

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Rowe, Michael (2023) Visible Policing: Uniforms and the (Re)Construction of Police Occupational Identity. Policing and Society, 33 (2). pp. 222-237. ISSN 1043-9463

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2096608>
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2096608>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/49501/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary



Visible policing: uniforms and the (re)construction of police occupational identity

Michael Rowe, Matthew Jones, Andrew Millie & Liam Ralph

To cite this article: Michael Rowe, Matthew Jones, Andrew Millie & Liam Ralph (2023) Visible policing: uniforms and the (re)construction of police occupational identity, *Policing and Society*, 33:2, 222-237, DOI: [10.1080/10439463.2022.2096608](https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2096608)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2096608>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 13 Aug 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2989



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Visible policing: uniforms and the (re)construction of police occupational identity

Michael Rowe ^a, Matthew Jones ^b, Andrew Millie ^c and Liam Ralph ^d

^aDepartment of Social Sciences and Languages, Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK; ^bFaculty of Business and Law, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK; ^cDepartment of Law and Criminology, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK; ^dSocial Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to contemporary criminological debates on police visibility by exploring the relationship between police uniforms, artefacts and occupational identity. The article is influenced by visual criminology and semiotics and draws on elicitation interviews with officers and staff from four English police services. Participants were asked to bring with them an object or image that they identified as being an important expression of their occupational identity, which was then discussed. Most often objects or images were associated with their uniform. Findings are presented in relation to the visual symbolism, iconography and performativity of uniforms and related material artefacts. Participants drew upon visual representations in making sense of positive and negative aspects of their role and in defending their occupational identity in the light of perceived external challenges, such as reductions in police numbers and threats of violence and danger. It is argued that the communicative properties of this material culture play an important symbolic role in the self-legitimation and professional identity of police work.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 16 February 2022
Accepted 27 June 2022

KEYWORDS

Visible policing; uniforms; policework; police culture

Introduction

The article draws upon work focusing on narrative traditions that inform the understanding of occupational identity in the police (van Hulst 2013) and work that has used Goffman's (1971) sociological accounts to explain the presentation of police in everyday life (O'Neill 2017). Other studies have explored the ways in which narrative accounts of police work and occupational identity can play an important role in transforming police organisations (Macauley and Rowe 2019). These are developed further in this article by drawing on the religious idea of icons, with selected policing objects and images – including police uniforms – regarded as visibly contributing to the construction and reconstruction of accounts of policing and police work. The symbolic power and iconography of the police has been explored by Brodner (2010) and Loader (1997). For instance, drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, Loader has noted the following:

Bourdieu (1991: 75) emphasizes that there can be 'no symbolic power without the symbolism of power'. This does not mean, however, that the ceremonies, rituals and imagery associated with police work themselves generate the symbolic power of the police. They do not. Rather, the iconography of policing – the handcuffs, fingerprints, cop shows, uniforms, photofits, picture postcards, memoirs, cars, sirens, helicopters, riot shields and so

CONTACT Michael Rowe  michael.rowe@northumbria.ac.uk

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

forth – connect with and re-articulate dispositions towards, and fantasies of, policing that already pertain within the wider culture.

For this article we are interested in these ‘dispositions towards, and fantasies of, policing’, as reflected in the visual iconography and symbolic power of the police uniform and associated artefacts. We draw on visual criminology (e.g. Rafter 2014, McClanahan 2021) that is interested in, ‘ways in which all things visual interact with crime and criminal justice, inventing and shaping one another’ (Rafter 2014, p. 129). The article is also influenced by semiotics which considers the sign value of things, that ‘everything that can be taken as a sign’ (Eco 1976, p. 7). So, for instance, a police helmet might be read as a sign of authority, or perhaps of oppression depending on who is doing the viewing. Thus, we do not take a structuralist view, where signs may mean the same to all, but rather adopt an interpretivist understanding of semiotics where the same signs – or icons or symbols – can be read differently by different people. It is contended that visual iconography and symbolism can play a role in maintaining support for police but acknowledge that there are always other interpretations. A dramaturgy of policing (Manning 1997, O’Neill 2017) is developed as police costumes and props are examined in relation to their significance in maintaining professional identity.

To anticipate the conclusions, it was found that participants selected a narrow range of images and artefacts to bring to the interview, and that their selection tended to be explained in terms of traditional, conservative accounts of policing, that stressed the related significance of risk and danger in policing, and the ways in which the ‘police family’ could mitigate those risks. The article makes an important contribution to the research literature by exploring the cultural and identity work that police uniforms perform for officers and staff themselves, developing from most of the extant work that explores the impact of uniforms on public perceptions of police and related occupations. This discussion develops Waddington’s (1999, p. 238) observation that ‘symbolism permeates policing [...] because of the need to legitimate and re-legitimate police authority’. While Waddington was discussing authority in relation to external audiences, our focus is instead upon the legitimisation of policing internally among officers and staff. The article concludes by reflecting upon the position of these perspectives in relation to critiques of policing that have emerged in the context of Black Lives Matter and ‘defund the police’ protests in the UK in recent years. It is argued that these artefacts and the symbolic representations of police work are read as important sources of self-legitimation for police in a period when external criticism appears marked. In doing this we extend Bradford and Quinton’s (2014) analysis of officer self-legitimation and ways that underpins their own authority.

Police uniforms and professional identity

Following from Charman (2017) the article explores the role of visible components of police uniforms and material culture in the shaping of occupational identity and workplace culture. In her study of police socialisation and occupational identity, Charman (2017, p. 15) examined how the ephemera, symbolic capital and material culture of police services helped explain how individuals situated themselves in relation to the institution:

It is this deeper level of understanding of an organisation, through an appreciation of the symbolism of the organisation (and of the meaning of that symbolism), which is so important. Analysis of organisational culture has the potential to provide a link between macro-level understandings of organisations and micro-level appreciations of the everyday lived experiences of the employees.

