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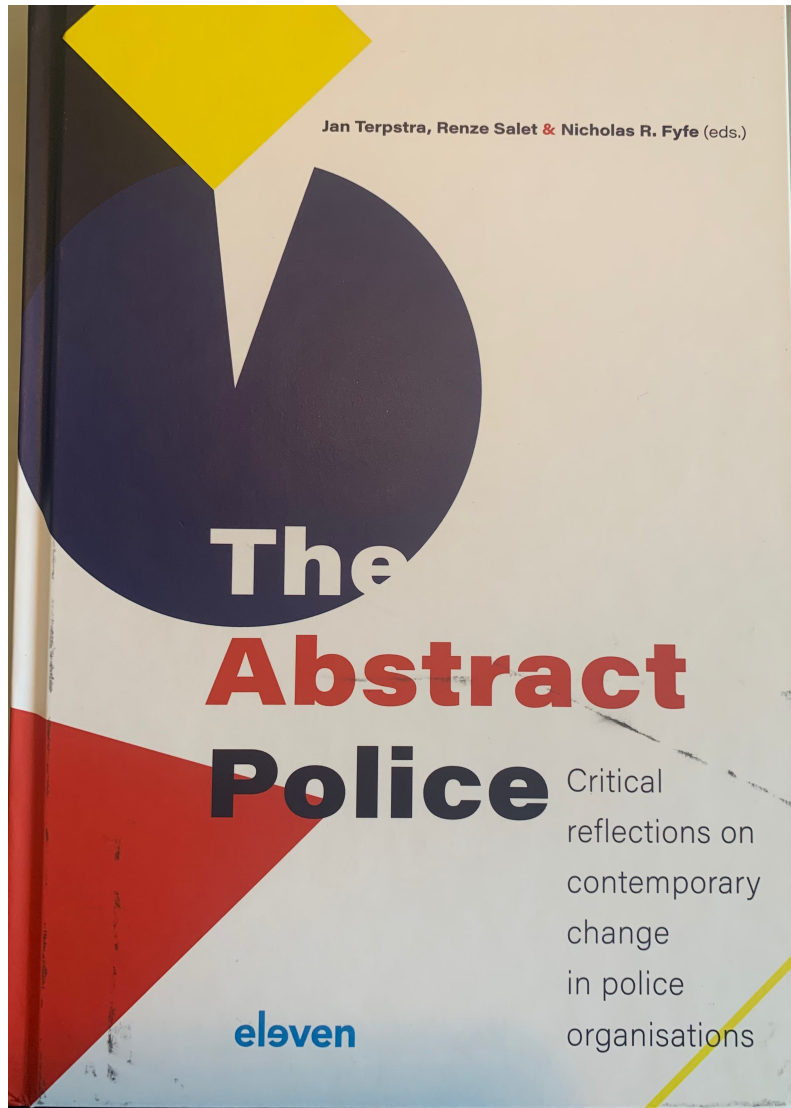
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3. Abstract Police Between Organisational and Occupational Professionalism: Contemporary Contradictions in British Police Forces

Tom Cockcroft & Jacques de Maillard

Introduction

To understand contemporary changes to the context, processes and cultures of policing one needs to comprehend the extent to which these are all bound up within wider questions of how control is exerted on police organisations. Furthermore, such elements of control are not linear, explicit and necessarily transparent, but applied through broader elements of the firmament within which policing operates. Accordingly, political and fiscal considerations emanate from the public sector's relationship with the state to create a situation where control (and the rhetoric of control) is applied both covertly and overtly. Furthermore, control is applied less directly through the concerns and expectations of the public, not least in respect of how police legitimacy is constructed through their experiences and expectations. At the same time, the pushes and pulls of late modernity, in turn, not only create new opportunities for policing to extend its sphere of operations but also leads to the imposition of some restrictions to what the police can do. In short, the already complex occupation/profession of policing finds itself at the centre of a number of competing and shifting dynamics, driven by an array of policies and social changes against a backdrop of organisational, political and financial precariousness. While the interplay of such diverse challenges provides a fertile backdrop within which to derive academic insight, this chapter will focus on one, admittedly broad, dynamic – that of the emergence of organisational, as opposed to occupational, dynamics and their relationship to contemporary policing contexts. By this we refer to the waning influence of informal occupational (or role-based) values (often equated with police occupational culture) and the ascendancy of values that reinforce and support more formal organisational aspirations such as those aligned to thresholds of quality of service and stakeholder participation and engagement. These trends are very much in line with what the concept of Abstract Police (Terpstra et al., 2019) has emphasised, i.e. a logic combining centralisation (based on the ramping up of central directives at the expense of local knowledge), complexification (fragmentation and specialisation, making access to police organisations more difficult) and dehumanisation of police organisations (prioritising procedures and technology and recasting the user as a technologised consumer). This chapter begins by providing some contextual background to the processes being explored, before reporting on the findings of research conducted in two English police forces. Finally, the themes that emerge in the literature and the findings are discussed in a context that explores the synergies with the concept of Abstract Police. In particular, we focus on those areas where we believe the concept of the Abstract Police can expand our knowledge of policing.

