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Chapter 7 New Contexts for Police Culture

A key theme throughout the book so far has been the complexity of policework and the challenge of utilising the concept of police culture in a way that reflects this. In the last two chapters, we have predominantly focussed upon those internal elements of policing that lead to very different working styles and orientations such as rank and role. In this chapter, we will look beyond the policing organisation to wider pressures, forces and dynamics that, in turn, have led, or are currently leading, to cultural change in the police. In doing so, once again, we will draw into question the extent to which simplistic assumptions regarding police work and the communities in which it is enacted have contemporary relevance to our understanding of police culture. The chapter will begin with a brief overview of 'late modernity', a sociological concept that provides a starting point for many explanations of societal change and, indirectly, for those changes which we witness in policing organisations. This will be followed by an exploration of more focussed types of change agendas, which might indirectly be associated with late modernity and which link to our understanding of police culture.

Late Modernity and Policing <2>

The period from the 1980s to the present day has been described, sociologically, as that of 'late modernity' and represents a substantial change in the nature of our society from the preceding era of 'modernity'. Modernity was an era characterised largely by optimism in a world based upon certainty and driven by progressive values and a faith in science and technology. In this respect, it was largely a forward-looking era where challenges were perceived as being directly overcome by the application of science, technology and logic. Central to this worldview was the idea of structure. This after all was the period of the nuclear family, and further bolstered by the ordering effects of a quite robust and embedded class system. Furthermore, an array of

controls (both formal and informal) were brought to bear in respect of gender. The combination of optimism and progress within the confines of an ordered and quite prescriptive society led to social stability where change and progress were present but where the pace of their evolution was quite gentle. This lies in contrast to the era that succeeded it, the late modern. Where modernity was built upon optimism and ordered structure, late modernity was founded upon uncertainty and individual freedom, and these fundamental changes were bound up in broader social change at the global level. As a result, local lives were increasingly being impacted by global events, global communication and the democratisation of travel. The tightly-knit communities which had provided the backbone of modernity were, under late modernity, replaced by fragmented and increasingly diverse physical communities and, simultaneously, augmented by sub-cultures rooted in new non-physical environments (for example, cyberspace). The broad post-war consensus which led to the Golden Age of policing had been replaced with a more fluid, precarious and uncertain form of lived experience that tended to exacerbate inequalities at the local and global level. Furthermore, during the period we also witnessed the emergence of what has been termed the 'Information Society'. To Tsoukas (1997) the period of late modernity is characterised by an increasing reliance on 'knowledge', a point that is readily understandable in the light of the unparalleled expansion of information technology over recent decades. However, whilst the growing accessibility of data and material has been met with optimism by some commentators, Tsoukas remains quite critical of our current information driven era. In particular, he suggests that the nature of the data we access and process nowadays is information rather than knowledge, a distinction based on the fact that knowledge is considered as being both contextualised and imbued with values. Information, instead, represents knowledge that is, 'decontextualized, timeless, impersonal, value-free' (p. 839). The importance of this distinction, suggests Tsoukas, is that, in the late modern era, the more information we have, the less we actually understand and, furthermore, the more

information we have, the less we trust the experts who generated that information. This is a contradiction that Tsoukas himself recognises, noting that expert knowledge is inevitably contextualised in ways that are difficult to fully understand or engage with without a degree of expertise in that subject. As a result, far from the 'Information Age' leading to greater rationality, we have witnessed greater distrust of experts and the knowledge they create, meaning that the potential benefits which that information holds is less likely to be realised. As the amount of information available to us increases we actually witness a decrease in trust that greatly hinders the state's ability to govern rationally.

The impact of these changes can be witnessed in all aspects of modern life. However, they have been especially profound in respect of those areas for which the police hold significant responsibility – crime, fear of crime and security. To some considerable extent, this is to be expected given the significance of such issues to the concept of risk. The issue of risk, in a sociological sense, is a helpful concept through which to explore the relationship between policing, police culture and social change and was popularised, at the conceptual level, by the author Ulrich Beck in his 1992 book The Risk Society. Its main premise is quite straightforward in that it suggests that contemporary society is increasingly focussed on the future. As a result, societies, organisations and individuals have become more intent on minimising potential risk. This relatively new way of understanding contemporary life represents a substantial departure from previous eras when society was more accepting of risk as an inescapable aspect of existence. Simultaneous to these social processes, political systems in the west have come to increasingly reflect neo-liberal values which, according to Harvey (2007), are characterised by, 'strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (p.2).

