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Learning and practicing police craft

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Abstract

Purpose – The authors consider current policy debates in the UK about the professionalisation of the police to respond to changing patterns of crime and, specifically, the suggestion that officers be educated to degree level. Drawing on the ethnographic evidence, the purpose of this paper is to focus attention on how officers learn, and continue to develop the applied, that is the craft aspects of the work of uniformed constables.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors draw on a long-term ethnographic project observing officers during the course of their duties. The focus is on the use of discretion and of particular powers. But in the course of the research, the authors also observe the way officers behave and the way they talk about their job.

Findings – The authors suggest that, while there may be a role for degree qualifications, attention needs to be paid to the practices the authors observe, practices that have long been the core craft skills of uniformed officers.

Originality/value – The authors suggest that, despite the emergence of cybercrime and other new forms of crime/threat, the evidence suggests that much has not. Not least, crime is not the only focus of police work.

Keywords Ethnography, Craft, Professionalization, Policing, Professional education

Paper type Research paper

> It is likely that roles in policing will have to become increasingly specialised. As a police constable, I had to be all things to all people, but the changing nature of crime is demanding specific skill sets to deal with particular problems […] Part of ensuring that the skill levels of officers are right for the roles they perform is recognising what the equivalent education or qualification level should be in policing. There are many everyday situations in which police officers and staff are called upon to make judgments and exercise extraordinary professionalism. Yet, while working alongside partner organisations, be that probation, local government, prisons, healthcare workers or others, they are often the only professionals without established qualifications (Marshall, 2015).
>
> The next time I find myself in trouble and shout up for help, I hope they send someone with a degree certificate! (Sergeant, Fieldnotes, 9 November 2015).

The contemporary debate in the UK (BBC, 2015; Marshall, 2015) about the professionalisation of policing is nothing new. In the USA, in the late 1960s and 1970s, the idea was associated with efforts to secure a degree of independence from political influence. Establishing policing on the basis of scientific knowledge and of qualified and regulated practitioners offered some prospect of defining an autonomous terrain (Ashenhurst, 1959; White, 1972). As a newly formed professional body, we might understand the College of Policing's emphasis on both professionalisation and on

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evidence-based policing as just such an attempt. In the face of public criticism, whether about past tragedies at Hillsborough or more recent shootings, or political scrutiny over the use of powers to stop and search, drawing on ideas of professionalism and evidence, that is on a quasi-scientific expertise, appears to offer a firmer basis for legitimacy and autonomy (Holdaway, 2015). However, as the quote that opened this paper suggests, this agenda is confused and, all too often, associated rather simplistically with the idea of a degree as a requirement for a professional and thus for police officers.

As this ready association suggests, throughout both the past and contemporary debates, the meaning of profession, of professional, of professionalisation and of professionalism remain unclear (Evetts, 2011; Goode, 1957; Potts, 1982; Sciulli, 2005; Skolnick, 1967; Wilensky, 1964) except in so far as they are contrasted with bureaucracy as an alternative form of control and oversight of officers and their performance (Hall, 1968; Skolnick, 1967; Wilson, 1968). In this paper, we do not wish to engage with these debates at the level of definitions, noting the different ways in which the terms are used and interchanged (Evetts, 2011; Sciulli, 2005). Instead, we are more interested in understanding the nature of the role of the police officer and, from this vantage point, reflecting the idea of the professional as used by the College of Policing and others. Having said that, we will begin the paper with a discussion of professionalism and of craft in policing, before going on to outline the nature of our ethnographic evidence. We will then use illustrative stories that shed light on the nature of the role of the police, and specifically the uniformed constable performing routine patrol, response, neighbourhood and traffic duties before reflecting on the practice of policing and the idea of professionalisation.

Professionalisation as an historic project

The discussion about the nature of policing can be found playing out in some of the classics of policing and ethnographic research. Bittner (1967a, b) described aspects of police craft, noting the limited recourse officers had to the law, but later argued that professionalisation was a necessary project to improve their image and gain public trust and support for their work. He envisaged an "informed, deliberating and technically efficient professional" educated at "institutions of higher learning" (1970, p. 121). Skolnick (1967, p. 196) similarly described policing as a craft, recognising the problems of oversight of officers' use of discretion beyond the ready scrutiny of supervisors and of the law. However, he saw professionalisation as a flawed project without a realignment of policing "so that police 'professionalization' rests on the values of a democratic legal order, rather than on technological proficiency" (p. 239). On this front, his prognosis was a gloomy one. Martin (1995), commenting on policing in Canada, recognises the craft nature of policing but, much like Bittner, suggests that professionalisation is the future. Crank (1990) identifies a similar gradual trajectory in the US, and Green and Gates (2014) also find it in Australia.

