SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE POLICE CULTURE OF THE LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE FORCE BETWEEN THE 1930s AND 1960s

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ABSTRACT

Police culture is generally viewed in unproblematic terms that position police behaviour and values as being determined by the 'universal' nature of police work (See Skolnick, 1994, Reiner, 2000). This paper will argue that such conceptions, in practice, lead to narrow and biased (and, essentially, *un-*cultural) frames of reference that fail to satisfactorily explain the nuanced nature of police culture. Through reference to the data generated by a police oral history project (see Brogden, 1991, Weinberger, 1995) the paper will examine evidence to suggest that substantial variations in police behaviour can be identified between different policing locations within the Metropolitan Police Force. Furthermore, the paper will forward the suggestion that substantial variations in police behaviour and values (and, therefore, culture) might be attributable to different geographical locations (and the subsequent variations in social relations particular to each) rather than institutional-led policy. In conclusion, the paper will argue that a greater appreciation of the impact of wider cultural factors are required for a more sophisticated understanding of police occupational culture.

Keywords: Police culture; police history; oral history, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Police culture, at least in Western contexts, appears at times to be a convenient yet unsophisticated tool with which to make sense of those police behaviours or values that we generally consider inappropriate, illegal or, merely, unpleasant. Indeed, scholars in the field of police studies (for example Reiner, 2000, Skolnick, 1994) have tended to accept the 'police culture' moniker as a wholly appropriate (and unproblematic) heading under which to conduct their studies of the social worlds of police officers. Recent years have seen moves towards adopting more theoretically adroit conceptual underpinnings (for example, Chan, 1997) and new methodological approaches (for example, Cockcroft, 2005). Nevertheless, there is certainly an argument to be made that police culture, as a general term, fails to reflect the diversity of experience, opinions and actions of police officers as an occupational grouping.

This paper will seek to explore the idea that the study of police culture has traditionally been based on models of police culture that tend to offer limited scope for a more sophisticated understanding of police values and behaviour. In particular, the paper will forward the argument that future analyses of

police culture will require an acknowledgement of the impact of non-organisational factors in explaining some police values and behaviours in certain situations. In particular, specific reference will be made to data from an oral history project which investigated the views of 26 retired London police officers who served in the Metropolitan Police Force of England between the 1930s and 1960s.

A Critical Overview of the Term 'Police Culture'

Police culture has become an incredibly powerful term in respect of both its breadth and its pervasiveness. It has been used to explain the existence of informal values and behaviours within the police institution (Chan, 1997), the situational application of principles of police conduct (Manning, 1989) and a common and structured set of understandings that act as a means of cushioning the harsh realities of policework for the occupation's practitioners (Reiner, 1992). That we tend to adopt a degree of selectivity regarding which areas of policing are considered appropriate focuses for our cultural analyses is perhaps unsurprising given contemporary concerns regarding accountability, targeting and community relations. Correspondingly, the relationship between the police and ethnic minority groups has repeatedly been subjected to analysis in terms that position police occupational culture as a key (and essentially negative factor). Conversely, the potential utility of police culture to enhance occupational working practices remains relatively unexplored. There is some evidence to suggest that, in some quarters at least, the tendency to use cultural explanations to explain those examples of police behaviour we find offensive might be increasing. As Foster (2003) shows, whereas Lord Scarman's report into the disorder of the early 1980s viewed police racism in terms that emphasised the individualised nature of such behaviour, the enquiry into the police investigation of the Stephen Lawrence murder (Macpherson, 1999) sought to explain police racism in terms of 'institutional racism'. Such a distinction is important – the notion of the institution as the locus or causal factor in explaining police behaviour immediately draws attention away from both the individual and the wider societal environment. Our reluctance to actually define what constitutes police culture, its extent and its limits betrays the possibility that 'police culture' is, in many respects, an unhelpful means of explaining what the police do and why they do it.

Mills' (1967) analysis of the language of 'motive' provides an appropriate foundation from which to question the often deterministic framework that we invoke in our attempts to understand police behaviour. Mills (1967, p. 442) describes the limitations associated with our use of the *'vocabulary of motives'*, not least the way in which linguistic representation becomes a prescriptive shortcut to the 'interpretation of conduct' (p.440). Sumner (1994) draws on Mills' work to suggest that such vocabulary draws attention away from the individual in explaining why a certain phenomenon occurs.