Neo-liberalism opposes extensive public spending within state institutions such as the police and, in the process, tends to work towards a narrowing of the focus of the state's remit. When policing is reconfigured to meet the needs of the neo-liberal agenda, notes Kaplan-Lyman (2012) in his essay on neo-liberal policing in New York City, it is done in a way that neglects the need to do so in a context that positively engages with the public and which pays sufficient attention to accountability and governance. In conclusion, he suggests that these all hold potentially negative impacts for the legitimacy of the police. Moreover, the challenges associated with late modernity such as fragmentation or disembeddedness of experience, a focus on risk and a related anxiety or fear of crime are exacerbated by the neo-liberal context. This creates a fundamental issue of supply and demand in respect of the state's ability or obligation to satisfy the public's need for security. In the risk society, disparate insecurities around a wide range of concerns become entwined with those risk-based anxieties surrounding crime (see Walklate and Mythen, 2008) to create a seemingly intractable and emotive sense of fear of crime. At the same time, whilst the public demand for security increases as result of such processes, increasingly the state is less likely to have the resources (or, it has to be said, the political will) to respond.

This changing social context is incredibly important for our understanding of contemporary policing, a fact recognised by Eugene McLaughlin in his book The New Policing (2007). Since the 1990s, he suggests, police scholars have recognised that such changes have had an incredible impact on our understanding of policework. He states that, 'any contemporary analysis of policing must be the recognition that economic and cultural globalization, dematerialization of production processes, new information and telecommunication technologies and networks, commodification and mass consumerism, and profound and rapid

social complexity have all worked to alter the institutional configuration of Western society' (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 87).

The ambiguity, instability and insecurity which, as a result of the processes of late modernity, characterise our modern world necessitate, according to McLaughlin, a re-evaluation of the ways in which we strategise and operationalise policework. Furthermore, the drift into late modernity mirrored the advent of high crime societies (see Garland, 2001) signalling a growing normalisation of crime. Crime, as a result, became something to manage rather than to eradicate, and members of the public began to see crime as a common, if not attractive, facet of everyday life. Against the background of a retreating state, insecurity (as crime does) becomes normalised and this leads to the public becoming increasingly likely to question the legitimacy of the police (Terpstra and Van der Vijver, 2006).

This backdrop of economic, political and social change requires us to revisit the issue of police culture and the relevance it has in the late modern society. If we look back to the origins of academic interest in police culture it is interesting to note that police culture is very much a concept associated with the period of modernity. In other words, it was developed prior to the advent of late modernity. Furthermore, traditional ideas regarding the nature of police culture very much reflected modernist values of structure and logic and this was demonstrated, to give but one example, by the somewhat deterministic assumptions that underpinned our thinking about the relationship between police values and behaviour. Police culture was seen as an easily definable set of values that were generally viewed as common to all officers. The social and societal changes that we have witnessed over the last 40 years or so have not so much lessened the validity of the concept of police culture but made us more aware of the variety of ways in

which the concept can be used. Commonly, our interest in police culture appeared to very much focus at the micro level of police interaction with the public and, whilst this is still an area of concern for academics (see, for example, the work of Long and Joseph-Salisbury, 2019), it is also true to say that we have seen a renewed interest in the relationship between policing and more abstract and externally-driven agendas. Two such agendas, which will provide the focus for the remainder of this chapter, are the issues of police professionalisation and police ethics.

The Professionalisation Agenda <2>

One response to the changing social context which has impacted upon policing so markedly, has been the growing prevalence of police reform processes which seek to professionalise the police. Professionalisation is a broad term and one which deserves a certain degree of clarification. Sklansky (2014), for example, identifies four different approaches to understanding police professionalism. The first is where professionalism is seen as a way of increasing the quality of the professional practice engaged in by officers. The second is where professionalism refers to the ways in which occupations increase their status (to that of profession) and thereafter seek autonomy as a means of resisting interference at a political level. The third is where professionalism is used to articulate that occupational practice draws not on experiential knowledge, but on a legitimate, established and tested knowledge base. That is, that there exists a body of credible professional knowledge that informs practice. The final approach to understanding professionalism, according to Sklansky, is to view it as a process whereby practitioners act in appropriate ways, not because of the influence and control of external bodies but because they have internalised professional norms. Despite this attempt to explain the various conceptions of professionalism, Sklansky admits that these individual elements are intricately connected.