The Reconfiguration of Public Sector and State Relations

It is important to step back, for a moment, and consider a key issue here. Many of the processes and their resultant challenges affect the wider public sector and not just the police. For example, recent decades have allowed us to identify a pronounced shift towards the institutional isomorphism identified by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) that gives a normative steer to the characteristics, processes, values and norms of organisations owing to the convergence of influences of professional bodies and training networks. In this way, different public sector institutions see similarities emerge between themselves as a result of the growing influence of generic (and institution-bridging) norms and expectations that are managerialist in nature. These broad skill sets and orientations, it can be argued, fulfil a distinct contemporary purpose. In recent years, public sector organisations have increasingly been challenged by an integral

tension between occupational skills, knowledges and roles (those elements that might pertain to 'professionalism') and broader pragmatic necessities (those elements that pertain to 'managerialism'). Recent years have seen a partial resolution of these two paradigms with the emergence of 'hybrid' professionalism (Noordegraaf, 2015), where managerial considerations are increasingly seen as inherent elements of the professional role. Since the advent of the 'managerial state' (Clarke & Newman, 1997), therefore, this 'hybrid' professionalism has represented a merging of the professional and the managerial spheres across the public sector.

Moreover, it should be noted that this development, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), is not explicitly forced on organisations. Rather, it presents itself as a rational strategic choice in a new socio-economic context where political considerations lead to ongoing concerns of institutional and professional legitimacy. As a result, 'professionalism' begins to extend beyond its traditional remit of role-based competencies, skills and knowledge to encompass the more managerial concerns of "rationalizing and innovating production" (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011: 97) and that place, centre stage, the need for organisations to remain credible in the eyes of the state and legitimate in the eyes of the public. As a result of this merging of managerial concerns into the professional role, according to Cockcroft (2019b), traditional work roles expand to encompass new elements such as, for example, the recording, analysis and presentation of operational data. This process has been articulated by Terpstra et al. (2019: 350), and others, as an evolution from "street-level bureaucracy", via "screen-level bureaucracy" to "system-level bureaucracy". While we would not wish to assume that the processes of abstraction articulated by Terpstra et al. (2019) automatically correlate seamlessly with those of professionalisation, we recognise that distinct synergies are identifiable. In particular, we would suggest that these shifting modes of bureaucracy allow, as Chan (2001) has previously suggested, for information technology integration to evidence accountability and transparency in ways that might facilitate meaningful engagement with stakeholder groups and other agencies. As a result of such processes, however, we can see a reduction in the capacity for informal and unrecorded interaction with members of the public at the granular level. This not only reinforces the concept of abstraction but also speaks directly to the level of organisational control being asserted under present arrangements.

To draw back again to the broader backdrop or context of social change, neoliberalism creates a pull away from the traditional post-War social democratic consensus and a fundamental reorientation of the state to its public sector institutions that deliver key services to the public. In doing so, new pressures are brought to bear within the public sector that public sector workers have to navigate. In particular, according to Cockcroft (2019b), police have to simultaneously strive to position themselves in a way that presents them as credible in the eyes of the state while simultaneously seeking to engage with the public in a way that makes them appear legitimate. The emergence of such changes has ramifications for all public sector institutions and encourages broadly similar responses from these to navigate these novel pressures. We can, as a result, identify an increasing similarity of core elements of professional roles across these institutions as they broaden to incorporate technical elements that go beyond primary service delivery. For police these include such elements as the development of partnership work with agencies within, and beyond, the policing sector, to increasing stakeholder engagement initiatives and to strategically respond to budgetary limitations (Noordegraaf, 2015). A central feature of such sector-spanning changes, according to Canel and Luoma-aho (2018), are changes to the nature of citizenship, in general, that impact public sector bodies in similar ways. In particular, they identify four broad areas of change – the demands and expectations of citizens, changes to citizens' communication practices, the growing diversity of citizens and new citizen roles. Taking the second of these, citizens' communication practices, it is straightforward to see how "citizen-centered engagement" (2018: 6) is forcing changes in communicative practice across the public sector – and how initiatives

related to this concept will impact practitioners at all levels of an institution. Additionally, the changes identified previously, for example, in respect of citizens' expectations (of, in this case, security) resonate broadly with the processes of abstraction identified by Terpstra et al. (2019), not least in terms of the potential future impact on police relationships with citizens.

Integral to our understanding of the increasing abstraction of policing, and the application of greater levels of control, is the shift from occupational to organisational dynamics. A look at police organisation over the last four decades reveals a perceivable change to the ways in which control is exerted on the police. This is driven by pressures external to the police and takes a range of forms, from those with a legal character to those that reduce the scope of operations through budgetary tightening. Many accounts might take, in the context of England and Wales, at least, the 1980s as the starting point of such processes – whether they refer to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984 or the somewhat infamous Home Office Circular 114/83 (Manpower, Effectiveness and Efficiency in the Police Service), circulated in 1983, which heralded the incoming mantra of 'value for effectiveness' within police work.