The use of non-demarcated phrases such as 'police culture' serves to remove behaviour from its specific and individualised context through generalisation[1]. Furthermore, by doing so we not only

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[1] For example, Skolnick (1994) situates the origins of the 'working personality' solely within occupationally determined variables such as danger, authority and the need for efficiency.

simplify our understanding of the reasons for specific behaviour but limit our understanding to that of 'rationalization' rather than 'real motive' (Mills, 1967, p. 442). Such a model brings clarity to our understanding of police behaviour in a number of ways. First, it helps to explain the imbalance between the 'individual' and the 'institution'. As Fielding (1988) wrote, "...one cannot read the recruit as a cipher for the occupational culture" (p. 135) and it is unfortunate that, traditionally, we have adopted a conception of culture that fails to appreciate the agency of the social actor as well as the institution. Second, it helps us to account for the general reluctance to address the impact of wider environmental factors in determining variations in police behaviour and values. Although some research has addressed, for example, the variations in policing in terms of a rural/inner city divide (see Cain, 1973, Shapland and Vagg, 1988), research has failed to unequivocally embrace more nuanced appreciations of environmental influences upon policing. Indeed, where variations in policing have been observed in the past, research has tended to explain these in terms of different typologies or orientations *within* a dominant police culture. One such example of this is Reiner's (1978) 'typology of police orientations' which describes six different individual types of police officer, characterised through variations in their perceptions of such variables as the role of the police, the relationship between the ranks, the promotion system and job satisfaction. Such variations within a 'common' culture highlight important questions regarding the pervasiveness of a uniform culture in the light of such variations.

Furthermore, clarity is required in terms of the ability to explain variations between areas in the characteristics of the 'dominant' police culture. Research that has sought to explain distinctions between areas in the general traits, styles and behaviours of the police has tended to situate the cause of such changes as being decisions made at a management level within the organisation (see Foster, 1989). Correspondingly, scholars such as Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (1983) have attempted to explain variations in cultural style in respect of the different roles that different officers fill. Such research is welcomed in that it allows us to understand the cultural impact of the growing specialisation of police work. However, such frameworks do little to enlighten us regarding the fact that, in many instances, cultural dynamics and reference points appear to persist irrespective of the rank or role of the officers involved. Such top-down approaches fail to appreciate that styles of policing have, historically, been determined by the decision-making of individual officers in the face of specific situations encountered during their work (see Brogden, 1991). Correspondingly, much of the culture of the CID[2] in the East End of London was, claimed Hobbs (1989), caused by the 'symbiotic' relationship between the public and the police force in the area. The entrepreneurial basis for East End culture was seen as pervading the occupational personalities of both the police officers and the 'villains'. Accordingly, both were seen as players in a game based upon, "...the trading of moral identities" (Hobbs, 1989, p.179) which served to confuse the distinction between 'cop' and 'criminal'.

As such, it might be suggested that any investigation of police behaviour needs not only to appreciate the role of the organisation in determining styles of police behaviour but also the interaction between the individual officer and their immediate environment. Thus, and as Chan (1997) suggests, the term 'police

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[2] Criminal Investigation Department

culture' has been used to a large extent as a means of describing a set of social relations where the agency of the individual is dwarfed by that of the organisation, where the culture of the organisation exists in a cultural vacuum devoid of wider non-organisational influence and, finally, where the behaviour of officers is ultimately determined by the universal (and relatively rigid) role of the police officer. In this respect, police culture has come to denote a set of values, behaviours and, sometimes, problems which, our 'vocabulary of motives' suggests, can be 'controlled' by the police. Furthermore, the limited analytic frameworks that we invoke to understand such behaviour do little, as Fielding (1997) claims, to further our appreciation of 'why' people do the things they do rather than simply providing a critical account of 'what' they do.

This vocabulary of motives can be understood in terms of a two-dimensional lens through which, variously, we seek to understand the values and behaviours of police officers and which focuses upon the 'negativity' of police culture, its focus on law enforcement as opposed to service provision roles and, finally, the pervasiveness of organisational influence. The negative light in which police culture is viewed is, as Narayanan (2005) notes, intrinsically linked to a reformist strand of sociology that concerns itself with the relationship between police behaviour and due process. In short, the prevailing tautological wisdom within criminology appears to be that poor police practice must have a cultural explanation ergo police culture must, essentially, be negative. This apparent pessimism over police culture's moral standing has undeniably influenced the way in which we undertake research into policing. Bayley (1983) noted that at the time of his writing remarkably little was known about the police. What we did know about the police was driven by a 'moral repugnance' (p.23) at how the police policed rather than their impact upon society. In many cases, when researchers did draw back the 'sacred canopy' (Manning, 1977, p.5) of policework they were met with practices, attitudes and opinions which encouraged censure. Similarly, Bayley's (1983) assertion that the police may have a greater appreciation of the control needs of the community than those commentating on their conduct does highlight a crucial issue for police research which is in many cases, although not exclusively, undertaken by members of the academic community. As Van Maanen (1978) notes, many analyses of policework undertaken in the name of social science have served mainly as a means of highlighting the incongruity between stated aims and actual practices and, perhaps unsurprisingly, policing has been a perennially popular focus for such endeavours. Only rarely, has research sought to address the possibility that police culture may have some positive utility[3].