The concept of professionalism is a challenging area, not least because we tend to differentiate it in respect of whether we are applying it to 'old' professions or to 'new' professions. According to Cockcroft (2015), the work of two writers, Julia Evetts (2013) and Valerie Fournier (1999), in particular, help us to explain this distinction by exploring the fundamental differences between professionalism in these two contexts. Essentially the distinction rests on the idea that for 'new' professions (for example, policing, nursing and social work) professionalisation, rather than a process whereby an occupation is granted autonomy, refers to the application of 'disciplinary logic' (Fournier, 1999, p. 288). Similarly, Evetts (2013) suggests that new professions (as opposed to the 'old' professions connected to legal work and the higher levels of the medical profession) are controlled not from within but from above. In other words, the new professions enjoy none of the autonomy of the 'old' professions. This can be explained, according to Fournier (1999), as ultimately being caused by late modernity. She argues that the changes which are associated with late modernity have meant that, for some occupations, work has become increasingly unstructured and hard to control. The resulting 'disciplinary gap' (Fournier, 1999, p. 281) is filled by a model of professionalisation which is largely synonymous with the idea of regulation. Furthermore, and as Cockcroft (2015) notes, the rise of 'new' professions appears to have been motivated in many cases by a desire to reduce the opportunities for discretionary work practices in public sector occupations. This potentially positions 'new' professionalism agendas in policing as attempts to limit or restrain the impact of police cultures on police behaviour.

It is relevant here to refer one of the major challenges posed by professionalisation for policing and its culture, its impact upon discretion. As we have noted previously, discretion is an integral

element of the police culture, and one that, arguably, has commanded insufficient explicit scrutiny from academics, police leaders and policy makers alike. Whilst much work has been undertaken to address what are viewed as the manifestations of police culture, such as discriminatory behaviours, comparatively little focus has been given to that part of the police role that allows such problematic manifestations of the culture to occur. At one level of analysis, discretion represents the key to understanding police culture. This is because discretion is both an essential part of the police role and, simultaneously, one of the most symbolically important and valued elements of the police culture. To add a further layer of complexity, discretion is viewed by the police leadership as perhaps the key factor that is common to elements of police practice that they view as unprofessional and/or inappropriate. It also therefore represents a dilemma in respect of the delivery of good police practice as it is an essential, and integral, element of the police role, and can lead to both appropriate and inappropriate police practice and is viewed by many police officers as pivotal to their perceptions of both personal professionalism and the professionalism of the occupation of as a whole.

Contemporary attempts to address police professionalism through police reforms are, it can be argued, consistently founded upon ideas that seek to limit police discretion. As we can see above from the work of Evetts (2013) and Fournier (1999), the professionalisation of public sector occupations are often driven by perceived needs to introduce a greater element of control over the working lives of practitioners in these fields. Where policing is concerned, the reduction of police officer discretion is a key area where such control can be exerted. However, such approaches bring a number of challenges for police practice. First, as noted by Cockcroft (2017), it is difficult to envisage ways in which police discretion can be limited given the wide remit of the police role, the reactive nature of the work and the status of the police as the service

that deals with those occurrences that fall beyond the responsibility of other agencies. Second, as noted by Brogden (1982), the legislation that represents the legal tools that are used by police officers is often very much reliant upon the notion of police discretion. Finally, the idea of restricting police culture as a means of encouraging greater professionalism has serious ramifications, somewhat ironically, for the sense of professional worth amongst officers given that discretion has not only a very real practical value but also a symbolic value for officers.

In terms of the first of these, the practical element, it is not hard to envisage the benefits of discretion. The scope of policework is so broad that the scope to make professional decisions is of substantial value to officers. It allows them to draw on their professional experience, and that of their colleagues, to make decisions that represent the best possible outcome given the restrictions of their role and their powers combined with the particular characteristics of the situation that they are in. Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage how a police organisation without such discretional powers would operate within the real world. Officers will undoubtedly and inevitably face challenges in their working lives where discretionary 'freedom' is required to fashion a response to situation which they never expected nor were trained to face.

There is, therefore, substantial evidence to suggest that much of the motivation to embark upon a professionalisation agenda is consistent with the first of Sklansky's categories, where professionalism is associated with an increase in the quality of work undertaken by practitioners. Evidence can be found for this in the College of Policing's Leadership Review of 2015. Whilst advocating a re-thinking of how the police engage with the idea of leadership,

it also strongly proposed a vision of a fully professional police service. The document itself repeatedly draws on the language and rhetoric of professionalism. For example:

'Leadership is a primary issue for a body establishing the elements of a formal profession. It sits at the heart of what it means to practise as a professional and it is the responsibility of a professional body to state what can be expected of leaders in that profession' (2015, p. 7).