Furthermore, this process has been very reliant on the narrative of occupational culture (and the negative connotations that accompany it) and the leverage it provides in terms of policy, strategic and practice responses (see, for example, Cockcroft, 2019a). It is the rise of hybrid professionalism that has allowed for the 'traditional' occupational values to become openly criticised by elite voices within organisations.

Two case studies illustrate the thesis that the traditional police role has been abstracted by these processes. The first is the rise of the new professionalisation agenda, which crystallises the dominance of organisational values, while the second is the transformation of ordinary investigation, which reveals the increased monitoring of activities within police agencies.

Education, the New Professionalisation Agenda and the Dominance of Organisational/Managerial Values

Entwined within these processes, there has been a growing trend towards professionalisation agendas within policing and in the wider public sector. These should be positioned, and understood, as the ways in which the wider tensions (outlined earlier) become resolved at a lower level, within the context of the profession itself. The contradictions inherent to many recent professionalisation agendas (especially those related to the 'new' professions of the public sector) have previously been identified within the work of scholars such as Evetts (2013) and Fournier (1999). When we adopt a narrower focus on the context of policing and police work we can identify the ways in which a range of strategies and developments, all positioned under the term of 'police professionalism', have been introduced to respond to these growing needs to enhance institutional credibility and legitimacy, by strengthening the organisational dynamic at the expense of the occupational.

To begin with, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the capriciousness of the concept of professionalism within the police context. The work of Sklansky (2014), for example, shows how the term police professionalism has been used to denote a variety of connected processes – the enhancement of the quality of police work, the exercising of autonomy to remove the police from scrutiny by external bodies, the strengthening of the relationship between practice and evidence, the development of an accepted body of professional 'expert' knowledge and, finally, the reduction in transactional work relationships and the subsequent internalisation of 'professional' norms and values.

To further complicate these matters, and one that strikes at the heart of this chapter, is the issue of control. In particular, we must concern ourselves with the issue of whether or not police organisations have the power to control how they respond to the configurations of the world they now inhabit. We must, therefore, explore the ways in which control is asserted and the extent to which the police are complicit partners in such processes. This distinction is

important as it allows us to resolve the evident challenges of understanding this apparently confusing convergence of opportunities and restrictions occasioned by the increasingly neoliberalised context of the contemporary public sector. The identification of two ideologically and operationally distinct sets of power bases, the occupational and the organisational, militate against our adoption of a simplistic understanding of the ways in which policing has accommodated contemporary social change. Put simply, there is not one policing position. As we can see from a range of work (Reuss-Ianni & Ianni, 1983), policing, when seen through either an organisational or an occupational lens, presents different aims, values and narratives. Occupational narratives generally follow the informal values articulated through the cultural orientation of police officers working in public-facing positions and calling for discretionary-based judgement to be made in an unpredictable environment. Organisational narratives, conversely, tend to follow more corporate articulations of a police organisation's work often based on explicitly presented standards of service and their underlying formal values. In short, the occupational perspective is informal, relates to those employed as police officers and serves as both a guide to action and, according to Waddington (1999), a palliative through which to deal with the rigours of the job. The organisational perspective, however, represents a more outward-facing set of values than the occupational. By this is meant that the traditional occupational outlook adopted by police officers is generally a response to the challenges they perceive within their working environment. One example of this is Skolnick's notion of the 'symbolic assailant' (1994: 44), whereby a culturally derived construct is created that provides officers with a guide to navigating the physical dangers that they will encounter in their working lives. Organisational cultures, however, are focused on less operational concerns. They exist as a means by which to guide the organisation, and not merely the individual, in charting a successful course through the obstacles that they face. For the organisation, these challenges largely relate to ensuring that they are perceived as operating efficiently and legitimately by the state and the public, respectively.

An example of one such organisational narrative is the College of Policing's Leadership Review of 2015, which noted a range of contemporary challenges spanning deficits of both legitimacy and finance coupled with a backdrop of "new social, economic and political realities" (College of Policing, 2015: 5). The result of this was to, once again, explicitly highlight a narrative predicated on negative influence of occupational culture on the ability of police organisations to deliver an effective service, with the College of Policing going so far as to suggest that police culture could "impede change, prevent internal challenge, restrict innovation and, at worst, damage individual and institutional legitimacy" (p. 17). This narrative of a public sector service, held back by an unwieldy occupational culture that resists innovation or reform, has come to resemble a folk devil to those concerned with "rationalizing and innovating production" (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011: 97). In other words, it can be argued that the term 'police culture', as it has been presented within policy debates over recent decades, is largely used for its symbolic power to leverage change rather than its ability to explain the shortcomings of police organisations.

Against this complex backdrop such binary differentiations are problematic. To return to the idea of a power struggle between operational police cultures at the occupational level and leadership police cultures conceived of at the organisational level, it is of course too straightforward to conceive of the processes that we describe as being reduced to a conflict between police leaders and a street officer culture. First, police leaders are generally, consciously or otherwise, steeped in the street officer culture that they seek to control. Second, the assumptions that underpin the values and actions of those in leadership positions are as culturally constructed and supported as those of their colleagues in the lower ranks. In this way, the College of Policing's (2015) comments about the negative attributes are misleading. Rather than seeking to minimise the operational impact of the culture of the police, it could be argued

that theirs is merely an attempt to supplant existing values with ones more closely aligned with those of the higher ranks.