As early as 1964, Banton noted that, for many observers, any sociological study of institutional behaviour was assumed to be an attempt to explain inappropriate or unproductive occupational behaviour. Such assumptions appear to be reinforced by much of the published research in the area of

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[3] For example, MacAlister (2004) draws on contemporary literature into occupational stress to illustrate the idea that police culture may serve a positive function within the police arena although such research that aims to identify the utility of police culture is uncommon.

police culture where, as Waddington (1999) notes, any observer of the policing literature will be supplied with a, "...diet of macho, racist sexist thugs" (p.291). This is not to suggest that such areas fail to be of importance but that the study of police occupational culture needs to take place through a critical lens that not only acknowledges the difference between actual practices and official intent, but which also acknowledges the subtleties and variations within police behaviour and its causes.

Our understanding of police culture may also be compromised by our apparent inability (or reluctance) to make sense of the bifurcation of the police role into two apparently contradictory areas – law enforcement and service provision. Such a divide might simply reflect what Manning (1978) refers to as the 'impossible' mandate whereby the police are seen as constructing a suitable façade in the light of their own culture, the expectations of the public and of the criminal law. Despite this, research that purports to explore the cultural dynamics of police officers (and the social worlds they inhabit) have tended to portray such environments as wholly dictated by the law enforcement aspects of policing. That the law enforcement remit is integral to the cultural world of the police is indisputable. However, any analysis of police culture that fails to appreciate the cultural impact of the service provision role of policing is liable to misrepresent the reality of 'policing'. As Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary noted in a thematic report addressing the policing of plural communities:

> "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)

Such concerns lead to some awkward debates regarding the purpose, nature and utility of police culture research. Zedner (2003, p.199) sensitively unthreads the contested purpose of the criminological enterprise and identifies a division between two camps, the 'useful' and the 'useless', with the former seeing criminological knowledge as being driven by its relationship with policy and the latter seeing it as being a purely academic exercise with no policy purpose. Much work in the area of police culture has unashamedly been driven by the joint requirements of policy and a 'reformist orientation' (Narayanan, 2005, p.8) drawn from civil libertarian thought. Arguably, such a coupling of civil libertarian thought with a broadly policy-based mandate contradicts Van Maanen's (1978) desire for police research that avoids being led by prevailing wisdoms and accepted knowledge.

There is therefore some scope for reasoned debate regarding whether or not the study of police culture should be policy-led, 'theoretical' or both. Ericson (2003) notes that recent years have seen criminology, particular those areas of it that deal with policing, emerge as another part of the governmental apparatus concerned with risk-management. As such, policing research has tended to

reject the systemic issues associated with policework and adopted a utilitarian framework of analysis to dealing with easily identifiable 'issues' that require easily quantifiable 'solutions'. The effect of this increased emphasis upon research which addresses policy implementation, according to Reiner (2000), has been to neglect the 'hidden' aspects of policing which were so integral to earlier research in this field. Seven years have passed since Reiner concluded that controversies, such as the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, might just provide the stimulus to provide a return to the more theoretically-informed approaches of the past. Unfortunately, to date such changes have not yet taken place.

That the variety of the police role is not paralleled by a readily accepted conception of police culture that allows alternative readings of police values and behaviours, their intensity and utility is unfortunate. Despite persistent calls[4] for a more advanced appreciation of what the police do and why, there has been a general reluctance to critique the simplistic way in which we view the relationship between police values and behaviour and the social relations which inform them. Alternative methodological approaches may allow for a more critical understanding of police culture and allow us to progress beyond the unsophisticated stereotypes prevalent in many analyses.

Methodology

The work of Weber (1946, 1949) goes some way to contextualising Van Maanen's (1978, p.314) criticism that police research is consistently used to test rather than discover theory. Weber's work, quite simply, stresses the importance of interpreting any behaviour in the light of the meanings that social actors attach to actions rather than merely confirming or disproving that such behaviours exist. For such an approach to succeed in satisfying Mills' demands for methodologies that explain rather than merely rationalize requires an approach to research that is both appreciative and critical. Furthermore, to fully appreciate the impact or extent of police culture requires an appreciation of the social relations, expectations and roles that constitute the environment of policing through the eyes of police officers.

Any analysis of police culture which fails either to appreciate the increasingly complex notion of 'policing' or to recognise the complex sets of social relations which constitute the 'community' is at risk of perpetuating a framework of understanding that under-estimates the impact of culture in its widest sense. Such approaches, according to Punch (1985), lead to confusing explanations which present
all police behaviour in terms of a specific occupational culture whilst, simultaneously, refusing to acknowledge that police officers might be subject to other, non-occupational, cultural forces. Punch (1985) develops his argument by suggesting that future research and analysis in the area of police culture will benefit from the adoption of, "…historical, comparative (cross-cultural and cross-national),

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[4] As far back as 1978, Manning's (1978b) asserted that policing was not endowed with a common culture

and organizational levels of analysis" (p.186) to make sense of the complex intersection between the social and occupational worlds of police officers.

