journalistic shorthand that summarises the thinking of operational police officers as being explained by "a canteen culture" is as misleading as it is mischievous. It is acknowledged that the location reference is merely evocative of what is seen as a collective attitude. These very canteens witness the conversations of officers who still see service to all members of the public as an intrinsic part of their vocation. The

number of officers who are nominated each year for community awards are part of this same culture' (1999, p.29).

Similarly, it should be noted that Paoline (2003), in his review of police culture literature, cites published work (generally from North America) that underlines a number of potential benefits to the police institution of its organizational culture. It is seen as providing a measure of emotional comfort to officers engaged in taxing roles, enabling new officers to learn the practical skills needed to undertake their role effectively, a potential facilitator of police reform and a means of preventing poor police practice. A third factor that has led to increasing difficulties in developing comprehensive definitions of police culture are associated not so much with new ways of thinking about culture but that recent years have witnessed tremendous societal change, not least in respect of the criminal justice system (Garland, 2001). Factors such as the increasingly pluralized orientation of security provision (Garland, 2001) and the normalization of crime (Matravers and Maruna, 2005) are leading, it can be argued, to a reduction in the potency of the police as an institution and a reassessment of appropriate levels of responsibility and effectiveness. As Loader and Sparks make clear, we have witnessed the emergence of a set of new philosophies regarding crime and its control that draw on, 'a diverse, contradictory array of situational technologies, policing styles, preventative strategies' (2005, p.14). Control of crime and the provision of security has become an increasingly intricate array of relationships that take place amid a backdrop of changing criminological knowledge and competing political agendas. In short, policing has changed greatly since the time of the early period writers in this area, and both 'policing' and 'culture' appear, as concepts, to have escalated in complexity over recent years.

To these challenges we might add another and one that highlights the conceptual rift between those who prioritize the understanding of police culture or its manifestations. In practice, the study of police culture engages with a number of separate but intertwined issues. It touches upon particular behaviours, the social forces that motivate individuals to display those patterns of behaviour and the ways in which police use cognitive and communicative frameworks to understand or express those behaviours (Cockcroft, 2007). So far, we have explored some of the fundamental themes associated with police culture and provided a brief overview of some of its inherent complexities. It should be noted, however, that our interest in police culture is not just concerned with the cultural dimensions of the police world, but with the impact of those factors on the practice of policing. In reality, the primary concern of a great deal of the literature of police culture appears to have been not so much an understanding of the culture of the police but an analysis of those aspects of police behaviour which might be considered inappropriate or illegal, and which are generally attributed to a specific police culture. Such behaviours include heightened sensitivities to gender and race, camaraderie, social solidarity, suspicion, noble cause corruption, cynicism, machismo and a sense of mission and it is these issues that have tended to become associated with the issue of police culture (in the minds of many academics and members of the public alike). Cop culture has traditionally been conceptualized as a universal phenomenon by virtue of the fact that police officers throughout the world have a large amount of occupational discretion at their disposal to be utilized on a common set of problematical situations. Thus, it could be argued that police officers working in such diverse cultures as the UK, the USA, Asia and Africa all face similar issues regarding public order, crime detection and crime management and that this has prompted a willingness to perceive a comparatively cohesive culture within the occupation. Furthermore, if one takes Skolnick's concept of the 'working personality' as a cultural template for police organizations, the key factors of danger, authority and efficiency would be present, in some form, in the majority of

public police organizations. Increasingly, therefore, police culture has been portrayed as a universal phenomenon with far-reaching consequences and which, accordingly, demands a set of responses with which to combat it. To all intents and purposes, therefore, criminologists, sociologists and police scholars alike have never satisfactorily explained how, why and where we should differentiate between, and I borrow heavily from Downes and Rock (2003, p.316) here, police culture as a sociological problem and police culture as a social problem.