It is possible to view the increasing ascendancy of the organisation over the occupation in terms of the attempts, not least by the College of Policing, to shape the prevailing cultural characteristics of policing. And while it might be tempting to view this aspiration as idealised within the notion that leadership values are transmitted from higher to lower organisational levels via a 'trickle down' model (see Mayer et al., 2009), we should exercise caution in this regard. As we have already described, the challenge to the primacy of occupational ways of thinking goes beyond the gentle dictates of, for example, transformational leadership (see Cockcroft, 2014). For example, the *Code of Ethics* (2014: 15) states that

According to this standard you must never ignore unethical or unprofessional behaviour by a policing colleague, irrespective of the person's rank, grade or role ... You have a positive obligation to question the conduct of colleagues that you believe falls below the expected standards and, if necessary, challenge, report or take action against such conduct

As a means of tackling the assumed camaraderie and solidarity of the police, this measure can be seen as a pivotal moment in the assertion of the organisation over the occupation. By moving beyond mere requests for officers to 'do the right thing' and formally obliging them to act we can identify a more concerted approach by the upper ranks to bring the lower ranks under control. This corresponds closely with Fournier's assertion that "disciplinary logic" (1999: 288) is increasingly being used to limit the discretion available to practitioners within non-traditional professions. Furthermore, we can identify here Noordegraaf's (2015) 'hybrid' professionalism in action, through the process of ensuring that occupational practices are encouraged to accommodate the needs of the organisation. This can be seen to have been initiated in a variety of ways in policing. One approach has been to limit the ways in which officers use their discretion (for example, through performance measurement regimes) or, at least, to ensure that it is exercised through accepted parameters. Likewise, as the work of Butterfield et al. (2005) indicates, another means of achieving this is to ensure that practice and management become amalgamated within key organisational roles. For example, the advent of the sergeant as a 'practitioner manager' not only articulates management responsibility at a relatively low level of the rank structure but also serves to reinforce the emerging discourse of management being a central theme of all police roles (see Grint & Thornton, 2015). Furthermore, while a code of ethics might be viewed as a tenet of professionalism, as we have already noted, it makes clear demands on officers in respect of their behaviour and that of their colleagues. In such ways, we can see how the needs of the organisation are increasingly being met by changing the structural and cultural conditions of those who work within it.

Increased Monitoring and Internal Negotiations in British Police Organisations

Beyond rules organising traditionally investigative work (such as standard operating procedures and other bureaucratic constraints), a range of organisational changes have been introduced over time aimed at strengthening the organisational control over officers' activity, which are very much in line with the Abstract Police interpretation. The orientations concerning the treatment of victims is a case in point, as it illustrates how this priority has been subjected to increased organisational control. However, despite the apparent rigidity of guidance, the performance framework leaves potential leeway for negotiation, interpretation and even forms of resistance within the police organisation (see also de Maillard & Savage, 2021).¹

¹ This part is based on empirical research on police performance management in two police forces in England (a large metropolitan force and a county force). The research was conducted primarily through a programme of 66 semi-structured interviews divided almost equally between the two forces.

Monitoring and Control

In the two forces studied, there existed complex schemes of performance indicators, automated performance monitoring and regular performance evaluation sessions that increased the reach of organisational control on detectives.

The first mechanism was through numerical performance targets (or 'objectives'). Investigative units and even individual officers were assigned to specific numbers of cases to manage and levels of detection to be achieved. Some middle managers were particularly inclined to set objectives for their units and investigators, arguing that "it holds people to account ... that does inject a little healthy competition." (Detective chief inspector, urban force). The use of quantified targets was particularly intensive when it came to actions with strong visibility, like the 'big wing days' (named after the Battle of Britain), which were high-profile, force-wide, normally single-day operations to target specific crime areas (for example, drugs, traffic offences and so on). To ensure that instructions were followed, police districts were asked not merely to perform a specified number of checks but to achieve a certain level of 'successful' checks, that is to say, resulting in a fine and/or seizure of a vehicle. In other words, performance targets were about both activities and outcomes of those activities.

In addition to target setting, professional discretion was also controlled through close, detailed and focused activity monitoring by supervisors and middle managers throughout the police organisational hierarchy. In the county force, a sergeant, with fifteen years of experience, stated that:

The responsibility now is to manage more closely to make sure that investigations are being pursued effectively by the officers. That if there are delays, why isn't a reason for those delays recorded? That the victim is fully updated and informed of what is happening and where have these victims contracted agreements which should be agreed between the officer and the victim when they attend incidents. (Police sergeant, county force)

These forms of control could relate to the very content of the interaction with the victims. Not only should the investigation include regular periodic communications with victims, known as 'secondary investigations', on the status of the investigation (after 7 days, after 28 days, after 3 months), but also a more senior officer (at least of the level of detective inspector) was responsible for recalling victims to ensure compliance with standards. This points to very regular monitoring of the various tasks to be performed by professional actors, with timelines set down and specific rules to be followed. Much of this monitoring was conducted automatically by computer systems. Such system-driven activity provides potentially substantial challenges for police legitimacy in line with the Abstract Police reading: these regular periodic communications imply pre-prescribed levels of organisational contact with victims, rather than allow those officers involved in the case to use professional judgement to assess individual need.