Punch's (1985) declaration of the need to utilise different methodological tools in order to understand police occupational culture prompted the adoption of the oral historical method. Although the field of policing has seen two major works of oral history (Brogden, 1991, and Weinberger, 1995) there has been a general reluctance amongst historians to consider biography and oral history of equal empirical status to orthodox historical practice (Popular Memory Group, 1982). Furthermore, this, according to Grele (1998), has led to an institutionalised scepticism about such narrative-driven accounts amongst professional historians. 'Orthodox' historians have criticised oral history for perceived weaknesses such as the problem of memory (Cutler, 1970) and its 'facile democratisation' and 'complacent populism' (Passerini, 1979, p.84). Swain (1965) argues that oral historians have generally failed to substantially address these problems and Colman (1965) went as far as to stress the need for oral historians to construct accepted academic and methodological conventions regarding the use of oral history. Such tensions concerning the academic worth of oral history has meant that the methodology continues to occupy a scholastic stasis, according to Bornet (1955), somewhere between 'authentic' sources such as diaries, reports and eyewitness accounts transcribed shortly after the event and 'non-authentic' sources such as hearsay.

Such considerations aside, the adoption of such a methodological approach to explore police culture did allow for a research framework that avoided what Van Maanen termed 'methodological self-consciousness' (1978, p.315). That is, oral history has, to many of its practitioners, a core ideal based on empowering the subject of the research (Cockcroft, 2005) and it is this that serves a welcome balance to the numerous ethnographic works in the area of police culture. The police oral histories written by Brogden (1991) and Weinberger (1995) immediately draw attention to the diversity of policework both over time and between geographical location and provide evidence to support Manning's (1978) contention that a common police culture simply cannot exist.

However, such explanations are unlikely to find widespread support in policy circles. First, we must question the extent to which we can assume that historical approaches to understanding our social world have any currency within the current policing context. Despite the fact that sociology and history have, according to Abbott (1991), converged at times through a sharing of theoretical, if not methodological, knowledge the relationship between the two has largely been characterised by a, "pleasant but empty cordiality" (Abbott, 1991, p.201). Arguably, one might reason that sociological approaches are significantly more accommodating of a research environment that demands 'social facts'. As Abbott notes, historical approaches to the study of social relations tend to generate much greater amounts of data than sociological studies meaning that the development of straightforward causal arguments is simply not always possible. Furthermore, the work of Cross and Barker (1991) demonstrates the ways in which oral historical data may often challenge hitherto accepted knowledge and, perhaps more importantly, call into question the use of the customary generalisations we use to simplify complex sets of social relations.

Quite simply, such alternative methodologies tend to provide a richness and variety of data by virtue of the fact that they tend to avoid standardised samples from homogeneous populations, and, importantly, allow the motivations of the social actor to be heard. Punch's (1985) appeal for historical, comparative and organisational analyses of police culture appears to have largely gone ignored, perhaps unsurprisingly, in a policy-driven arena which focuses increasingly upon straightforward problems and their solutions.

Sample

Twenty-six retired police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service were interviewed during the course of the research with all having served between the 1930s and the 1960s. Nine had served in CID and seventeen had worked as uniformed officers. Nineteen of the sample achieved the rank of police constable, five the rank of sergeant and two the rank of inspector.

Findings[5]

Existing literature (for example, Skolnick, 1994, and Smith, and Gray, 1983) in the field of police culture tends to give the impression that few if any variations occur in the culture between police stations or areas. However, many officers in the sample were of the opinion that the particular social nuances of a station or area might greatly influence the culture among the officers there. For example, one interviewee claimed that stations got either a good or a bad reputation, the result of factors as varied as the socio-economic make-up of the area to the strategies implemented by senior officer.

This research appeared to show a large variation in cultural dynamics between both geographical areas and police stations. One interviewee spoke of how the culture of a police station was largely determined by the attitude of the police officers. For example,

> "...it depended entirely on the station, you see, stations got bad names and good names...some stations, you would have a lot of young, pushing blokes at the station and the discipline would be really very hard...but, generally speaking, the PC's had...the last word because if a bloke wanted something done on his relief...say there had been complaints...they'd say, "We want..."...but, you see, if one of these pushing blokes came...they'd walk past them...and wouldn't take any notice at all...so it worked both ways..." (Extract 1 - Officer 'R').

The above quote shows how the presence of motivated officers in a station could lead to a stricter and more disciplined regime being imposed at a police station. However, the quote also illustrates how the low amounts of supervision and high amounts of discretion which characterised beat policing led to officers in some areas

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[5] Where possible, geographical locations are referenced in terms of their distance and direction in relation to Charing Cross Station, a central London landmark.

having substantial freedom to police in whichever style they wished to. This appeared to happen regardless of the atmosphere nurtured inside the station by more senior officers.