According to literature on procedural justice and policing, public perceptions that the police act with authority and legitimacy are the most significant drivers of trust and support, and these are shaped – in part – by the symbolic representation of police organisations and police officers (Jackson and Bradford 2009). The concept of legitimacy has been central to policing in many ways and broadly refers to the extent to which the public explicitly or implicitly recognise that powers are exercised

with proper authority, that police are accountable and subject to the rule of law, use minimum force, and operate with equity and fairness (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012; Kochel and Skogan 2021). As Reiner (2000) has argued in the British context, police legitimacy has been associated with the wider social, political, and economic landscape such that it has been higher during periods of relative prosperity and social inclusion. In this study, we further consider the importance of legitimacy internally within policing through considering the ways in which officers understand their own status, values, and occupational identity in relation to their powers as a constable and role in society more widely. This is also significant in relation to emerging discussions about organisational justice in policing and the ways in which officers and staff interpret their position within police services, relationships with leaders, and the ethical frameworks that operate internally within 'the job'. Recent studies have considered the concepts of legitimacy and organisational justice in relation to police officer engagement in their work and job satisfaction (Crow *et al.* 2012, Piotrowski *et al.* 2021). Our study contributes further to that work through consideration of the symbolic status of uniforms and material cultural artefacts within that context.

There is a long-standing body of literature exploring the significance of the symbolic representation of the police as the embodiment of social cohesion and order (Banton 1964, Manning 1997, Reiner 2000) and the various ways in which police act as a mirror and a metaphor in terms of social and political identity and belonging. This body of work is too wide and too complex to properly outline here; but some of that work has focused on the communicative properties of police uniforms upon public perceptions of policing, which draws attention to the significance of seemingly mundane objects, logos, colours, and artefacts in terms of the symbolic capital that police officers rely upon in the maintenance of public support.

Of course, prior to joining as police officer or staff those who become part of the police service are subjectively influenced by these visible representations of policing. The processes of self-legitimisation of police through uniforms and visual culture, that we outlined below, do not begin as new at the point of entry into policing.

Most of the extant literature is focused on the impact of visible policing on the wider public, or sections of it. Studies have explored, among other things, how the public perceive the police in terms of the colour of uniforms (Johnson 2005), distinctions drawn between the authority of police and other uniformed and non-uniformed officials (Cooke 2005), perceptions of police in plain clothes (Gundersen 1978, Mauro 1984), and the extent to which infants recognise police in terms of visual cues from the uniform (Durkin and Jeffrey 2000). Blaskovits *et al.* (2021) found that the adoption of militaristic equipment and armaments had a negative impact on public perceptions of trust and approachability, but that officers visibly displaying such kit were seen as stronger and better prepared to respond to danger. Using a visual methodology, recent work by Simpson and Croft (2021) found that the public perceive women to be less aggressive than men when they are wearing civilian clothes but equally aggressive when wearing police uniforms. In an earlier piece, Simpson (2017) found that officers in uniform were perceived more favourably than when in civilian clothing, although perceptions also varied depending on the situation in which the officer was depicted, for example they were rated more positively if walking or on a bicycle.

Relatively few studies, however, have focused on the significance of uniforms and associated artefacts upon police officers and staff themselves, and it is in this regard that the findings and discussion offered here make an important addition to extant literature. In our discussion below we note that uniforms and related artefacts were associated with positive elements of the occupational identity, most crucially with the concept of the police family. Bell (1982) argued that the authoritarianism that the public attributed to the police was associated with a militaristic style of police uniform, and that this also shaped officers' self-perceptions of their role. He argued that reducing authoritarian policing required a change in attitude among officers and a change in the style of uniform. To a limited extent this approach was an early recognition that the uniform has symbolic properties that communicate to officers, as well as to external audiences. More recent studies, including that of Charman (2017) cited above, have provided much richer appreciative understanding of the importance of the

police uniform in terms of officer identity and work. Significant among these has been De Camargo's work (2019), which has explored how Police Community Support Officers¹ (PCSOs) adjusted their uniforms as a means of performance management that – they anticipated – would enhance their acceptance among police officers. Applying Goffman's (1971) concept of a 'sign vehicle', the uniform, she argued, presents legitimacy, authority, and power to audiences (for PCSOs these audiences are members of the public plus police officer and staff colleagues). Similarly, in the Canadian context, O'Connor *et al.* (2022) found that auxiliary officers reported that their uniform represented an important bridge connecting them to the mainstream of police officers, and that recognising this helped assuage subjective perceptions of risk and danger. Our findings below suggest that this emotional and subjective process also applied to police officers and staff as they regarded their uniform as a representation of their belonging to a police family that helped mitigate risk and danger. Relatedly, De Camargo (2020) has written about ways in which, following 'dirty' encounters with members of the public, officers cleanse their uniforms in ways that entail the symbolic purification of a sacred object that is seen to mark a boundary between 'the job' and those sought to contaminate it.

Other researchers have explored the significance of the uniform in relation to gendered relations within police organisations. Some of that has related to the historical representation of women in policing (see Joshua *et al.* 2020, on representation of women in Canadian policing, for example) and the movement away from highly feminised uniform design and rules around physical appearance. Debate has also centred on the normativity of men in policing such that women are expected to wear the same uniform as men rather than those designed to fit the female body (Westmarland 2011). The transformation of policing away from traditional masculinist and chauvinistic cultures has entailed reconsideration of the image of police, according to Lander's (2014) analysis of Swedish police reform. The process of 'demasculinisation' of Swedish policing, he argued, has entailed transforming how officers think and act, such that the 'cowboy male' of the past (rough, tough and aggressive) has been erased while the feminised body of the female officer has been 'masculated' through a new emphasis on all officers being fit, strong, practical and able to deal with risk and danger. In part, Lander found, this has entailed addressing the visual appearance of officers in terms of their uniforms and accoutrements. In our discussion further below we develop Lander's (2014, p. 81) point that:

The police identity is in a constant state of becoming, and this becoming takes place in relation to a foundation of discursive conceptions of what the police profession means and how modern police officers are required to think, that they are permitted to say and how they are required to look.

Gender performativity through police uniforms was identified in different terms in Chacko's (2021) study of police cadets in Kerala, India. She found that the gender-neutrality of cadets' khaki uniforms empowered female officers who, more usually, when in their school uniforms, were symbolically assigned to distinct gender roles. In contrast, when in their junior police role 'the power and authority associated with the khaki enabled cadets to access public spaces, specifically the street, with confidence and courage' (Chacko, 2021, p. 88). The temporary and conditional nature of this 'gender neutrality', Chacko (2021) argued, made for a problematic gender equality. Our data, presented further below, shows that officers were conscious of the empowerment that the uniform offered and adapted their professional appearance in anticipation of the particular working context in which they are deployed. Utilising the uniform to achieve desired image management among colleagues within police organisations seems to be rational behaviour given Simpson and Sargeant's (2022) statistical findings that different types of uniform and accessories influences officer perceptions. Their study measured officer attitudes toward civilian clothing, uniform colour, and high visibility jackets (among other things) and found that these influenced perceptions of the extent to which police officers thought that their colleagues were accountable, aggressive, approachable, competent, and friendly.