Thirdly, performance monitoring was also integrated into regular performance review events conducted at various levels within the police hierarchy. In the forces being studied, three levels of follow-up meetings over specific periods reflected this temporally: a monthly meeting at force-wide level, where the respective performances of the different areas and districts were discussed; a weekly or bimonthly district meeting where major crime trends, levels of activity of units and available information on series of crimes were discussed; and a daily meeting (daily management meeting) where the criminal activity of the last 24 hours was reviewed. At this latter meeting, heads of units could be asked about each criminal case dealt with by their unit:

Heads of units must individually justify the decisions their detectives have made (whether to search or not, whether to put in police custody or not, etc.).... If the discussion is about individual cases, the quantitative objectives set in the borough are

clearly recalled in the different slides that introduce the meeting. (Field notes, urban force)

This excerpt from our field notes draws attention to the fact that a more detailed and time-bound follow-up also implies another way of rendering accounts, where managerial accountability is combined with individual case tracking.

Generally speaking, managerial accountability is reflected in the fact that officers at each level of the hierarchy are accountable to their superiors. This accountability is at its greatest at the level of the heads of departments who have a transversal territorial responsibility (i.e. inclusive of investigation and uniformed units). This accountability was positioned within the framework of forums (known variously as 'force performance groups' or 'CrimeFighters') in which members of the management team questioned, in quite remarkable detail, police activities in individual districts (see Willis et al., 2007), particularly when the performance statistics were seen as inadequate. Force-level monitoring events then had a cascading logic: district commanders transferred these pressures on performance at their command level down to individual investigatory units as a means, ultimately, of easing those pressures on themselves. The control of information was a central issue: it was a question of knowing exactly how and why the crime was committed and how it was handled by the unit in charge. In other words, the diffusion of systems of information combined with neomanagerial orientations leads to the restriction of the autonomy that detectives traditionally enjoyed. Such developments can be viewed as significant in that they show how the process of abstraction occurs in parallel with a fundamental shift away from the position, originally articulated by Wilson (1968), that views police discretion residing in greatest degree among those at the bottom of the police hierarchy.

Organisational patterns can be identified: standardised procedures rather than professional self-determination; hierarchical control through the managerialist prism over professional autonomy; and pressures to comply with numerical performance targets rather than other professional obligations. A dual process is at work: more activities are measured and they are measured more systematically. Rules, procedures and routine monitoring in this case required specified levels of communication with victims that investigators are expected to attain.

These current trends within British policing fit with the distinction made by Evetts (2011: 334) between organisational professionalism and occupational professionalism. In the context of the profession of police investigator, the classic figure of the detective, which Peter Manning (1979) calls the 'super-investigator', autonomous in the handling of the case in question in terms of how to open it, progress it and, if necessary, close it, is threatened. Trust in professional groupings is being eroded, and procedures around victim assistance are a good example of this process. This highlights the propensity for abstract and systems-driven policing to impact legitimacy by reducing the discretionary opportunities for officers to provide solutions to problems presented to them by the public.

Concern for Victims and Organisational Control

Successive reforms have greatly enhanced the status of victims within the criminal justice system (Walklate, 2007) and placed them more centrally in respect of the investigative process. The performance regime served to reinforce this reorientation through guidelines, performance indicators, targets and routinised monitoring of investigative activities. Obligated to inform victims systematically about the progress of the investigation, investigators were also required to justify, on a regular basis, all the decisions that she/he made.

At the time of the study, satisfaction surveys were a legal requirement for all English and Welsh police forces. They required a sample of people who have come into contact with the police to be asked, independently, how they were treated via a standardised questionnaire separating out overall satisfaction, ease of initial contact, treatment by police officers, actions

taken by police officers, and the follow-up of their case. The answers to these questions produced a performance indicator that was monitored across the different boroughs. Since the 2000s, the urban force has also devised its own survey focused on public expectations and perceptions ('Public Attitudes Survey') completed by 12,000 residents each year, with a sample of 3,000 people questioned every trimester on a rolling basis (Stanko, 2017). As with crime, boroughs are ranked according to levels of confidence and satisfaction. Taking the latter as an example, it is measured monthly at the level of the borough for members of the public who have had contact with the police, and the level of satisfaction is then compared with the target and the urban force's average with a series of graphs comparing respective performances. Satisfaction is evaluated by separating its different components (ease of initial contact, treatment, police actions and follow-up). The analysis, produced by the local borough analyst, consists of identifying areas that require particular attention: from updating the website or the competence of the team in charge of reception to the rules about handing out visiting cards to victims or accurately recording victim data in the computer system.