Over half of the officers claimed that the geographical location of the station was a very important factor in determining the behaviours and attitudes of the police officers. One officer said that,

> "...People did take on the colour of their area...and I knew several pleasant people from A division, Cannon Row[6], and round there...Buckingham Palace and that...but they did take on an element of bullshit to be honest...just the same as West End[7] coppers took on another rather more unpleasant aspect...and perhaps we took on the characteristics of the East End[8]...and we'd use...certainly I used Yiddish words all the time and criminal slang..." (Extract 2 - Officer 'V').

Perhaps the greatest cultural chasm between geographical areas in inner London existed between the East End and the West End. Five officers pointed to the cultural distinctions between East End policing and West End policing, a distinction seemingly informed by the dominant social and cultural composition of the areas,

> "...we found that the Londoners in the East End, round about my days, were friends. In the West End, Chelsea[9] and around there...it was cosmopolitan...the people were snooty and looked down on coppers...they wanted to rule the roost and you had to be careful how you dealt with them, but with the East Enders, I don't say you could get away with anything, but you could deal with East Enders a lot more easily...I found that East Enders wanted to be friendly with the police more than the West Enders. And when I went out to Enfield[10] it was wartime...a lot of young men had gone to the War...they'd built an estate out there and transferred a lot of people from the East End and when they started clearing the slums from the East End a lot of East Enders came out there, but...I don't think it seemed to be the best of the East Enders...we didn't get on with those like we did when they were on their own patch around Whitechapel[11] and so on..." (Extract 3 - Officer 'B').

Similarly,

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[6] 1 km South of Charing Cross

[7] The West End has routinely been viewed as perhaps the most affluent and fashionable division of London. Its inner district comprises Bloomsbury, Holborn, Covent Garden, Seven Dials, Soho, Fitzrovia, Westminster, Marylebone, Mayfair and St. James's. Historically, it has also comprised an outer district to the west of Park Lane that also includes Knightsbridge, Belgravia, Pimlico, Chelsea, South Kensington, Bayswater, Paddington, Notting Hill and Holland Park.

[8] The East End refers to a district without formal boundaries to the east of the walled City of London. It is usually seen as including Stepney, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, Poplar, Shoreditch and Hackney. However, sometimes this district is sometimes expanded to include the outer-lying boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest.

[9] 5 km West of Charing Cross

[10] 16 km North-East of Charing Cross

[11] 5.5 km East of Charing Cross

"...I was loaned to C Division for six months...in the West End and I was an East End copper...and I was then in Piccadilly[12] on traffic duty and I saw a woman standing on the edge of the kerb...she was an old lady and I said, "C'mon Ma" and she came across the road...she stopped in front of me...she said, "I'm not your ma"...I said, "Oh, I'm sorry"...I went across the road...never thought anything more of it...When I went off at 2 o'clock I was called into the office and she'd made a complaint...she'd complained that I'd called her 'Ma'...to me it's laughable...but up in the West End...He said, "You're an East End copper. You call the women 'Ma' in the East End...but you mustn't do that here. It must be 'Madam'". It just shows you the difference between the East End and the West End..." (Extract 4 - Officer 'X').

As the above quotes appear to show, officers appeared to have a far greater empathy with the public of the East End. The officers seem to have identified themselves far more closely with the values, behaviours and traditions of the East End which were predominantly working class. This, in many respects, might be considered unsurprising given the large amount of working-class men (and, more latterly, women) who have joined the police force. The West End, however, tended to be populated with the middle and upper classes who were perceived as expecting the police to show deference to them by virtue of their background.

However, despite the fact that officers appeared to prefer policing the working class neighbourhoods of the East End, that is not to say that officers enjoyed a good relationship with the public in all working class districts. The following officer describes the differences between policing the working class neighbourhoods of the East End and of South London,

"...it depended on the area you worked, you see. Your working environment and the people you deal with have such a great bearing on how you feel when you work. Now, I worked in the East End of London...thoroughly enjoyed it...but you've got...a mixture of villains, hooligans, all walks of life...but basically I liked working with them. Subsequently, many years later, I went to work over at...a part of my patch was Kennington[13] with those big blocks of flats...Disaster!..Brixton[14] I worked at...Stockwell Park Estate[15]...Disaster! Because the people there didn't want you. They wanted to run themselves but run it their way which was the wrong way...the blokes *[fellow officers]*, they didn't have the same sort of attitude,...They were a bit, 'Bloody Hell. I'll be glad when I've got my three years and my five years and they bloody move me. This is hard work'. So, yeah, you did get a change..." (Extract 5 - Officer 'D').

Another ex-officer spoke of the differences between different parts of London,

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[12] 0.5 km West of Charing Cross
[13] 3 km South of Charing Cross
[14] 5 km South of Charing Cross
[15] 4 km South of Charing Cross

"...I served at…the Elephant and Castle[16]...When I went to the Elephant and Castle and the bloke said, "You're in the underworld now"...you were! And you had to talk a different language. This old copper said, "You've got to talk their language...It's no good trying to be nice and kind to them 'cause they won't appreciate it"..." (Extract 6 - Officer 'M').