The association between a particular visual image displayed by officers in uniform with professionalism and public acceptance has been debated more recently in connection with regulations relating to officers displaying tattoos. Simpson and Sargeant (2022) found that officers rated colleagues less favourably when they wore sleeve tattoos. Thielgen *et al.* (2020) found, contra-wisely, that the display of visible tattoos by police officers had a negative impact on perceptions of credibility. Another recent study found that the public rated officers with tattoos as less trustworthy and less competent than colleagues without (Hauke-Forman *et al.* 2021). In this vein, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, when appointed in 2021 was reported as saying that he would prohibit officers from displaying tattoos. This was, he said, integral to presenting an appropriate public image:

It's part and parcel of being smart and professional. I also want people to polish their shoes, tie their hair back, I want them to keep themselves fit, I want them to be punctual and polite, and all of those old-fashioned qualities that are the hallmarks of a first-class police officer (Police Oracle 2021)

In our findings below we explore the contemporary nature of visibility in relation to the ways in which police officers and staff understood their professional status through their uniforms and associated visual and material culture. We emphasise the ways in which these artefacts perform symbolically to individuals within policing. This performativity was linked to dominant narratives of police culture in terms of a conservative, rank- and hierarchy-conscious orientation. Furthermore, these images and artefacts were discussed in the context of an understanding of the dangers of policing and that officers faced significant physical and mental risks. The artefacts selected were described in terms of a professional solidarity that was seen to mitigate those risks. The uniform and related paraphernalia connoted the police family, and that was an important objective and subjective protective shield that reduced risk and the impact of danger.

Findings from our research are presented in two inter-related sections, the first of which examines the nature of the visual objects and images that police officers and staff selected to represent their professional identity. A significant aspect of this, we argue, is that these artefacts most often reflected traditional organisational symbols and displayed the formal authority of police services. Developing from this, in the second section, we focus on the frequent selection of a particular artefact – the 'thin blue line' emblem – and the significance that had in presenting an account of police work that emphasised danger and the potential capacity of the 'police family' as a means of safeguarding and well-being. Prior to discussing these findings, the article outlines the methodology that generated the qualitative empirical data informing the analysis presented here.

Methodology

A total of 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted with police officers, PCSOs and staff from four police services in the North of England between October and December 2019. The services varied in size and covered both rural and urban areas. Interviewees were selected by police contacts who facilitated the work. We had no direct control over that selection process and as a consequence we make no claim that the results below are representative of the more general population. As with many police studies, we recognise that this selection process might 'skew' findings if participants were selected by gatekeepers such that they might present a positive image of the service. We did not get any impression that this had happened, though. If anything, it seemed more likely that those selected were those who happened to be available at the appropriate time. We ensured all participants were aware that their involvement was voluntary. Altogether, 21 males and seven females took part. Nineteen were police officers, seven were police staff, and a further two were PCSOs. Police officer participants varied in years of service and roles, including for example neighbourhood, traffic, armed response, and counter terrorism. Staff too had different roles, including for example, digital and IT, evidenced-based policing, and policy. To create an atmosphere of trust within the interview setting and to reinforce anonymity information about participants' career history, personal demographics, or other details was not asked for. The nature of the photo

Table 1. Material artefacts brought to research interview.

Collar number	Constabulary logo x5	'Sin Eaters Guild' logo
Uniform/chevrons/epaulettes	Commendation certificate	Screen shot from movie Hot Fuzz
Police hat/cap x4	Liverpool FC badge (Liver Building, symbol of city)	'Manchester Bee'
'100 years Women in Policing' badge	Dress-up uniform/teddy bear x2	Police vehicle (images or components) x3
Society of Evidence Based Policing badge	Police whistle x2	'heart trace line'
Thin Blue Line badge x3	Hairbrush	Drone
Armed Response Vehicle badge	Wedding ring	Body-Worn Camera
Warrant card x3	Peel Monument (photograph)	Galaxy hand-held tablet device

Note: Participants sometimes brought more than one item or image to the interview, so the total number is greater than the number of interviews. Some place names are mentioned in the above; as it happened these were not part of the force areas in which those participants worked.

elicitation method is to commence with discussion of the images brought to the room, and to gather that data would have been an unhelpful diversion. For that reason, we make no claims about the relation of the findings to those professional or personal characteristics. This might be a useful direction for subsequent studies, including quantitative methodologies.

The interviews were carried out in connection to five key themes: their role in the police and motivations for joining, material artefacts associated with the police, occupational identity, and the relationship between the police and citizens. To encourage discussion, police officers and staff were invited to bring to the interview an object or an image that they identified as being an important expression of their occupational identity. The material artefacts brought to interviews included a drone, police badges, police hats and caps, a shoulder number, whistles, and a hairbrush (see Table 1 for a full outline). Interviews began with participants being asked to explain their selection of images or artefacts, which led to a wider discussion about professional identity and the role of the police in society. Often these were deeply personal – sometimes emotional – accounts about personal experiences. The hairbrush, for example, had been chosen by an officer since it was an artefact from an old case he had dealt with involving a vulnerable child (who's brush it was) and symbolised a positive intervention to safeguard someone at grave risk. A teddy bear (dressed as a police officer) belonged to the participant's child and embodied the central importance of working to protect her (and other) families.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour and took place in each of the divisional headquarters for the four police services involved. The interview schedule guided the conversation, focusing on the object or image they had selected, and each was digitally recorded and fully transcribed. The data were analysed using the qualitative software NVivo and thematic coding and re-coding. Ethical approval was granted by [redacted] University. Pseudonyms for individuals (chosen by interview participants) and places are used throughout to safeguard anonymity.

Tradition and authority

As was noted in the previous section, the interviews generating the qualitative data presented in this article entailed participants selecting an image or an artefact that they thought represented something significant about their occupational identity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants chose a broad range of items. Table 1 outlines the items chosen.