The choice of these performance indicators, and their institutionalisation in the urban force's monitoring systems, reveals a broader conception of policing that is based not only on crime reduction evaluated as a function of internal indicators but also on police-community relationships. Neither political actors nor police managers challenge the use of these indicators: in the early 2000s, police officers expressed reservations about taking into account the opinions of citizens whom they considered insufficiently informed (Stanko, 2017), but this reticence has since disappeared. In the different boroughs, an exacting automated system has been set up to ensure the quality of victim follow-up (de Maillard & Savage, 2018). Dedicated software flags up crime records whenever officers in charge of an investigation fail to provide victims with timely updates. Moreover, supervisors are expected to double-check that the officers in charge of an investigation have done their work properly by personally calling victims.

The pursuit of confidence and satisfaction targets has led to heightened control over police officers' work, suggesting a dual internal logic. On the one hand, the urban police sets satisfaction and confidence as organisational targets, making a point of not simply focusing on fighting crime; on the other, implementing this priority leads to greater and tighter control over what officers do, which some consider 'stifling' and of little use ("what's the point in updating victims regularly if we have nothing new to tell them?"), said an inspector.

In other words, the pursuit of procedural justice objectives were led at a certain distance from organisational justice principles: police managers have attempted to update the 'policing by consent' model, making confidence and satisfaction key priorities, through a logic of greater organisational control. A key outcome of applying such organisational control is to transform such priorities into anonymised and abstracted quantitative aggregates that serve to undermine the 'service' elements of police work by removing them from the context of traditional understandings of policing.

Negotiation and Making Sense of Performance Indicators

We have thus far highlighted the processes leading to an increased organisational control over professional values. However, despite its seeming rigidity, the performance regime allows room for manoeuvre. Depending on the forms of work in question or the status of the organisational unit involved, middle managers have degrees of professional space to interpret organisational performance priorities, thus acting as 'filters' rather than simply communicators of such priorities. Not all police managers and supervisors appear to take the position of simple 'transmitter' of performance pressures; some of them, at least, are prepared to act as a sort of 'buffer' for the pressures coming down the line. Some middle managers and supervisors took a position where they would 'soak up' the pressure coming from above. Two dimensions may be

underscored: the time frames involved and the extent to which they can be manipulated, and the managerial narratives available to 'translate' quantified performance indicators.

While time pressures oriented to the attainment of results in the short term are part and parcel of the police performance regime, degrees of accommodation are evident in some cases of middle management such that time scales for demonstrable improvements in 'results' can be negotiated in the direction of more relaxed time scales. The capacity to win 'breathing space' in terms of negotiating more relaxed time frames may depend on the force of personality and negotiation skills of the middle manager concerned. In the county force, two examples of these negotiations and interpretations by middle managers can be given. A superintendent under pressure for rapid improvement in results developed several tactics to relax the burden. He started by negotiating with his superiors for a delay:

One of the first things I said, 'you have got to give a hundred days to get my head round'. I have never commanded a district before. It was one of the first ways to keep them at bay. Give me three months and I will tell what the priorities are, and I will have a plan.

He then achieved some short-term outcomes by targeting 'low hanging fruits' – more easily attainable results (for example, by strengthening the teams that dealt more specifically with crimes such as vehicle crimes in line with organisational objectives). Having bought time, he then initiated more extensive improvements in the performance he was under pressure to deliver. This reminds us of a perennial issue that emerges when systems are introduced into police organisations with the aim of directing officers' activities or limiting their scope from using professional judgement. Put simply, one of the unintended consequences of such systems is to provide opportunities for some officers to attempt to cynically 'play the system' (see Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009), where police managers play the rules of the organisational game at the expense of service delivery and professional working. This is significant in that it evidences the growing abstraction of officers from their organisation as their scope for working professionally is eroded. Another chief superintendent mentioned that he was assessed on the basis of six performance indicators (relating to crime rate, detection rate, the management of his team and value for money). He had to reach four out of six targets to be considered 'successful' but could introduce his own priorities (in his case victim satisfaction). In some cases, at least, middle managers operate to interpret and shape the performance agenda and not just routinely 'pass it down the line' to the front line. They may act as 'buffer zones' to partly mitigate the full force of the regime they operate within. However, as those two examples remind us, organisational autonomy may exist, but it is conditioned by a focus on targets that, as mentioned previously, are abstract for police officers and may appear arbitrary.

In line with our case that the police performance agenda should be seen as one that is highly impactful but nevertheless one mediated by professional agency, we would point to the extent to which the narratives and discourses employed by police middle managers and supervisors may vary significantly. More particularly, police professionals appeared prepared to challenge and even partially resist the ethos of the managerial agenda. For example, several middle managers insisted on the limited use they made of quantitative indicators in their workforce management. An alternative narrative employed in one case was to contrast 'hard data' with the 'human stories' behind their work. This narrative applied in this interview to victim satisfaction, a dimension of police regularly measured and used to monitor police activity. Of interest here is the apparent potential for resistance against these processes of abstraction, although it is hard to tell at this point how successful these strategies will be and, if so, under what conditions.