'Adopting elements that can be associated with its development as a profession can help policing assure the quality of its service in a changing context' (2015, p. 18).

'Policing at its best is based on knowledge allied to professional judgement, not on hierarchy wedded to procedure and process' (2015, p. 18).

Whilst there can be no doubt that raising the quality of policework to meet the changing societal context of the contemporary world is a key driver of the professionalisation agenda, it is possible to identify other factors. A strong case can be made to also support the idea that the professionalisation agenda is also very much a result of the fact that, since the 1960s, the British public have placed less trust in the police. As police legitimacy has therefore declined it has been possible to identify what Waddington (1998) termed a 'crisis in policing'. Professionalisation brings a wide variety of benefits, not all of which are connected to practitioner performance, one of which, for example, is the opportunity to enhance the public view of policing by invoking the somewhat nebulous concept of professionalisation. Furthermore, the work of Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) charts some of these broader

externally facing benefits. By identifying itself as a profession (rather than an occupation) policing promotes itself as an authority on those subject areas aligned to its role. By becoming credible authorities in this way, Sklansky (2014) suggests that the police become perceived as being more efficient in their work. Similarly, where police professionalisation agendas are achieved through partnership with Higher Education institutions, further benefits accrue such as, for example, better quality police/public relationships, improved relationships with both the government and other professions, and a greater ability to counter negative judgements of police competence (Hallenberg, 2012). A common feature of many of these claims is that the benefits for the police of professionalisation, according to Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017), are largely symbolic and external facing rather than directly related to the improved professionalism and competency of officers. In their research which studied police officers who had undertaken Higher Education programmes whilst serving as police officers, they found some interesting tensions around the relationship between Higher Education and professionalisation. Whereas police organisations often supported officers both in terms of the financial burden of studying and in terms of protecting learning time, upon completion many officers felt that no value was placed on their achievements by their employing organisation. Moreover, officers felt that their engagement with Higher Education also met with some cultural resistance from both their peers and from senior officers. For example, one Sergeant interviewed for the research recalled,

'There was a guy came in he had a PhD apparently and on his email signature it sort of said you know–PC452ST, PhD at the end of it. And apparently his sergeant said to him 'take that off you XXXX that means nothing.' And there is still very much a culture of a degree is something that you ought to hide' (Hallenberg and Cockcroft, 2017, p. 281).

The relationship between professionalisation and Higher Education therefore is complex. It has been well documented by earlier research that the pragmatism of the police culture has meant that officers were disparaging of Higher Education and those who engaged with it. At the same time, much of the academic writing about policing has been largely critical of police practice. It is probably fair to suggest, therefore, that for many years policing and academia occupied separate, distinct and often mutually antagonistic worlds. Recent years, however, have seen a much greater sense of partnership between the two (see, for example, Goode and Lumsden, 2018) and this has led to significant numbers of mutually beneficial collaborations. However, whilst the previous degree of mutual antagonism may have dissipated there remains a cultural challenge in respect of the extent to which the values of academia should permeate police practice.

One area where this cultural division becomes acutely noticeable is in the rise of the EBP agenda and the way in which this has brought to the fore arguments about the respective roles that evidential and experiential knowledge should have in the police world. In particular, a sizeable question has arisen in respect of what actually constitutes knowledge in policing. And whilst this may not seem to bear much relation to the subject of police culture, upon closer inspection we can see how it becomes apparent that police culture is in fact central to this argument. As we have seen from earlier chapters, EBP has become incredibly influential as a preferred model through which we should generate knowledge about policing. By adopting the rigour of the empirical sciences to establish what works and what does not work in policing we can create, proponents suggest, a knowledge base which whilst informally bolstering the professional status of the police will, in parallel, raise the quality of the work that police

undertake. However, the aforementioned pragmatism of the police culture can be seen, in many respects, as strongly opposed to the concept of EBP. To Williams and Cockcroft (2019) this is because police officers have traditionally recognised the value of experiential knowledge, informal knowledge with no basis in scientific testing which nevertheless proves useful to police in supporting them in their duties.