Many of the items listed in Table 1 were associated with traditional visual iconography of policing and police work. Most often these were formal institutional expressions of policing, such as a police whistle, warrant card or collar number. Interviewees were not asked specifically to select an item of uniform, or an image from their police service livery, or an object from their professional kit; any item at all could be chosen (which might explain the inclusion of a hairbrush by one participant or a teddy bear by another). That collar numbers, uniforms (and parts thereof), hats, badges, constabulary logos and such like featured heavily among the items is of interest in itself. It suggests that occupational

identity is conceived in terms of the traditional iconography of the service. While some brought other items (a teddy bear or a wedding ring for example, that were presented as signifiers of the connection to the interviewee's family), a few brought photos containing colleagues or the general public. The selection presented a largely constabulary-oriented interpretation of professional identity, and one that was discussed, most often, in terms of traditional visual symbolism and iconography of policing and police work.

When asked to explain their rationale for selecting a particular image or item, respondents spoke frequently of 'pride in the uniform' and that they valued being able to personally identify with the sense of the history and tradition that it embodied. One respondent (Police Officer James, Police Service B) illustrated this wider perception, and related this directly to the performance of policing at ceremonial occasions, as he explained his selection of a photograph of himself in his 'Number 1' (i.e. ceremonial) uniform:

I'm actually just about to wear them in a few weeks' time. My local church is running a Remembrance Day service and there's going to be a procession to the local war memorial and the 'Last Post' is going to be bugled. As everyone knows who I am and what I do in that community, it sort of feels right and appropriate to wear the ceremonial uniform to go to the war memorial as a mark of respect, really ... I'm not so geeky that I got married in my police uniform. That is one that people do quite a lot.

The formalism and tradition of the uniform was broken down to component elements, seen to be particularly symbolic of the status and role of police. Badges and crests were often noted in this regard, as they were timeless icons of policing in abstract terms: explained by several respondents in relation to traditions of political neutrality and being servants of the Crown. In these interviews, respondents read these material artefacts as signs legitimising their role. One civilian member of staff spoke tacitly of the significance of the uniform – and in particular the rank insignia on officer epaulettes – as she described the difficulty of recognising the authority and formal hierarchical position of non-uniformed civilian staff, relative to sworn officers. Not recognising the hierarchy and associated authority of colleagues was seen to be problematic. The absence or presence of uniform was clearly a cultural marker:

... the ranking structure does cause problems, because my manager now is ... I wouldn't know what grade she was but say she's a 12 as a police staff. I asked the other day. I said, "What rank is she then?" ... For the staff, there's no identity ... or identifier with the staff as there is with the officers. You know there's a Chief Inspector: you'd know by the pips they've got on. There's a lot to identify, whereas, the staff we're just all walking around, and no one actually knows who does what; what grade they're at; what skills they've got; what kind of responsibilities they've got from day to day. (Staff Member Sarah, Police Service C)

That respondents applied their understanding of the police hierarchy from these visible symbols of authority was evident from many of our participants. It reinforces Davis's (2020) argument that rank continues to be a dominant source of status and authority within policing. Certainly, this was reflected by Police Officer Poole (Police Service A) who spoke of the greater respect and recognition of rank formalities while working at Police HQ compared to being 'on division'. He felt confident in his experience such that 'I knew when I come to headquarters what to expect, how to treat everybody in the station, how to talk to bosses that have got pips or crowns'. Similarly, Officer Stephen (Police Service A) noted that expectations were different at HQ:

I wouldn't have shiny shoes on my normal days, but for this uniform I have to keep this set standard. I think that being at headquarters it's more of the discipline of doing it and you might hear officers say "play the game" which is you're meant to be at this standard, yeah ... you just have to keep it a bit more here.

The significance of the visible symbolism was context-dependant in terms of civilian and police, HQ and division, as respondents sought to locate themselves within the organisation by referring to uniforms, badges and 'pips and crowns'. Our data suggest that the visual impact of police uniforms on the public, which includes that they communicate legitimacy and authority, also applies within the service among officers and police staff. Not only did uniforms communicate rank, the collar numbers

were also significant, interviewees reported, since they revealed the length of service of an officer (in circumstances where numbers were issued consecutively); and for one interviewee that an individual was a transferee in from another police service. In this case, he reported that his collar number would always mark him as an outsider, which could help in the mutual recognition of other arrivals from external police services. This communicative work within and among police officers might apply in particular to recruits in early stages of their career. Self-legitimacy was reinforced by uniforms and artefacts, which connoted belonging and secured professional identity. This was expressed by Police Officer Hannah (Police Service A), who was about to complete her probationer training at the point she was interviewed:

R: So, this is your warrant card, what made you choose that?

P: I think that was the moment when the job became really real for me, I now have a warrant card, that's my name, that's my picture, this job became really real when I saw this warrant card ... I was kind of a little bit "Wow they're really letting me be a police officer, this is crazy!" Yeah.

R: What does that symbolise then do you think?

P: I think just ... I think this, for me, symbolises like my achievement really. Because it was [a] difficult process to get through just to be here, yeah, that's what that symbolises for me. That hard work just to try and get here did pay off and I have actually been able to achieve something ... I mean the picture's awful, my eyes are wonky, my collar's all skew-whiff but I'm smiling and I'm proud of being on it. You know when I put my uniform on for the first time and you know, I looked in the mirror and I thought "Oh, who's let her have a uniform?". But when I got my hi-vis body armour because that has to be made for you, your size, and I put that on, and I thought ... I did feel quite protected and like I could do things, as silly as that sounds. Yeah, I do think you kind of feel like you have a bit more authority when you are all geared up and things.

The transformative nature of the uniform, changing both self-perception and anticipating that other people would regard the person wearing the uniform differently arose in a number of interviews. Symbolically the uniform provided a bridge linking the traditions and history of the organisation with the individual identity of the officer. It provided the wearer with a sense of belonging and equipped them with a new sense of purpose and confidence. Several officers spoke of the significance of the custodial helmet in this regard – the traditional 'bobbies' helmet as opposed to the soft capped version. While the latter might be more comfortable and practical, the former was regarded as more effective in terms of commanding respect from the public. In that regard, it performed a legitimating role (it was thought) in terms of public perceptions, but also in relation to the ways by which officers identified with their colleagues and with the organisation. For both parties it was seen to communicate organisational tradition and gravitas. Police Officer Shaun (Police Service A) brought a photograph of a police helmet to the research interview. He explained his selection of this artefact in ways that demonstrate the importance he placed on a sense of belonging within the organisation and solidarity with colleagues:

R: ... so why did you choose, of all the things you could have brought in, why did you choose that particularly?