I very rarely quoted figures [victim satisfaction statistics] to my staff ... I tended to use a human story for an example ... For instance, victim satisfaction, we did really a big focus on that, understanding what it is, what the victim wants, some deep

sampling, some coaching, we have seen huge improvement, I would tend to build some human stories, with a victim that phoned me, an officer has done that, and we have built trust ... I tried to build human stories. (Superintendent, county force)

This narrative reveals a concern to avoid pressurising staff under their command with hard performance data but rather to encourage a more reflective approach that seeks to look 'behind' the figures. In turn, this involves a claim that such data are a starting point for a management and front-line response and not the essence of that response. We would interpret this as an example of 'occupational professionalism' expressing itself when faced with the 'organisational professionalism' inherent in the police performance regime. Importantly, it indicates levels of professional space available even within seemingly rigid performance agendas, an observation that reflects Chan's (1997) observation that police organisations, for all their apparent hierarchy and control, mask a variety of informal behaviours. In this contested space between the two (apparently unresolvable) positions of the organisational and the occupational, we find the cause of unintended consequences.

We can illustrate this further with examples of the orientations of front-line supervisors to the value they place on quantified performance indicators. Some can absorb the pressure of the results to be achieved, moderating the effects of a performance regime that they may deem too restrictive, while others openly recognise that they are more oriented towards achieving quantified results. Commenting on a fellow sergeant, one interviewee stated: "She's not worried about figures. She always moans at me because I'm worried about figures" (Police sergeant, county force). Another reflected that:

I mean for example some sergeants are very keen on the figures and targets and they'll put pressure on to achieve those even if potentially the offences we're investigating aren't mostly serious. And other sergeants would be more, you know; don't worry about the targets for the moment, crack on with this investigation. (Detective constable, county force)

In part, this reflects a wider dilemma faced by sergeants who sit at the fulcrum between organisational imperatives coming from the police hierarchy and supporting the officers directly under their supervision, as captured well by Dominique Monjardet when articulating on the role of the French brigadier (equivalent to the English sergeant): "Faced with the rule of impersonal nature and general (valid at all times and in all places), he must deal with the singularity of persons and conjunctures of which it is largely dependent" (Monjardet, 1996: 87).

More generally, in the words of Noordegraaf (2015: 192), one could speak of "managed professionalism":

Professional work becomes a matter of combining professional and managerial principles, which do not so much create 'controlled professionalism' but more ambivalent, balanced, and subtle forms of 'managed professionalism' – professional action is positioned within managed and organized surroundings that both respect and restrain professional spaces.

Discussion and Conclusion

A challenge here is to understand how best to articulate these processes that we are witnessing. In particular, a question of fundamental importance here is of the extent to which these challenges to the informal occupational culture by the formal organisational culture can be viewed as the central strand to such professionalisation agendas or whether traditional and reactionary cultural values are nothing more than the accumulated detritus of a bygone age to be replaced by the new opportunities offered by elevation to a fully fledged profession. In other words, we can choose to view professionalism as either the imposition of organisational values at the expense of occupational decision-making or, conversely, as a means of empowering police professionals to reject the cultural barriers to effective workplace practice. Either way,

the tension between the two positions provides fertile ground for the increasing abstraction of police work. As we have already noted, we believe that this process of abstraction, through its decontextualisation of traditional police-public relations, will continue to have further negative impacts on police legitimacy.

As with all questions of this complexity, there are probably multiple responses. For this, however, we will pick just two. If we draw on the work of Sklansky (2014), mentioned previously, we can explain police professionalisation in a variety of overlapping ways. It can be viewed as a way of enhancing the practice and skills of police officers, a means of avoiding excessive scrutiny from external audiences, an articulation of an evidential (rather than experiential) knowledge base and, finally, as a way of showing that behaviours are driven by internalised norms as opposed to transactional relationships between workers and their managers. These, Sklansky (2014) points out, are not mutually exclusive categories of purpose and, furthermore, point to professionalisation as being a process whereby an occupation becomes increasingly autonomous while, simultaneously, driving up the capacity of officers to deliver higher quality service. As we have previously seen, professionalisation can also be viewed through a different lens as a process through which legitimacy and credibility might be accrued regardless of any changes to the level of knowledge and/or professionalism being displayed by individual officers. As a result, we should not overlook the potential for professionalisation to be cast as (a) a rhetorical device, as opposed to a pragmatic policy, and (b) a device to be used to enhance the symbolic credibility of the police regardless of the impact on actual police practices. If professionalisation is used in this way, we would argue that it becomes a key means by which abstraction is achieved, not least because it simultaneously ramps up public expectations of police service while failing to equip officers with the necessary skills to meet this demand. In turn, this would lead to greater reliance on systems to direct officer engagement with the public.

The data presented within this chapter serves to outline not just the pressures to appear 'efficient' (by evidencing 'results') but also the need to appear 'legitimate' (by appearing responsive to the needs of the public, especially those who have been victimised). At the same time, it highlights, intriguingly, the liminal space where organisational pressures meet occupational resistance, by identifying the ways in which middle managers 'manage' the tensions of this combination of dynamics. This space, previously noted by Monjardet (1996), remains of crucial importance, representing as it does, the continued conflict between these elements.