Once again, it appears that officers in working class areas sought to adopt some of the local mannerisms or speech to be accepted by a community. It is interesting to contrast this with the attitude of some of the more prosperous areas where officers were discouraged from becoming part of the environment. It may be the case that some areas of London were viewed differently by many officers because of the fact that a different type of policing was required and that this differentiation was made in terms of the socio-economic class of people who lived or worked there. The following two quotes show how officers stationed in Kensington[17] had a somewhat different role from those in the East End,

"...I was transferred to Kensington which wasn't bad...when I saw the Chief Inspector...he told me that, at Kensington, my main job was to keep the people happy so we didn't get any complaints...and if I caught any thieves on top of that, better still. But the main object was to stop Kensingtonians complaining. I did that quite successfully as far as I was concerned...totally different policing to what it was in South London at the time..." (Extract 7 - Officer 'F').

Similarly,

"...I liked the smaller station...Kensington was a little station and very friendly...everybody got on well...it was a little family almost...we were mainly dealing with tourists and traffic and the big things like Olympia [*a conference centre in Kensington*] and Earls Court[18]...I suppose that I didn't, like the East End would have done...didn't get so much involved in the community work..." (Extract 8 - Officer 'L').

Thus, it seems that for Kensington, at least, police work did not so much revolve around law enforcement as keeping happy both residents and tourists alike. This shows a marked difference with policing in the East End where officers were drawn more into the fabric of the environment and, therefore, played a greater role in the lives of the inhabitants. Policing more prosperous areas necessitated a more removed presence and this can be seen as being due to two main factors. In short, the East End was perceived to have a crime problem whereas Kensington was not perceived to have a crime problem. It also appears that there may have been a reluctance

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[16] 3 km South of Charing Cross
[17] 4 km West of Charing Cross
[18] 4 km West of Charing Cross

on the part of the police to enforce lower level laws against the inhabitants of wealthier areas. One officer said,

>"...St John's Wood[19] is a very, very, predominantly Jewish area...I mean, you may pick up on the fact that I'm talking about Greeks, Irish, and Jews...policing in those days was very, very, conscious of different groups, if you like...you could say the police were very fascist, I don't mean that in a heavy duty sense of the word, but fascist in that they were white and Anglo Saxon and British and everything else was kind of like foreign, so to speak. But St John's Wood was very, very, wealthy...pop stars and people like Bob Monkhouse and Joe Loss used to live there...and, yes, you did behave differently...if you found Joe Loss's car parked on a yellow line in St John's Wood you could put a ticket on it...but it was a pointless and wasted exercise...so, yes, you did treat people differently..." (Extract 9 - Officer 'I').

Whilst a minority of the interviewees claimed that small police stations instilled more camaraderie than the larger stations, one officer claimed that a significant crime rate or element of danger was also required to create a strong bond between the officers. The following quote appears to show how the size or location of a station can affect the culture within it,

>"...Well, it depends on their size...and the locality you're in. Now, Barnes[20]...I was a DC there and there was one Sergeant...and we were the lord of the manor. We were attached to Richmond[21] police station...Now, Lavender Hill[22], rough old quarter, but we all stuck together...down the pub. We were all friends together...the DI and the whole lot because you had to stand together..." (Extract 10 - Officer 'N').

Similarly, another officer described what he perceived as the difference in levels of camaraderie between an East End station and a suburban Essex station,

>"...At Leman Street[23]...a PC coming in from the street...he would see people at the counter...if the Sergeant didn't shout to him...he would deal with it automatically...you would say, "Can I help you?"...But at Romford[24] I made myself disliked because I went into the reserve room and said, "I want someone to come out here and assist me". They thought that was very bad form. The fucking Essex mentality...they didn't work as a team in the suburban areas...there was a massive gap between Sergeants and PC's..." (Extract 11 - Officer 'V').

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[19] 5 km North-West of Charing Cross
[20] 9 km South-West of Charing Cross
[21] 13 km South-West of Charing Cross
[22] 5 km South-West of Charing Cross
[23] 5 km East of Charing Cross
[24] 22 km East of Charing Cross

Another officer, who was used to working in the inner divisions of the Metropolitan area, appeared, like the previous interviewee, to find some aspects of rural or suburban policing as distasteful. He said,

"...I got promoted to Sergeant...my first station after getting promoted from a PC at Chelsea was at Epsom[25] which was a different police game altogether...oh dear, oh dear, a lot of the 'old pals act' down there..." (Extract 12 - Officer 'O').