## THE COMPLEXITY OF POLICE CULTURES

Traditional early accounts of police culture present a standardized description of police institutions with research conducted by Westley and Skolnick during the 1950s and 1960s acknowledging cultural variation between officers but failing to engage, at a sufficiently explanatory level, with these differences. This presentation of the police institution in such homogeneous terms represented, in part, a somewhat skewed account of police work concentrating as they did on the work of lower rank beat officers in predominantly urban areas. Whilst the following sections of this book will deal in greater depth with the impact of changes to the police institution and its culture, attention will now be turned to some of those specific issues that have at times been ignored in those accounts of policing which highlight the uniformity of the police role and its associated cultural responses. Without wishing to preempt some of the themes that will emerge later in the book, these will help to introduce some of the broad conceptual points that will emphasize and reinforce just some of the reasons why police culture is such a difficult area to define effectively.

Paoline (2003) in the introduction to an article in which he advocates a synthesis of existing knowledge of police culture suggests, ironically, that despite the consensus of agreement



regarding the importance of culture to the policing world, there is no real unanimity regarding an accepted definition of its nature. In part, this might be attributed to the persistence of a quite narrow set of terms of reference regarding the police role that has become increasingly irrelevant as new policing ideas take hold and as police employees are recruited from increasingly diverse backgrounds. This clear-cut rendition of the police institution, the individuals who work within it and the roles they carry out have met with some criticism, especially in recent years. To Nigel Fielding the problem is straightforward, and he criticizes what he views as simplistic interpretations of police culture for their unimaginative, 'cultural universals' (1988, p.185) which have become embedded through our failure to develop an analytic framework that acknowledges difference as well as similarity in the behaviour of police officers.

Paoline continues by considering these issues in some length and suggests that there is no conceptual structure in place that adequately helps us to explain the source of police culture, the solutions it presents for practitioners and what the consequences of such solutions are. These he considers crucial questions and he goes on to explain why these are of such importance with reference to environment, the coping mechanisms that the culture prescribes to practitioners and the impact of these on the wider community. Paoline suggests that fundamental to our understanding are the environments within which the police operate and he makes the case that not only do police officers require cultural prescriptions to allow them to deal with the stresses of dealing with the public, but also that the imprecise nature of the police role, coupled with inconsistent approaches to supervision and discipline, lead to insecurity and stress. Police officers, therefore, find themselves navigating two distinct environments both of which present pitfalls and hazards as, 'organizational uncertainty is the counterpart to the perceived physical danger within an officer's occupational environment'

(2003, p.201). In turn, the threats posed by these are met with a number of informal cultural solutions including suspiciousness, 'ass-covering', and a crime-fighter orientation. By adopting these responses, two 'defining outcomes' (2003, p.203) of the culture emerge, specifically, social isolation and group loyalty which have a further impact on police interactions with members of the public.

Importantly, Paoline stresses the importance of allowing for cultural variation between and within police institutions and identifies the three main axes along which these occur - 'organization', 'rank' and 'officer style'. Organizational factors are significant as the organizational environment of police work may vary between institutions given a particular location's law enforcement needs. Paoline recognizes that some geographical areas have more pressing law enforcement requirements than others and that, accordingly, police departments will vary in respect of their law enforcement and service provision roles. In turn, these different organizational requirements will lead to different needs amongst officers and, presumably, differences in the form and/or intensity of cultural solutions. Of particular interest here is the work of Wilson (1968) that proposed more of a top-down model of police occupational culture. Styles of policing, for Wilson, varied between different locations but for reasons associated with the desires of police managers and administrators rather than the particular requirements of a given environment. Despite lower level officers being 'directed' by the strategies of their managers, Wilson is quick to add the caveat that their effect is, 'gross, imprecise, and hard to predict – they shape the over-all style or strategy of the police but they cannot direct or guide police behaviour in the concrete case' (Wilson 1968, p.279). Control in such cases is reduced to the application of negative policies with which to inform officers of behaviours that they should not engage in. This failure to apply control through informing officers of what constitutes appropriate behaviour has disadvantages for officers.

Telling officers what not to do merely highlights the lack of direction regarding what should be done and therefore is unlikely to be seen as beneficial.