To conclude this part of the discussion, it might be of some use to briefly outline the ways in which these changes get played out at the level of individual officers. After all, for all this talk of social change, new political philosophies and the cultures of both organisations and occupations, policing remains, at present, a role that we traditionally perceive to be, at one level, about people. Discretion, and the reining in on the use of discretion, is central to the recent history of British policing and is often viewed as a component of the professionalisation process. As might be expected, given the complexities outlined in the earlier sections of this chapter, responses are not uniform. The advent of New Public Management provoked a mixture of responses with one piece of research, which focused on the impact of a police performance measurement regime (Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009), reporting that responses ranged from compliance to gaming the system to outright rejection. At the same time, we have, however, seen research and commentary over recent years that has identified risk aversion as a common challenge for police organisations (see Flanagan, 2008; Heaton, 2010) as officers increasingly find it difficult to reconcile the laws that support their powers, the discretion of their role and the demands of their operational field. Whether this can be viewed as proof that professionalisation has occurred, or otherwise, is problematic and largely reflects the semantic dilemma of what constitutes professionalisation. In all probability, this challenge of what

constitutes professionalisation takes us back to the entrenched tension between the organisational and occupational viewpoints, which, as we have previously noted, helps to sustain these processes of abstraction.

In light of the above discussion, it would be logical now to explore its wider relevance to the concept of Abstract Police as we can identify a number of explicit synergies between our work and this concept. At its broadest level, we can view these processes of abstraction as very much signifying a decrease in the occupational autonomy of policing previously identified through traditional cultural markers such as the symbolic power of discretion, the informal communicative forum of the 'canteen' and the low level of supervisory oversight of officer practice. In its place, we have seen the imposition of greater organisational control as we move towards processes associated with Abstract Police. Furthermore, the processes through which abstraction is achieved (for example, targets and transactionally enforced procedures) are themselves abstract and arbitrary. We are reminded here of the observations of Reiner (1998) that such impositions of control on policing tend to be driven by a focus on processes rather than outcomes, a tradition that appears to be replicated (or extended) through the decontextualising processes associated with Abstract Police.

Simultaneously, we believe that this chapter allows us to perhaps provide some context towards a greater understanding of how the idea of Abstract Police relates to broader areas of policing such as legitimacy, accountability and professionalisation. Taking legitimacy and accountability first, we believe that the concept of the Abstract Police allows us to understand the ways in which police organisations orientate themselves to the dual challenges of achieving legitimacy in the eyes of the public and remaining accountable, not least in a financial sense, to the state. Most markedly, we see this process in the move to centralised and systems-driven engagement with the public, which facilitates not only the the generation of data but also keeps the public at a greater distance than was previously the case. Here, abstraction leads to delegitimisation through the creation of generic requirements of action rather than those based on individual need. This feeds directly into professionalisation agendas that are associated with decreases in practitioner discretion and professional freedom. Such developments might be considered 'desirable' within a system that seeks to minimise risks to institutional reputation. Furthermore, when professionalisation is used as a blunt tool through which to generate external credibility (and not to upskill practitioners), further abstraction will inevitably follow. Our findings on the growing formalisation of communication with victims demonstrate how exchanges become systems driven rather than a result of practitioner decision-making. In the process, this disempowers the lower ranking practitioner while bolstering a remote system from which data can be drawn to shape claims to evidence that practices are both legitimate and accountable. In doing so, the long-acknowledged power that resided in the lower ranks is driven further up the hierarchy. As a result, we believe that there remains great potential for the concept of Abstract Police to provide a means of furthering our understanding of a range of issues germane to 21st century policing. Central here, we believe, is the tension between organisational and occupational power (in effect a binary between organisational control and officer discretion), and it is this dynamic through which we can establish the ontological basis for the Abstract Police. Furthermore, this tension has substantial repercussions for our understanding of legitimacy and, as a consequence, accountability.

There are also three areas where we believe that the concept of *Abstract Police* requires a greater degree of clarity. First, at the micro level, the evidence presented in this chapter largely supports the idea that processes of abstraction are occurring. What is also of interest, however, is that the evidence suggests that it is possible to push against these processes of abstraction. While cognisant of Terpstra et al.'s claim (2019) that the idea of Abstract Police should be considered as an ideal type rather than as a predictive model as such, it would be helpful to develop some form of framework that will allow us to understand those spaces where resistance

is possible or where these processes of abstraction have, thus far, failed to permeate. Second, there remains an issue of understanding the extent to which these processes of abstraction pertain just to policing or also to other public sector institutions. Certainly, the work of writers such as Noordegraaf would suggest that these processes are a result of the reconfiguration of the public sector and the advent of public sector professionalisation agendas. Further work could focus on understanding the extent to which these processes converge or diverge between different elements of the public sector. Third, and finally, many of the processes described under the concept of the Abstract Police appear to parallel those associated with late modernity. We believe, therefore, that greater clarity of the distinction between 'late modern policing' and 'Abstract Police' would be a helpful first step in developing the theoretical base of policing studies.

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