The same officer details the differences between rural and inner city policing and therefore suggests the ways in which markedly different cultures might arise in police stations situated in such areas,

"...Up in Central London it's mainly street work...all kinds of things happened there...but out in the country it's different altogether...things with animals and all that sort of thing. And there was Mr so-and-so...he's a friend of so-and-so, all that bloody nonsense. Oh that sort of thing did go on, but I was only at Epsom for about six or seven months...but it was a different world down there. And another thing down in Epsom, I always seemed to be doing...stray dogs and stray cattle and things like that. And down in Epsom it was rather funny. They used to run two books when I was there...missing persons. And you had West Park, Harden...four big mental hospitals down there. And they used to walk in and out of these hospitals...the patients... at their own will...Yes, a variety of things used to happen down there. It was a very queer place...very, very queer...I wasn't exactly sorry to leave..." (Extract 13 - Officer 'O').

Another factor peculiar to some police stations that may affect the levels of camaraderie within is that of whether or not a particular station is viewed as a 'punishment' station. 'Punishment' stations were so known because of the fact that most officers who were posted to them had either committed some disciplinary offence or had, in some cases, fallen foul of a senior officer. One officer said,

"...Somers Town[26]...was a punishment station and Leman Street was one...they finished up...these punishment stations in being renowned for their being happy places. Everyone was in the shit together as it were..." (Extract 14 - Officer 'V').

It, therefore, appears that a number of factors might contribute to differences in cultural dynamics between areas. The varying crime and criminality rates of areas, the differing amounts of danger and pressure to gain results, the predominant social class of inhabitants and the size of the police station all interacted to create distinct cultures within police stations. At all times, however, we must be aware that

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[25] 28 km South of Charing Cross
[26] 2 km North of Charing Cross

"...I think a lot of the different styles or approach was just different people...different individuals had different styles...you know, different Inspectors, different Superintendents, different Sergeants, and, probably, I would even think that different reliefs had styles because you became a bunch of guys who worked together and you tended to have a style of working..." (Extract 15 - Officer 'E').

Discussion

When analysing the narratives generated for this piece of work, one factor immediately becomes apparent. The data generated by the study sits uneasily with the findings of other pieces of research which set out to explain police culture. Police culture literature such as that produced by such scholars as Reiner (1992 and Skolnick, 1994) has in many respects appeared to perpetuate a self-fulfilling prophecy in terms of police culture. Police behaviour and values are portrayed in essentially negative terms and seen as being embedded within the potent primacy of the police organisation. The 'vocabulary of motives' (Mills, 1967) invoked by traditional readings of police culture is, it can be argued, too limited to aid a more advanced understanding and appreciation of police behaviour. In particular, conceptions of the primacy of the organisation tend to underplay the influence of decisions (themselves influenced by the social environment) made at street level by individual officers.

The findings appear to highlight a number of interesting dimensions in explaining different styles of policing. This section will highlight two of them – the distinction between policing the East End and policing the West End or North or South London and the difference between city policing and the policing of the more outlying areas. That the police officers in this sample saw the policing of the East End as fundamentally different to the policing of other areas appears quite evident. The narratives portray the relationship with the East End as being determined by cultural artefacts which cannot be explained solely in terms of the class of the area. As the narrative of Officer 'D' highlights, the South London working-class enclaves of Brixton and Stockwell appeared to be considered more difficult working environments than the working-class areas of the East End.

The narratives suggest that officers working in the East End could, despite the presence of significant crime rates, develop a good working relationship with the local communities. Significantly, these communities appeared not to resent the presence of the police (as may have been the case in South London) and neither did they expect officers to be deferential (as appeared to be the situation in West London). A number of factors may play a part in explaining the particular relationship that police officers had with the citizens of the East End. Primarily, during the period under consideration the communities of the East End were relatively homogenous and were subject to neither pluralisation or large amounts of social or geographical mobility. Correspondingly, the demographic structure of the area (predominantly white and middle-class) may have paralleled that of the majority of the officers' backgrounds. Although this comparative unity between the police and the citizens of the East End led to an enjoyable working life for many officers, it also can be seen as integral factor in explaining much minor police corruption of

the time. This theme is developed by Weinberger (1995) who shows how much of the petty corruption of the time[27] was enabled by the relatively harmonious relationship between the police and the public. That the distinctive social divisions in London impacted upon the nature of corrupt police behaviour is a concept that also finds some support in the work of Emsley (2005). Emsley's analysis of the case of Sergeant Goddard[28] seeks to position the crime in terms of the socio- environmental factors peculiar to Goddard's working environment of Soho. In particular, he describes how both the motivation and the opportunity to act corruptly was a result of the financial wealth of the West End which highlighted the relatively low pay of the police officer in respect of other inhabitants of this area.