To fully understand the resistance of some officers to EBP, it is necessary to explore the issue of police knowledge in a little more depth. The work of Wood et al (2017) begins by acknowledging the benefits of EBP, most notably in respect of its timely acknowledgement that the role of police knowledge is an important area that has been largely neglected. Likewise, they suggest that it also allows for the inherent authority of the rank structure to be challenged in respect of what is considered appropriate knowledge. In other words, EBP advocates an abstract body of knowledge that derives its authority, not from the rank of the officer presenting or using that knowledge, but through the scientific rigour of the method by which that knowledge was created. At the same time, Wood et al (2017) do forward some concerns with EBP and its associated professionalisation agenda. In particular, they raise issue with what they see as a quite narrow methodological focus and a lack of context. The first of these refers to the preferred methodological approach of the RCT (Randomised Controlled Trial) which is a scientific approach to generating data and, subsequently, knowledge. The RCT is a popular means of testing the effectiveness of one intervention over another by, simply, exploring the impact of the new intervention (for example, a new form of community policing) in comparison to a control group (for example, an old form of community policing). By doing so, it is believed that this comparison allows us to chart the effectiveness of the 'new' way of undertaking whatever phenomenon it is we are investigating. This method is tremendously popular within, the sphere of health and medicine where it allows us to explore the effectiveness of, for

example, a new asthma treatment by comparing the experiences and physiological reaction of one group of asthma sufferers treated with the established treatment with another group who undertake the new treatment.

However, the application of this approach to establishing the effectiveness of interventions (or, to put it another way, new ways of responding to problems), has been criticised, not on the grounds of the validity of the method, but on its application to the complexities of policing. Clinical trials of, for example, new drugs and treatments take place against a sterile and controlled clinical backdrop. Policing takes place against a very different set of conditions and it has been argued, by Wood et al (2017), that RCTs fail to reflect, or adequately account for, the different social, political and cultural contexts within which policing occurs. In other words, it is difficult to fully understand the relevance and applicability of RCT results without fully understanding the nuances of the conditions through which they were created. The same issue persists when applying that knowledge to different contexts with the argument being that there needs to be contextual similarity for the findings to remain relevant and appropriate. Other issues may also be identified such as those surrounding the extent to which existing knowledge remains appropriate as police objectives and practices change. Likewise, given the importance of personal and professional reflection to the practice of policing (see College of Policing, no date), it is difficult to see how the importance of personal reflection can be reconciled with the abstract and hard knowledge that is often associated with EBP.

At a more cultural level, this does make us question what forms of knowledge and skills constitute policework with some academics (see, for example, Tong, Bryant and Horvath, 2009) viewing it as a combination of science, craft and art. Innes (2010: 32 cited in Wood et

al 2017) goes so far as to suggest that, 'effective policing is more 'art' or 'craft' than 'science' ' and, if correct, this creates certain challenges for the implementation of EBP. To fully appreciate such issues, however, it may be helpful to draw on the work of Eraut (2000, cited in Williams and Cockcroft, 2019) who differentiated between 'personal' and 'codified' knowledge where 'personal' knowledge is associated with informal, cultural or tacit knowledge and 'codified' knowledge is that which is formalised, structured and usually disseminated from above. EBP represents therefore a type of codified knowledge that is largely generated without the input of lower level practitioners. Personal knowledge, however, would, in terms of a policing context, be more associated with that knowledge which is generated and transmitted at a cultural level between practitioners. A helpful example which we might use to illustrate this comes from the work of Brogden et al (1988) who described the relationship between police knowledge, police discretion and police culture in the following way, 'the occupational subculture equips them with the knowledge of how to deal with their substantial (legally granted) discretion on a day-to-day basis. And management initiatives to control the rank and file officer continually have to contend with this legally sanctioned discretion and the 'space' it offers the occupational subculture' (p. 35). Whilst it is appropriate to be aware of the potential that such 'space' has to lead to unprofessional practice it is also necessary to appreciate the need for cultural and contextual knowledge as a means of making 'codified' knowledge relevant. An example of this can be drawn from the work of Cockcroft et al (2018) which explored the challenges of developing effective cybercrime training programmes for police officers. They found that cybercrime presents real challenges for many officers as they may struggle to understand both the technology that underpins such offences and the ways in which they would incorporate the formal knowledge they have about cyber-crime into their working role. Through survey research the authors found that whilst 'formalised' knowledge has a substantial role in some elements of their learning, police officers very much benefit from