P: Because it's stands for not just me being a police officer, but me being part of the police as well. It shows you're not just by yourself when you're out there, you've got everybody you work with, there to help ... Yeah, uniform is part of like a ... well probably a bit over used, but like family if you see what I mean?

That (aspects of) the uniform were embedded with significance in relation to their symbolic representation of, or as icons of the 'police family' is discussed further in relation to the ways in which respondents read signs of risk and danger into the artefacts that they selected. The need to present an image – communicated through the uniform and personal appearance of the officer – that would be appropriate and 'professional' was noted by many participants. In terms of inducting new recruits into the culture and identity of the organisation this was something conveyed through the induction process. In Police Service A, Alistair was an officer of approximately 16 years' experience who explained that in the initial stages of his career there was a much stronger emphasis on maintaining a smart appearance in traditional terms. The shirt needed to be crisp, boots polished,

and hair neatly cut – he explained, and this was subject to routine inspection. In his current role in probationer training these standards had been relaxed, a trend he regretted but was resigned to. Nonetheless, he outlined that he continued to advise new recruits that their appearance mattered because:

you never know what job you're going to go [to]. You know it might be a burglary, it might be a theft, it might be you've got to pass a death message. Do you particularly want to be turning up to someone and passing on that kind of news and not looking professional?

The importance of conveying an 'appropriate' image in the context of engagement with the public while delivering news of a sudden death was emphasised further in Alistair's account as he described the process whereby he would return to his station to comb his hair, adjust his appearance and make sure his uniform was in correct order before delivering a 'death message'. It is clear from his explanation that he is performing a very specific role in this aspect of his work:

whenever I used to go to a death message, I'd have my hat on. It's just – for me – that's the uniform, probably in the grand scheme of things [it] won't count one iota to the individual I'm passing the death message for, they probably won't even recognise it. But I guess they deserve that professionalism. They deserve that consideration for me to think ... it's just a respect thing I think ...

I mean I'd walk up to the door and keep the hat on, yeah, probably once the door and the door was open, I'd probably take it off.

And for me it's kind of ... sub-consciously I'm telling the individual this is kind of there's something serious coming here.

The need to appear and behave professionally in the performance of mundane and everyday activity was sometimes associated with the ways in which officers used technology as they performed routine duties. Respondents spoke of their self-awareness when using portable technology and that they were careful to avoid any impression the public might have that they were using personal mobile phones or using devices in ways that discouraged people from engaging with them. As with the display of uniforms, the use of artefacts entailed conscious impression-management and the anticipation of public perceptions of visual components of police work.

Risk, danger and the thin blue line

Aspects of police professional identity (belonging, loyalty, and a sense of the 'family') were inextricably bound up with uniforms and material culture. These artefacts or icons also materially embodied officer perceptions of the physical dangers of their role. This underpinned the importance of the police family, as discussed above and is a central and long-standing component of police occupational culture. In an early sociological account of routine police work Skolnick (1966) argued that the threat of violence and physical harm shaped the ways in which officers approached their work and developed strong bonds of team loyalty and mutuality. Officers anticipated danger in their interactions with the public and were aware that their personal safety often rested in the capacity – and willingness – of their colleagues to intervene in their defence. More than half a century after Skolnick's foundational study it was evident from our research interviews that a similar set of perceptions shaped officer accounts of their work. Artefacts and uniforms encapsulated a sense of risk and danger, sometimes directly but also indirectly in anticipatory terms as they were read as symbols of camaraderie and of the police family's ability to mitigate such risks. If policing was seen as inherently dangerous, the family of the police could reduce the risk and ameliorate its impact should the worst happen. These features occurred very frequently as officers and staff spoke of the 'Thin Blue Line' emblem that was brought along to many of the interviews. Following its earlier adoption among police officers in the USA (e.g. Wall 2020, McClanahan 2021), the image of the Thin Blue Line has become a familiar symbol in British policing in recent years.

As Wall (2020) noted, the Thin Blue Line represents an expression of power, authority and legitimacy that casts police as the prime guarantor of civil order, liberty and security. It invokes an Hobbesian (1651/1990) perspective of human nature as egoistical and naturally violent, and a brutal 'state of nature', a war of all against all, that is only contained by the unceasing deployment of state power. Charman's (2017) study of the socialisation of police recruits found that by the fourth anniversary of joining the service, 90% endorsed the notion that police were the 'thin blue line' and spoke in terms of the police standing in isolation as a bulwark against crime and disorder.

Figure 1 is a typical Thin Blue Line patch brought to our photo elicitation interviews by three participants. It was referred to more widely in interviews by a further 21 of our respondents and comparable items were brought to the interviews, including a 'Sin Eaters Guild' logo,² the Manchester Bee,³ a heart trace line, and constabulary logos. Often these were discussed in terms similar to the Thin Blue Line logo and were read as invoking the idea that police play a frontline role in 'the protection of society from chaos, from criminality [and] harm' (as Police Officer Roy Jones from Police Service 2 suggested). While research interviews tended to focus on the signification of the blue line running through the middle of the emblem, some discussion extended to the significance of the Union Jack flag and the relation of the police to the nation, the public and the Crown. As with other aspects of police uniforms and material culture analysed throughout this article, the Thin Blue Line badge was valued because it placed police at the heart of the imagined community of the nation. In this respect the badge was iconic and read in terms similar to other components of the police image: the crests and logos containing the Crown in particular. This was seen by many participants as a source of legitimacy that encapsulated both the vocational calling of the police officer as defender of the public, and that the police service was independent of political control, representative of the nation and part of the state, but not subject to direct governmental control.