The second factor that Paoline draws upon to explain cultural variation is that of rank. Drawing heavily on those middle stage pieces of work that identified cultural variation between ranks, such as Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (1983), the point is made that the various ranked levels of the police organization, predictably, have different priorities and ideals and engage in diverse practices. In contrast to accounts that portray a single all-encompassing police culture, Paoline presents a view of police culture where each rank is effectively isolated, culturally, from the other and that this fragmentation mirrors the concerns of that particular level of the hierarchy. The culture of lower levels officers focuses predominantly on the immediate and practical concerns of managing their working environments with the least level of harm or risk to self. For middle ranking officers, a management ethos is the main cultural driver given their need to liaise effectively with both the more senior ranks and lower ranking officers. For those officers at the top of the command chain, different concerns lead to an altogether different cultural set based upon the politics of the police organization, issues of accountability and concerns over the perceptions of the institution held by external audiences.

The third factor that Paoline used to explore the issue of variation in police culture is that of officer style. One of the potential disadvantages of traditional conceptions of police culture is that they tend to conflate or confuse the distinction between the organizational culture and the individual's behaviours that arise as a result of it. In short, there was an assumption that individuals would react uniformly to the culture and this prompted Fielding to suggest that, 'one cannot read the recruit as a cipher for the occupational culture. The occupational culture has

to make its pitch for support...Increasing experience lays open increasing grounds of contradiction' (1988, p.135). This acknowledgement of the agency of the individual in relation to the policing institution does pose problems for earlier theories of police culture given that we then, by necessity, have to balance the idea of autonomous individuals encountering a dogmatic occupational culture. Over time, police literature has come to reflect a somewhat uneasy existence of these two conflicting concepts under the assumption that the discretionary basis of much police work means that the culture of the police facilitates independent decision making or, as Paoline suggests, 'there are some shared attitudes, values, and norms amongst police officers as well as tolerated differences' (2003, p.206).

This tension in the individual officers' orientation to the police culture is also highlighted through the use, by some authors, of officer typologies which provide different types of category of police officer that co-exist yet represent different orientations to certain core characteristics of the police role. Such typologies, according to Paoline, should be seen as sub-cultures that appear to be relatively consistent between police forces and eras. Reiner (2010), for example, provides an overview of the typologies provided by the likes of Broderick (1973), Walsh (1977), Shearing (1981) and Brown (1981) and proposes, despite the fact that these typologies differ in both purpose and focus, that they all suggest police officers can be divided into one of four categories that reflect, 'an alienated cynic, a managerial professional, a peacekeeper and a law-enforcer' (2010, p.134). Unsurprisingly, these typologies closely reflect basic differences between lower rank officers and managers and between detectives and uniformed officers as well as accounting for personalized or individualized responses to the job and its career opportunities. Such typographies, to Fielding (1988) signal a discrepancy with the occupational culture obviously providing different prescribed behaviours and values to different individuals. He goes on to question the

extent to which the culture is universally endorsed by all members of the occupation and, crucially, whether the sole requirement for cultural membership is to work for the organization. We are therefore left to question whether or not the adoption of typologies of different officer styles allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural world of the police or merely serves to undermine the notion of a single comprehensive culture.

In addition to Paoline's three factors of 'organization', 'rank' and 'officer style' it might be possible to suggest that other factors also have a role to play in explaining variations in organizational culture. For example, Paoline's analysis of the occupational and organizational environments that shape the cultural requirements of police officers fails to highlight the impact that environments have upon the police world in a more fundamental sense. The work of Mike Brogden, especially '*The Police: Autonomy and Consent*' (1982) and '*On the Mersey Beat: An Oral History of Policing Liverpool Between the Wars*' (1991), shows the importance of probing beyond basic distinctions between 'rural' and 'urban' when assessing the impact of specific geographic locations on policing cultures. Brogden does this by focusing on the city of Liverpool in the North-West of England and charting the lasting influence of its historical development upon the class composition of the police, their work and their relationship with the public.