group-based learning opportunities which give them the opportunity to discuss contextual issues around how such abstract knowledge would be applied in real life situations. Much like our understanding of how officers use discretion to understand how legal knowledge is applied in practice, so too it appears that a similar process is involved in the assimilation of technical knowledge. In short, whilst abstract knowledge is important to police work, cultural assimilation, made possible by informal peer interaction, has a crucial part to play in giving police officers an understanding of how to apply the knowledge they have learnt. Such findings appear to support the work of Richard Heslop (2011) who states that police learning is a distinct social and cultural process, rather than a passive one. Furthermore, the importance of socially and culturally derived knowledge is highlighted by the work of Ballucci et al (2017) who explored police officer reactions to the introduction of case management risk tools in intimate partner violence (IPV) situations. These risk tools, based on formalised research-based knowledge, were met with some opposition from officers as they believed such formalised mechanisms devalued the informal cultural knowledge and skills which police used in such cases. Officers tended to place much more value on experiential knowledge, of both investigation and IPV, which officers gain from doing the job and from working with other officers rather than the abstract formal knowledge derived from the risk assessment tools. Another allied concern was that such tools limited the scope for experientially informed discretionary decision-making. As we can see, from these examples, culturally derived knowledge has real world utility in helping officers to understand the relevance of abstract formal knowledge to their day to day roles. At the same time, cultural knowledge has also become, like discretion, an important and much coveted symbol of the professionalism of the police occupation.

Ethics <2>

In July 2014, the College of Policing launched its Code of Ethics for police officers in England and Wales with the stated aim of supporting, 'each member of the police profession to deliver the highest professional standards in their service to the public' (2014, p. iv). The document outlines a set of principles and standards of professional behaviour and guidance on how breaches of the code will be managed within police organisations. The principles proposed under the code are; Accountability, Fairness, Honesty, Integrity, Leadership, Objectivity, Openness, Respect and Selflessness and their stated intent was to influence individual police values and behaviour and to direct the organisational culture of the police (College of Policing, 2014). The standards of behaviour identified by the Code of Ethics were Honesty and Integrity, Authority, Respect and Courtesy, Equality and Diversity, Use of Force, Orders and Instructions, Duties and Responsibilities, Confidentiality, Fitness for Work, Conduct and Challenging and Reporting Improper Behaviour. These, the document states, represent the expected standards of police practice held by both the College of Policing and the public.

Whilst, at one level, this initiative represents another strand in the professionalisation agenda, it should also be noted that ethics in policing can also be understood at a more removed level. This is illustrated by Peter Neyroud, who suggested that, 'Police ethics includes both the values that underpin professional and democratic policing together with the moral decisions faced by police officers at all levels of the organization in the course of their work and the basis on which these are resolved' (Neyroud, 2008, p. 97). Neyroud continues by identifying three inter-related key elements of police ethics around which discussion has arisen; styles of policing; the police institution; and police organisational culture. In respect of the first, it is seen that particular styles of policing, such as crime fighting, are more likely to lead to ethical challenges than others. Where there is such an organisational focus that favours law enforcement over community policing initiatives, we are more likely to see police engaging in morally and

professionally questionable practices (for example, noble cause corruption) due to the pressure for results. This form of professional malpractice results not from the motivation of individual gain but from organisational pressure leading to officers having to engage in inappropriate practice to achieve the appropriate legitimate ends. This example, in particular, highlights the ethical interplay between the moral elements of decision-making at the individual level and the higher-level organisational goals of the police institution in respect of, in this case, crime control. Ethical policing can therefore be considered as having its roots, not just in the moral outlook of individual officers, but in the way in which institutional pressure is brought to bear in ways that make it difficult to police ethically. The role of police culture in the debate surrounding police ethics has generally focussed on the assumption that informal values and assumptions work against the adoption of ethical policing behaviours.

To explore these issues in a little greater depth it is helpful to draw on the work of Westmarland (2005) and Westmarland and Rowe (2018). The first of these pieces of research reports on questionnaire research carried out with police officers to explore their attitudes to a range of unethical behaviours. Its findings are interesting in that they suggest that officers have a considerable understanding of the ethical requirements placed upon them and of issues of professional integrity. Furthermore, officers also differentiate between different forms of unethical behaviour. For example, they are more likely to view acquisitive crime (that is, police crime which leads to some monetary reward for the individual) as unacceptable regardless of the value of benefit to be had and, correspondingly, they are more likely to report such behaviour to superiors. At the same time, those acts which involve the use of excessive force against members of the public or which involve the 'bending' of the law were viewed with less concern and were less likely to be reported. In conclusion, Westmarland highlights the importance of police culture to any debate over police ethics because of the influence of the