As well as locating police at the heart of the nation, respondents understood the Thin Blue Line as a symbolic reminder of the physical danger that officers faced as part of their routine working practices. These risks were discussed in terms both of threats from dangerous offenders and the prospect of accidents. Respondents were sometimes frank in their discussion of the impact that injuries had



Figure 1. The thin blue line badge.

on them directly; one officer recounting in detail a near-fatal motorcycle accident that had led to an extended period of sick leave and a reassessment of his life and professional priorities. He noted that he kept the battered windshield from his police motorcycle in his locker to serve as a reminder of the fragility of life and the need to remain alert while on duty. In this article we have invoked the religious language of icons, perhaps here the broken windshield is treated as a relic, holding symbolic power and performing significant emotional labour for the officer. Similarly, another officer became emotionally upset during the course of our interview, and reported that he had not previously discussed the impact of trauma he had experienced. As well as encapsulating the potential and actual experience of risk and danger, the Thin Blue Line image was also discussed in ways that defined policing as an occupation unlike any other. In this sense the 'line' was emblematic not only of the demarcation between order and chaos, law and anarchy and good and evil, it also invoked a boundary between police and non-police, between officers and civilians, or to use occupational slang, between 'job' and 'non-job'. The former have insight into the extremes of misery, suffering, harm and wrong-doing of human life (as led Bittner (1970) to characterise police as 'tour guides in the museum of human frailty') but – moreover – they adopt this mantle so that members of the public ('non-job') do not have to bear the associated burdens. This feature of police culture is widely noted in the research literature, and the material culture of the Thin Blue Line and the other artefacts that accompanied it (some of which were listed above) performed as symbolic reminders of this to our respondents, as icons or relics. This reflects Perkins (2018) research findings which led her to argue that danger within policing is both an objective⁴ and a subjective reality, a series of risks to be mitigated and managed but also a set of understandings and perceptions that inform officer understanding of their role.

The inherent risks and dangers of police work feature heavily in police officer Ben's account of why he selected the Thin Blue Line emblem. The extract also expresses the common theme among police personnel, which is that the capacity of the police is dangerously reduced:

Unfortunately, it's been used quite a lot recently, all the tributes to officers who have been killed in the line of duty. To be fair, I see quite a lot more now on social media than rather on actual attack vests of officers. So with officers, serving officers, and the members of the public, it shows a bit of support towards the police family, it clearly shows the Thin Blue Line, there ain't enough officers, will there ever be? Probably not. Unfortunately, 'til the government sees more fatalities of the police family [sic], then we won't see much of a difference. But yeah, so it does mean a lot ... especially this year, PC Andrew Harper, Roads Policing colleague, killed only a few months ago for just doing his job,⁵ same sort of department – well, exact same department I'm in, but yeah, so it just shows the realities of the dangers that we come across, you know, in our daily business.

There has been a reduction in police officer numbers over the last decade or so as government funding cuts have impacted on service provisions (Millie and Bullock 2013), although at the time of writing, there is now government commitment to recruit a further 20,000 officers by 2023 (Home Office 2021) As we have discussed elsewhere (author(s) 2021), a frequent complaint from those interviewed was that the reduction in police numbers had led to a faster pace of work and greater pressure to complete tasks quickly. Coupled with this, greater use of single-crew deployment meant that officers had less opportunity for informal support and camaraderie from their shift colleagues while on routine deployment. These concerns reflect data on officer numbers and deployment patterns but also mirror recurring themes within much police cultural narrative: that the Blue Line is thin to the point of snapping and that political masters (and maybe senior police officers) have been indifferent to the day-to-day realities that patrol officers encounter. The pressures caused by reduced numbers and higher demand on officer time compounds, in the transcripts of many of our interviews, the inherent dangers and risks that officers face. As the above quote illustrates, officers frequently noted instances where officers had been subjected to serious physical violence and reported that the Thin Blue Line patch displayed on their uniforms was both a tribute to their sacrifice and a reminder of the everyday danger of police work.

In his discussion of policing in the 1990s, McLaughlin (2007) argued that debates about representation, diversity and identity politics amounted to a form of internal 'cultural war' within British

policing. Minority groups and women staked claims that effectively challenged prevailing conceptualisations of policing that were white, masculine and heteronormative. During recent decades the adaption of uniform regulations to allow for religious observance, the wearing of political badges, or rainbow Pride emblems have variously been contested, both within and external to policing. Unlike some of those signifiers, and contemporary controversies about officers displaying tattoos or piercings, the adoption of the Thin Blue Line patch seems not to be controversial within policing itself. None of those we interviewed reported that they were challenged, internally, in relation to wearing the badge. Even though it amounts to an adaptation of the permitted uniform it was described only as a technical breach of the regulations, akin to the wearing of an armistice poppy (which is also implicitly authorised within the service). Our respondents stated that their senior ranked supervisors had never challenged the wearing of the Thin Blue Line symbol.

In many ways the discourse surrounding the image reflects the long-established sense of danger and risk that, as noted above, has been a central trope of police subculture for a long time. Its communicative properties were described by our respondents in terms internal to policing, rather than externally directed at the wider public. In this way the patch was understood as a display of fraternal solidarity within police ranks. The visual representation of danger and risk that the Thin Blue Line icon conveyed was combined with a sub-theme relating to the loyalty and safety provided by the idea of the police family. While danger and violence loomed in the recesses of police work, for our respondents at least, the real or *de facto* kinship relations within 'the job' offered a protective physical and mental shield to offset the objective and subjective sense of imminent harm.

Conclusion

The findings and discussion above has highlighted ways in which uniforms, badges, logos, and related artefacts form a material culture of policing that has important significance for officers and staff. The communicative properties illustrated indicate that this material culture plays an important symbolic role in maintaining police occupational identity, as officers and staff understand and respond to negative elements of their work (the risk of danger) as well as positive features (familial loyalty). Through the discussion presented here we have begun to explore the ways in which police officers and staff legitimise their occupational identity through the symbolism and iconography associated with the uniform, and associated images and objects. This was done by positively associating their role with traditions of police organisations and hierarchy (embodied in constabulary crests and rank insignia) and linking this, for example through the Thin Blue Line patch, to wider loyalties to Crown and nation. Negative aspects were managed and mitigated by the concept of the police family, which reduced risks of danger in both subjective and objective terms, and provided welfare and support to ameliorate such problems should they arise. We noted at the start of the article Waddington's (1999) observation that much of policing is about symbolism and the cultivation of police legitimacy, and we have shown that these processes are not only about the management of external public perceptions, media coverage, or the views of political elites. Legitimacy is also cultivated internally within police organisations among officers and staff as they interpret their professional status. As highlighted, others outside of the service may read the signs, symbols and icons of policing differently, and this will be influenced by their current and historic interactions with the police. And within the service, officers and staff may interpret the visual culture of policing differently – with the same person perhaps reading different meanings in different contexts. That said, from our discussions, the material culture of policing could be regarded as embodied, almost literally, in the uniforms and artefacts worn and carried as part of the routines of everyday police work, symbolically legitimising and re-legitimising policing among the officers and staff who took part in our study.