Brogden's work is significant in that it draws out the unique economic and social characteristics of Liverpool which, for part of its history at least, was Western Europe's largest seaport. The city's resultant economic infrastructure that was comprised, in part, of 12 miles of docks led to a central reliance on casual employment practices amongst the poorest sector of the working class with over 50 per cent of the working population working in shipping and its related industries. The chaotic nature of their working lives contrasted

sharply with the rigidly supervised work of police officers meaning that, 'Time, like control, had a different meaning for police and policed' (Brogden, p.2). Other factors also contributed to the distinctive social environment which, ultimately, came to be reflected in styles of policing in the city. Brogden describes how, for a long time, the Liverpool police force was the most heavily resourced (in terms of both personnel and funding) outside the capital, and played a part in many of the new developments in policing. Likewise, Liverpool's economic history persisted in shaping class relations within the city. In spite of its distinguished history and contribution to the maintenance of the British Empire, the city was, by the early 1930s, a city in decline and one whose police officers were marginalized through, 'draconian discipline and appalling work conditions' (Brogden, 1991, p.1). That police identities merged with class politics is perhaps inevitable in such a city and Brogden (1982) describes a police force divided by stratifications of social class with officers from the middle classes being overtly antagonistic to unions and their members. Despite this division within the police force, Liverpool was the only force outside of London to witness significant police involvement in the 1919 police strikes that ultimately proved abortive in the face of a failure to organize local and national union support. Of significance here though is the mobilization of the lower classes against, and the support of the merchant classes for, those officers who chose not to strike. Simultaneously, the numbers of members of the middle class who signed up to join the Specials during the strike served to provoke dissent against the lower classes who viewed this as, 'outright embodiment of class interest' (1982, p.184). To the Liverpool of the first half of the twentieth century, class relations were, 'messy, [and] confused' (Brogden, 1991, p. 2) and some officers appeared to straddle the two conflicting worlds of unionism and policing with one of Brogden's sources describing his work policing industrial unrest during the 1926 General Strike whilst at the same time sending money back home to support striking family members.

Integral to Liverpool's police-public relations have been pronounced sectarian and racial divides that, of course, mirror wider societal tensions in the area. In terms of the former, Emsley (1996) suggests that there is evidence to support allegations that Liverpool police had, during some sectarian incidents (of which there had been several during the early 1900s), displayed bias towards Protestants and against Irish Catholics. Similarly, the Toxteth Riots of July 1981 took place in the geographic and symbolic borderlands between the merchant classes and the secondary economy (Brogden, 1982) and were comparable in many respects to the race riots that had occurred, resulting in the death of one protestor, in 1919. An interesting tangent documented by Brogden (1982) emerges regarding senior police officer attitudes to the causes of racial tension in the city with reports from both 1919 and 1978 suggesting that problems stemmed, respectively, from relationships between black males and white females and the offspring of such liaisons.

What we get from Brogden's work is an engrossing portrayal of a city whose police seem to defy convenient classification into a linear distinction between police and policed and whose social tensions appear intimately woven into the historical fabric of the environment.

Historically, hostilities flared-up sporadically in the city bringing the police into conflict with communities that were keen to air grievances based on religion (for example, the sectarian violence of the early 1900s), class (for example, the bread riot of 1855) or race (for example, the race riots of 1919 and 1981). Above all, the importance of crime and its control was underplayed with Brogden suggesting that, historically, Liverpool's police were, 'uniformed garbage-men' (1991, p.1) who favoured informal rather than formal means of maintaining the status quo. The laissez-faire approach to crime control in Liverpool is further evidenced by Emsley (1996) who describes the warnings of the Head Constable, a Captain William Nott-

Bower, in 1890 when asked by his Watch Committee to proceed with police action against brothels in the city. He reasoned that brothels were to be expected within a seaport and, second, that police intervention would displace prostitution to more respectable areas and impact on local businesses. His wish for non-intervention was eventually granted, when members of the local business community complained, adequately illustrating that police use of discretion could also benefit local members of the local mercantile class.