culture in inhibiting the reporting of unethical behaviours through formal mechanisms. In a piece of follow up research, published in 2018, Westmarland and Rowe develop many of the arguments originally presented in the earlier work and again found that police officers considered those unethical behaviours which resulted in personal gain for the officer as being the most serious, and therefore were more likely to be reported. Other patterns of interest were also identified. For example, there was little difference in results based on the respondent's gender, suggesting that male and female officers held similar views about what constituted unethical policing, and which types of behaviour were most appropriate to report. However, an important finding emerges here regarding differences in attitudes between officers working in rural and urban areas. The cultural differences between rural and urban police officers have been reported earlier in this book (see, for example, Terpstra, 2017) and it appears that these differences extend to perceptions of unethical behaviour. Rural officers were significantly more likely to report unethical behaviour and were more likely to view minor misdemeanours as unacceptable. One explanation forwarded for this by the authors was the tendency for rural communities to have more tightly knit police communities, for poor police behaviour in such areas to have significantly greater impact on a police officer's career and, finally, that in such environments the public were much more likely to become aware of such officer behaviours. Further findings reported in Westmarland and Rowe's paper were that officers in supervisory roles were significantly more likely to report unethical behaviours than those working in non-supervisory roles. Likewise, length of police service was also seen as exerting influence on the formal reporting of unethical police behaviours, with officers with less than five years of service being less likely to report it and officers with more than fifteen years' service being more likely to report it. As with Westmarland's (2005) paper, the authors found that there was a significant issue here in respect of police culture, which was evidenced by the fact that officers knew when a particular behaviour was unethical but often failed to formally report it.

The above findings are interesting in that they can be taken as evidence to reinforce the idea that, assuming culture is an impediment to ethical policing, it is particularly an issue of concern for those officers in the lower ranks, for those of limited length of service and for those working in urban policing environments. These tend to support the traditional ideas that we have around police culture, particular in respect of it negatively impacting the work of those officers undertaking operational work in high population communities with complex social characteristics. Whilst, at one level, such research findings are helpful, it is also worth considering the extent to which ethical issues impact in other policing roles – for example, for officers working in child protection, terrorism and, indeed, senior leadership.

Two aspects of police ethics that relate to police culture and which should be considered at this point are made clear in a paper by Sherman (1982). Despite being written over 30 years ago this paper highlights the changing balance between police ethical awareness and the traditional cultural values of the police and the challenges for ethical policing caused by complexities particular to the police role. The traditional values held by officers, according to Sherman (1982), suggest that police actions are often determined by non-legal factors such as the characteristics of the suspect and whether individuals show respect for authority. Furthermore, he states that officers also considered the use of physical force and deception as informal tools of the occupation, had a disregard for due process, were dismissive of 'social-work problems' (p.15), saw the accepting of gifts from the public (under some circumstances) as permissible and, finally, that loyalty to colleagues was a priority. Sherman (1982) acknowledges that these values have certainly become less prevalent or intense over recent years as a result of a number of factors including the growing diversity of police recruits (in respect of ethnicity, gender and

educational status), the growing focus of the media on police behaviour and the increasingly uncompromising approach of police organisations in dealing with the transgressions of their officers. Similarly, Sherman notes in respect of the US context, that traditional modes of operational policing (based on the values described above) have died out as a result of both their negative impact on community relations and the rise of litigation against police departments. That said, whilst some of the excesses of the latter end of the 20th Century may, arguably, have been curbed, the '#BlackLivesMatter' movement reminds us of the seemingly intractable nature of many of these ethical challenges.

When we turn to the second issue, the complex ethical challenges associated with the police world, Sherman again provides some valuable insights. To Sherman (1982), many of the ethical dimensions of police work are quite straightforward. For example, he notes that it would be difficult to defend any police officer engaged in the behaviour of theft. However, he continues by noting that there exist many areas where the particular characteristics of the police role would lead to the emergence of much more complex and difficult to resolve police ethical dilemmas. In particular, Sherman here refers to police use of force, the constraints of time, the presence of discretion and the impact of loyalty. We have already addressed, earlier in the book, the challenges and responsibilities that come with the appropriate exercise of police discretion. Decisions about what constitutes an appropriate degree of force may be influenced by the degree of perceived harm the recipient offers to both the officer and the public and these decisions are often made in real time and without the benefit of objective information. Indeed, it is not difficult to understand that, in the heat of a particular situation, and with very little information to hand, officers might make decisions that, with the benefit of hindsight, they might regret. Similarly, it is not difficult to understand how loyalty may serve to cloud judgement in an organisation where the inherent camaraderie of the culture can lead to both

personal loyalty based on friendship and more transactional forms of loyalty based on the rank structure. Furthermore, an added layer of complexity becomes apparent in respect of what Densten (1999, p. 46) refers to as the 'paradox of accountability' (p.46). This concept, simply put, suggests that whilst police officers are personally accountable for their decisions and behaviours the breadth of the police role means that, for many situations, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what constitutes a 'good' decision or outcome.