Completed in a period of three months in 2019, our study had no longitudinal component that would enable an analysis of how this self-legitimation continued over time or was affected by changes in the external environment. That would be a welcome and potentially significant task

for further research. Our study was undertaken before the Black Lives Matter campaign in response to the US murder of George Floyd in May 2020 that led to widespread protests, including in Britain (see McClanahan 2021 for a discussion of the importance of images in the wake of Floyd's death). Subsequent to those protests have been other controversies in the wake of the death of Sarah Everard in March 2021, killed by a serving Metropolitan Police officer. Her murder led to public protests focused on the inability of police and wider criminal justice agencies to provide for women's safety in public space. In the aftermath of these, and related events in the UK and elsewhere, visible representations of police have been closely bound up with debates about police legitimacy. Whether officers ought to take the knee (as an expression of solidarity with racialised minorities) has been a matter of controversy, as where images of police officers using force to restrain women protesting about ongoing risks of sexual assault and murder. In these contexts, and particularly in the US, there has developed a critique of 'copoganda', the visual and material representations of policing in popular culture that are apparently benign but that construct policing in ways that, it is argued, reinforce dominant narratives of policing. Loader's (2021) discussion of 'defund policing' movements in the US and the UK emphasises that there are important historical and structural differences in the policing of minorities in the two countries. However, it seems likely that there are similarities in the effects of these forms of visual representation and that the processes that Loader (2021, p. 19) quotes from the US debate in *The Nation* apply also in other societies (Myerson and Smith 2015):

Cop shows and other pro-law enforcement propaganda are an important way of naturalizing policing. Children's books, cartoons, comic books, Lego toys, Officer Friendly programs in schools, and other popular culture artifacts past and present — all condition us into being unable to imagine a world without police. Cops are lionized in monuments, memorials, and highway signs. Cops are usually portrayed as heroic. We're told that they are the bulwark between order and complete chaos. It's hard to think of any other occupation that approaches this type of public relations effort. Why does law enforcement need so much advertising? There are no television shows uplifting the contributions of child care workers, but they are essential to ensuring the functioning of modern society. (Loader 2021, p. 19)

Our particular findings, in relation to the threat of danger and the heroic status of police as the bulwark between order and chaos, suggest that similar conceptualisations of occupational identity were evident among the officers and staff engaged in our study. Moreover, beyond this particular framing of police work, we have demonstrated that the visual representation bound up in police uniforms, epaulettes, caps and badges played an important role in the self-legitimation of police officers as they interpreted and defined their occupational identity. The role of these artefacts and images as signs, symbols and icons (and even as relics) around which officers and staff anchor the emotional labours of their work in the face of external critique and controversy would be an interesting subject for further research and analysis. Our findings imply that the visual material cultures of policing are likely to be significant and contested elements in such debates, important internally within police organisations as well as externally in relations with the wider public. These debates are particularly significant at the current period due to wider international controversies, as outlined above. They are also important in the specific context of England and Wales since there is concurrently an 'uplift' underway in terms of increasing recruitment (National Audit Office 2022) and a recently changed model of police education (Martin 2021). These processes combined will mean that police officers will have a younger career profile since a larger proportion will be relatively short in service and they will have entered the profession through non-traditional routes. Against that context, these visual material cues, and the associated values and occupational traditions that they connote, are likely to become increasingly important touchstones that shape officers' sense of belonging and professional identity.

Notes

1. In the UK, Police Community Support Officers are uniformed civilian personnel, with some prescribed legal powers. They are neither police officers nor fully civilian staff (see O'Neill 2019, for a full account).

2. The 'Sin Eaters Guild' is a company and activist community of veterans representing the notion that the military confront evil on behalf of an innocent and unaware society. According to their webpage 'in hard times good people may have to embrace darkness in order to fight it, so that others are safe.'
3. Symbolising hard work and activity, the bee has been an emblem of Manchester since the Industrial Revolution. Following a terrorist attack on the city in 2017 it was widely adopted as an expression of unity and defiance (NB the participant who brought this symbol to interview was not from Greater Manchester Police).
4. Baker (2021, p. 11) provides a review of research (mostly from the US) that shows that policing might not be more dangerous than other occupations in terms of workplace fatalities and it is also clear that in Britain most police deaths at work are accidental.
5. PC Harper died in Berkshire in August 2019 having been dragged behind a car he had been trying to halt following reports it had been involved in a burglary. The following year three people were jailed for his manslaughter (BBC 2020).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Economic and Social Research Council [R011885/1].

ORCID

Michael Rowe  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6535-7188>

Matthew Jones  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9272-5687>

Andrew Millie  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5910-1015>

Liam Ralph  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4793-6562>

References

- Baker, D., 2021. *Police-related deaths in the United States*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Banton, M., 1964. *The policeman in the community*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- BBC, 2020. PC Andrew Harper's teenage killers jailed. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-46544144> [Accessed 14 Jan 2022].
- Bell, D.J., 1982. Police uniforms, attitudes, and citizens. *Journal of criminal justice*, 10 (1), 45–55.
- Bittner, E., 1970. *The functions of the police in modern society: a review of background factors, current practices, and possible role models*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Blaskovits, B., et al., 2021. The thin blue line between cop and soldier: examining public perceptions of the militarized appearance of police. *Police practice and research*, doi:10.1080/15614263.2021.1889378.
- Bottoms, A. and Tankebe, J., 2012. Beyond procedural justice: a dialogic approach to legitimacy in criminal justice. *Journal of criminal law & criminology*, 102 (1), 119–170.
- Bourdieu, P., 1991. *Language and symbolic power*, trans. G. Raymond and M. Adamson. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bradford, B. and Quinton, P., 2014. Self-legitimacy, police culture and support for democratic policing in an English constabulary. *The British journal of criminology*, 54 (6), 1023–1046.
- Broder, J.P., 2010. *The policing web*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Chacko, M.A., 2021. Freedoms in the khaki: gendering a 'gender-neutral' uniform. *Gender and education*, 33 (1), 86–102.
- Charman, S., 2017. *Police socialisation, identity and culture: becoming blue*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Cooke, C.A., 2005. Issues concerning the visibility and reassurance provided by the new 'policing family'. *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, 15, 229–240.
- Crow, M.S., Lee, C.-B., and Joo, J.-J., 2012. Organizational justice and organizational commitment among South Korean police officers. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, 35 (2), 402–423.
- Davis, C., 2020. Rank matters: police leadership and the authority of rank. *Policing and society*, 30 (4), 446–461.
- De Camargo, C., 2019. 'You feel dirty a lot of the time': policing 'dirty work', contamination and purification rituals. *International journal of police science & management*, 21 (3), 133–145.
- De Camargo, C., 2020. They wanna be us': PCSO performances, uniforms, and struggles for acceptance. *Policing and society*, 30 (7), 854–869.
- Durkin, K. and Jeffrey, L., 2000. The salience of the uniform in young children's perception of police status. *Legal and criminological psychology*, 5 (1), 47–55.