The impact of local cultures upon police behaviour is also evidenced by the work of Emsley (2005) who focuses on the case of Sergeant George Goddard, an officer in the Metropolitan Police who was sentenced to 18 months hard labour in January 1929. Emsley's work provides a timely contribution to debates regarding the ways in which police histories traditionally view police corruption in individual (the 'rotten apple' metaphor) rather than systemic (the 'diseased orchard') terms. By focussing on a particular case, Emsley succeeds in describing how police corruption could be influenced by the nuances of the particular environments in which they worked. Goddard was stationed in the Metropolitan Police's 'C' Division which dealt with the district around Soho associated with much of the capital's vice industry and his responsibilities included the regulation of the area's nightclubs and brothels. Whilst the latter were considered illegal and subject to stringent police control, the regulation of night clubs was generally restricted to alcohol sales outside of permitted licensed hours. This role, however, put Goddard in a unique position. Effectively he controlled which information was passed to magistrates for applications for entry warrants making him a highly influential player within the lucrative, if legally ambiguous, businesses located in and around Soho. By the time he was arrested in autumn 1928 he had, according to Emsley (2005), personal possessions worth in excess of £17,000 including £12,000 in cash. As a case was built against Goddard, evidence began to surface suggesting that Goddard had tipped off



those establishments at risk from police raids, enjoyed the hospitality of hoteliers (whose businesses often relied on prostitution) and failed to act on anonymous information regarding 'disorderly houses', licensing offences and drug dealing. In regard to prostitution, Emsley draws on police memoirs to provide evidence that prostitutes on the Division routinely paid money to Goddard to be eligible for arrest by appointment, a system whereby women would be arrested on rotation at a pre-arranged time, allowing them to concentrate on the work of securing custom unhindered by police attention.

Allegations of police corruption appeared to blight 'C' Division and Emsley notes how in 1931 one inspector and 26 police constables, stationed at Great Marlborough Street, were discharged for accepting illegal payments. That C Division suffered the most high profile and perturbing examples of police corruption during the inter-war years appears to highlight the enabling features of that particular environment. The apparently illicit nature of much of the business activity in the area, the fact that it generated considerable wealth and the fact that legislation relating to licensing, prostitution and drugs were unlikely to eradicate these behaviours meant that laws, in this context, were used as tools to manage rather than fight crime. Similarly, in her oral history of British policing, Weinberger (1995, p.166) notes that exchanges between the police and marginalized groups became, 'formalized relationship and ritual' through means of strategies such as the accepting of bribes in return for 'turning a blind eye'. It is this ritualism which partially facilitated at least some of the 'corruption' that emerged around police control of morally ambiguous behaviours.

Brogden's depiction of the importance of Liverpool's historic heritage on the city's style of policing echoes Paoline's ideas of cultural variation, as does Emsley's coverage of the Goddard case, but extends them by acknowledging that police relations with the public are

complex, entrenched and rooted in specific localized factors and features. Of importance, therefore, is that these local qualities will influence police opportunities and choices regarding use of discretion, their choice of tactics for maintaining order, the expectations of the public and, of course, the police-public relationship.

## CONCLUSION

The suggestion that police culture is not monolithic (Reiner, 2010) lays the foundations for the successful definition of police culture, whilst simultaneously drawing us towards some incredibly challenging conceptual and practical barriers. Indeed, the concept of 'culture' suggests an implicit uniformity of value and behaviour which, whilst making for a considerably more straightforward analytic model, arguably has little if any relevance to our understanding of policing in contemporary society. When one veers away from the more linear and monolithic depictions of police culture characterized by homogenized actions, thought and expectation, we are effectively opting to choose a model of culture that is characterized by variation, exception and caveat. The inherent complexities of these approaches tend to encourage altogether different views of police culture. No longer does police culture represent merely the informal 'trade' rules that enable police officers to maintain order without falling foul of the laws, institutional procedures or even resource shortfalls that hinder their role. Instead, non-monolithic accounts encourage us to view culture as an altogether more sophisticated concept and, similarly, provoke debate regarding what culture is, the extent of its influence, the effect of different environments upon its potency and focus, its relation to wider societal culture and the extent to which it directs thought and behaviour.