For Sherman, one of the key challenges here is about how we socialise police officers into thinking ethically. Whilst he acknowledges the advances to police training and education which have been put in place over recent years, he perceives that, as far back as the 1980s, that police ethics training relied too much on 'war stories', anecdotes from more experienced police officers which tended to reinforce an ethical position closely aligned to the values of the police culture rather than to 'legal and societal values' (1982, p. 16). Through this process it is quite straightforward to understand how this becomes an important social process in the cultural reproduction of the police organisation. This also appears to be reinforced by the practical advice offered to new police recruits when they leave the classroom and embark on their first experiences of street police work. Using two quotations, the first from a London police officer who served in the Metropolitan Police Service between the 1930s and the 1950s and the second, cited in Sherman's work, we can see a consistent disparagement of 'formal' learning:

"But, of course, most of the Sergeants were...well I would say...not very educated...you used to take a report in and they would look at it and they'd cross things out...So you'd say, "Well...what's that for?" They'd say, "Well...you don't want that...you don't want that"...You'd say, "Well, that's what you're taught at Peel House"...Then they'd say, "Forget all you learned

in Peel House [the former training school for the Metropolitan Police Service]. This is how you make a report" (police officer quoted in Cockcroft, 2001, p. 105)

"Forget everything they taught you in the academy, kid; I'll show you how police work is really done" (police officer quoted in Sherman, 1982, p. 13)

At this point a tension emerges. Earlier in the chapter, a case was made to suggest that there is substantial value to the experiential elements of police learning as it allows officers to fully understand the ways in which formal knowledge can be made applicable to real life situations. However, it appears that there is a case to suggest that ethical knowledge in policing may be most effectively transmitted through a more abstract method of delivery. This certainly appears to be the preference of Sherman (1982) who suggests that such an approach holds a number of benefits. First, it allows officers to reflect on these dilemmas in a more constructive way, away from the immediacy of a given situation. Second, it allows these ethical issues to be worked through away from the peer pressure exerted by colleagues. Third, and finally, such issues also need to be reflected upon away from the hierarchical pressures that can be exercised by line managers and other supervisors. In short, therefore, Sherman appears to advocate police officers having ethical knowledge prior to entering the police field.

The College of Policing's Code of Ethics tends to mirror this concern for a more abstract reading of police ethics, drawing as it does on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Principles of Public Life. Westmarland and Rowe's (2018) research has relevance here as it provides some speculation on the likely success of the Code of Ethics in the light of the findings generated by their research. In particular, they draw attention to the requirement, under the

Code of Ethics, for officers to formally report the behaviour of colleagues which fails to meet the expected requirements. This provides a substantial testing ground through which to assess the resilience of the culture in the face of such a new strategic initiative. At the same time, the authors note, the fact that there is considerable ambiguity (and a lack of guidance) surrounding what is and what is not inappropriate police behaviour may provide some challenges as the Code of Ethics is embedded into routine practice.

In conclusion, this chapter has directed our focus away from those elements of the police role which influence the cultural world of the police, to those wider forces that can be situated in the external world. Some of these, like the social change associated with late modernity are more abstract and intangible. However, others, such as the professionalisation agenda and the associated idea of ethical policing, are more directly tied to contemporary political agendas surrounding the role of the public sector and the standards of conduct which we expect from people who work in it. Central to these issues are shifting values surrounding whether the police constitute an occupation or a profession and, if it is a profession, the extent to which it should operate with relative autonomy from external forms of interference and regulation. Such matters, inescapably, draw us back to the concept of discretion, the notion that officers, invariably, possess a substantial degree of unsupervised freedom over the choices they make. Many of the tensions that we can identify surrounding the professionalisation agenda relate to a cultural battle over this concept and advocates for police reform seek to limit, control or make more transparent the use of police operational discretion.

Key Questions <2>

To what extent does rapid social change work against the idea of a strong and coherent police culture?

Reflect on the argument that police organisations need to become more professional. What kind of changes do you think are needed? Why?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of the Code of Ethics for police officers?

Further Reading <2>

Cockcroft, T. (2013) Police Culture: Themes and Concepts, London: Routledge (Chapter 4).

College of Policing (2014), Code of Ethics: A Code of Practice for the Principles and Standards of Professional Behaviour for the Policing Profession of England and Wales. London: College of Policing.

Westmarland, L. and Rowe, M. (2018) 'Police ethics and integrity: can a new code overturn the blue code?', Policing and Society, 28(7): 854-870.