- Eco, U., 1976. *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Goffman, E., 1971. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Gundersen, D.F., 1978. Police uniform: a study of change. *FBI law enforcement bulletin*, 47 (4), 13–15.
- Hauke-Forman, N., Methner, N., and Bruckmüller, S., 2021. Assertive, but less competent and trustworthy? perception of police officers with tattoos and piercings. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, 36, 523–536.
- Hobbes, T., 1651/1990. *Leviathan*. In: S.M. Cahn, ed. *Classics of western philosophy*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 447–507.
- Home Office, 2021. *Police officer uplift, England and Wales, quarterly update to 31 March 2021*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-march-2021/police-officer-uplift-england-and-wales-quarterly-update-to-31-march-2021> [Accessed 23 Jul 2021].
- Jackson, J. and Bradford, B., 2009. Crime, policing and social order: on the expressive nature of public confidence in policing. *The British journal of sociology*, 60 (3), 493–521.
- Johnson, R.R., 2005. Police uniform color and citizen impression formation. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, 20, 58–66.
- Joshua, C., Walby, K., and Piché, J., 2020. Skirts, stereotypes, and silences: representations of women in Canadian police museums. *Women & criminal justice*, doi:10.1080/08974454.2020.1737628.
- Kochel, T.R. and Skogan, W.G., 2021. Accountability and transparency as levers to promote public trust and police legitimacy: findings from a natural experiment. *Policing: an international journal*, 44 (6), 1046–1059.
- Lander, I., 2014. Doing the right masculinities right: the police force as gendered practices. In: I. Lander, R. Signe, and N. Jon, eds. *Masculinities in the criminological field: control, vulnerability and risk taking*. Farnham: Ashgate, 71–88.
- Loader, I., 1997. Policing and the social: questions of symbolic power. *The British journal of sociology*, 48 (1), 1–18.
- Loader, I., 2021. Recognition and redemption: visions of safety and justice in Black Lives Matter. Available from: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3840766> or doi:10.2139/ssrn.3840766 [Accessed 15 Jul 2021].
- Macauley, M. and Rowe, M., 2019. Happy ever after? Making sense of narrative in creating police values. *Public management review*, doi:10.1080/14719037.2019.1630474.
- Manning, P.K., 1997. Police work: the social organization of policing. *British journal of criminology*, 38 (3), 521–525.
- Martin, D., 2021. Understanding the reconstruction of police professionalism in the UK. *Policing & society*, doi:10.1080/10439463.2021.1999447.
- Mauro, R., 1984. The constable's new clothes: effects of uniforms on perceptions and problems of police officers. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 14, 42–56.
- McClanahan, B., 2021. *Visual criminology*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- McLaughlin, E., 2007. *The new policing*. London: Sage.
- Millie, A. and Bullock, K., 2013. Policing in a time of contraction and constraint: Re-imagining the role and function of contemporary policing. *Criminology & criminal justice*, 13 (2), 133–142.
- Myerson, J.A. and Smith, M.D., 2015. We'll need an economic program to make #BlackLivesMatter. Here are three ideas. *The Nation*. Available from: www.thenation.com/article/archive/economic-program-blacklivesmatter/ [Accessed 15 Jul 2021].
- National Audit Office, 2022. *Police uplift programme*. Available from: <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-police-uplift-programme/> [Accessed 30 May 2022].
- O'Connor, C., et al., 2022. Presenting a uniformed self: symbols of safety in police auxiliary members' perceptions. *International journal of police science and management*, 24 (1), 15–26.
- O'Neill, M., 2017. Police Community Support Officers in England: a dramaturgical analysis. *Policing & society*, 27 (1), 21–39.
- O'Neill, M., 2019. *Police Community Support Officers: cultures and identities within pluralised policing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Perkins, G., 2018. *Danger and death: organisational and occupational responses to the murder of Olice in South Africa a case study*. PhD thesis. University of Cape Town.
- Piotrowski, A., Rawat, S., and Boe, O., 2021. Effects of organizational support and organizational justice on police officers' work engagement. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 642155–642155.
- Police Oracle, 2021. GMPs new chief says officers will be 'smart and professional'. Available from: https://www.policeoracle.com/news/HR_personnel_and_staff_development/2021/May/27/gmp-s-new-chief-says-officers-will-be-smart-and-professional-_107294.html [Accessed 13 Jul 2021].
- Rafter, N., 2014. Introduction to special issue on visual culture and the iconography of crime and punishment. *Theoretical criminology*, 18 (2), 127–133.
- Reiner, R., 2000. *The politics of the police*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simpson, R., 2017. The police officer perception project (POPP): an experimental evaluation of factors that impact perceptions of the police. *Journal of experimental criminology*, 13 (3), 393–415.
- Simpson, R. and Croft, A., 2021. Seeing gender in policing: uniforms and perceived aggression. *Women & criminal justice*, 31 (5), 406–421.
- Simpson, R. and Sargeant, E., 2022. Exploring the perceptual effects of uniforms and accoutrements among a sample of police officers: the locker room as a site of transformation. *Policing: a journal of policy and practice*, doi:10.1093/police/paac002.

- Skolnick, J., 1966. *Justice without trial*. New York: Wiley.
- Thielgen, M.M., Schade, S., and Rohr, J., 2020. How criminal offenders perceive police officers' appearance: effects of uniforms and tattoos on inmates' attitudes. *Journal of forensic psychology research and practice*, 20 (3), 214–240.
- Van Hulst, M., 2013. Storytelling at the police station: the canteen culture revisited. *British journal of criminology*, 53, 624–642.
- Waddington, P.A.J., 1999. *Policing citizens: authority and rights*. London: UCL Press.
- Wall, T., 2020. The police invention of humanity: notes on the "thin blue line". *Crime, media, culture: an international journal*, 16 (3), 319–336.
- Westmarland, L., 2011. *Gender and policing: sex, power and police culture*. London: Routledge.