Interestingly, the officers' narratives which compare policework in both central London and the more outlying areas reveal some distinct tendencies. In particular, officers who transferred from central stations to area like Epsom and Romford appeared to find a different type of culture. For example, Extract 13 highlights the different type of policing required by more rural environments. Some of these reflect more immediate characteristics of the rural environment such as having to deal with situations involving livestock. However, other parts of the rural officer's role could be influenced by policies regarding the treatment of those with mental health needs. For example, officers who served throughout much of the 20th century within rural areas may have done so in the vicinity of large mental health institutions which were situated in non-urban environments prior to the introduction of policies of deinstitutionalisation in the late 20th century. Also of interest is the apparent lack of solidarity between officers in the more rural stations. One officer (Extract 12) notes that, in his experience, policing in rural areas was "a different police game altogether". He continues by exhibiting a certain distaste for some of the apparent actions of his fellow officers. Another officer who transferred from the capital to Romford refers to the "fucking Essex mentality" which apparently was characterised by a lack of camaraderie between different ranks. Such observations are interesting in that they converge with the work of Whitaker (1964) who suggested that police camaraderie and solidarity intensifies when the police feel under pressure from either the public, the government or even their own management. Rural policing prior to the 1960s could largely be viewed as devoid of controversy, scandal or any other type of pressure given that the police role in such areas was based on service provision as opposed to law enforcement. Such factors, understandably, would impact on the style of policing in rural areas and therefore the culture.

Such ideas neatly parallel the work of Brogden (1982) who, in his analysis of policing in the English city of Liverpool, draws out the theme of the inter-relatedness between the police and the socio-economic and socio-historical dimensions of the environment. In the case of Liverpool, Brogden succeeds in drawing out the city's particular 'uniquenness'[29] and suggests that crime and subsequent styles of policing reflect

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[27] Corrupt behaviour in the East End was largely restricted to minor bribes being made to police officers by market workers and by those involved in street gambling which had been made illegal under the 1906 Street Betting Act.

[28] Sergeant Goddard was found guilty in 1929 of accepting large amounts of money from members of the public and sentenced to 18 months labour.

[29] According to Brogden, Liverpool's status as a major port was instrumental in determining its tradition of low-paid and casual employment which, in turn, determined the nature of crime and policing.

not only employment patterns but also social divisions determined by factors such as class and religion. In this respect, Brogden's work is crucial in that it pre-empts both his own later police oral history (Brogden, 1991) and that of Weinberger (1995) by drawing out the impact of the social environment on helping to determine the nature of police-public relations and, thus, the nature of the culture of the police.

CONCLUSION

The real value of the narratives presented in this piece of work is three-fold. First, they reveal the personal recollections of ex-officers who are under little, if any, pressure to represent the police force in a certain way. Rarely is the world of policing revealed to us by individuals who have experience of the profession yet who are, simultaneously, unrestrained by the requirements of occupational protocol. Second, such narratives represent data generated by our subjects rather than the mediated interpretations of the ethnographer. Third, and perhaps most importantly, they reveal the complexity of the social forces which impact upon not only officers' perceptions of the relationship between police and their immediate community, but also the ways in which these environmental forces shape officers values and behaviours.

The adoption of such approaches offer unique challenges to the social scientist. Not least they allow police researchers to perhaps forward Chan's (1997) essentially fluid interpretation of police occupational culture which suggests that we should, in fact, be talking of police *cultures* rather than police *culture*. In a similar vein, they offer perhaps a variation in research methodology which will, as Punch (1985) suggests, allow us to adopt wider frames of reference in our understanding of police culture. These wider terms of reference need not (and should not) be used to deny the influence of the police institution on police culture. Instead, it is hoped that they will allow us to unthread those specific areas or instances where we can identify the primacy of the institution in determining the cultural attributes of the police and, conversely, those where other factors take a dominant role. One such example is suggested by one of the officer narratives presented in this paper which alludes to the concept of the 'punishment' station. Such stations would appear to be one instance where the institution had a major part to play in determining the culture of an individual police station purely by hand-picking officers deemed to be un-disciplined and placing them in a particular station. The existence of 'punishment' stations is one of those peculiarities of the Metropolitan Police that rarely, if ever, come to light through official histories of London police forces. By utilising the narratives of retired police officers we allow a depth of information to be reached that hitherto was denied to us by more contemporary pieces of research that rely on straightforward interview or ethnography. Not least, they appear to allow us the opportunity to situate police culture in terms that acknowledge a complex interaction between a series of essentially different forces – that of the individual, the organisation and the wider society.

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Appendix 1

Details of the Interviewees' Station

Officer	Station(s)
B	Chelsea, Enfield
D	Bethnal Green, Kennington, Brixton
E	Golders Green
F	Stoke Newington, Lavender Hill, Kensington, Gypsy Hill, Balham
I	Albany Street, Croydon
L	Shepherds Bush, Kensington
M	Balham, Tooting, Earlsfield, Peckham, Deptford, Rotherhithe, The Borough, Kenley, Sydenham, Elephant and Castle, South Norwood.
N	Chiswick, Barnes, Lavender Hill
O	Chelsea, Epsom, Tooting
R	Brixton, Southwark, Chelsea
V	Enfield, Lemon St, Romford
X	Bethnal Green, Bow

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