In contrast, Wilson (1968) rejects the professional-bureaucrat dichotomy:

> The patrolman is neither a bureaucrat nor a professional, but a member of a craft. As with most crafts, his has no body of generalized, written knowledge nor a set of detailed prescriptions as to how to behave – it has, in short, neither theory nor rules. Learning in the craft is by apprenticeship, but on the job and not in the academy. The principal group from which the apprentice wins (or fails to win) respect are his colleagues on the job, not fellow members of a discipline or attentive supervisors. And the members of the craft, conscious of having a special skill or task, think of themselves as set apart from society, possessors of an art that can be learned only by experience, and in need of restrictions on entry into their occupation. But unlike

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> other members of a craft – carpenters, for example, or newspaperman – the police work in an apprehensive or hostile environment producing a service the value of which is not easily judged (p. 283, emphasis in original).

This distinction between profession and craft merely adds to the uncertain definitions of profession that are already evident in the debate. However, there are important ways in which Wilson's use of the term craft is intended to distinguish it from a profession. Both develop members through a process of formal education combined with practical experience, though it might be higher education for a profession and a more technical instruction for a craft. Both require an extended studentship, whether as a junior or as an apprentice, before attaining independent status as a doctor/lawyer or a journeyman. But a profession lays exclusive claim to expertise and a right to practice that expertise, neither of which is so clearly the case in a craft (Willis and Mastrofski, 2014). In particular, they do not regulate the conduct of their membership in the way that doctors and lawyers do. Wilson contrasts a craft with a narrow definition of professions to be found in the classic sociological approaches (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Parsons, 1951; Tawney, 1921) that emphasise trust, competence and discretion as hallmarks. He asserts:

> The police are not in any of these senses professionals. They acquire more of their knowledge and skill on the job, not in separate academies; they are emphatically subject to the authority of their superiors; they have no serious professional society, only a union-like bargaining agent; and they do not produce, in systematic written form, new knowledge about their craft (p. 30).

In contrast to this discussion in North America, debates about of professionalisation have been largely muted in the UK. Indeed, the topic scarcely appears in similar works (e.g. Banton, 1964; Fielding, 1988; Loftus, 2009). That is, until now (Holdaway, 2015; Marshall, 2015; Williams, 2015). While they form part of a wider programme for change, the suggestion that police officers should have or should gain a higher education degree award of some variety has provoked debate. Marshall (2015) suggests that the nature of the job has changed significantly, and he notes cybercrime as an example. But he has also confused the development of skills with learning in higher education institutions and with professionalism. As such, he reflects some of those differences about the meaning of professionalism to be found in academic debates. But the suggestion that policing has significantly changed is the theme to which we will begin to turn in this paper, drawing upon the contrasting idea of policing as a craft by way of contrast.

Our evidence

We draw on an extended ethnographic study of the use of discretion by uniformed officers in one police force. Originally focussed on the use of powers to stop and search citizens, powers that remain controversial, the research has sought to place the use of such powers in the broader context of the ways in which officers understand their roles. We cannot understand one action in isolation from the context of the team, shift or neighbourhood in which it occurs. To understand those actions, we have observed uniformed officers during the course of their duties, whether in emergency response, neighbourhood, traffic or territorial support roles. In doing this, we follow in a long tradition of ethnographic work with the police (Banton, 1964; Bittner, 1967a, b; Skolnick, 1967; van Maanen, 1978; Fielding, 1988; Martin, 1995; Loftus, 2009). And at the same time, we encounter many of the methodological hurdles and concerns encountered by our forebears.

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Our access to the force was at their request. Community organisations were raising concerns about the disproportionate use of powers against black and other minority communities. We were approached to undertake observations in order to understand how officers were using their powers and their wider discretion. While this formal access was readily agreed, individual officers were to be volunteers, fully informed about the nature of our research interests. This has meant that officers have been slow in coming forward and that those who have will be atypical, perhaps more confident in their own competence or eager to please their supervisors by participating. To date, we have observed 52 officers over more than 120 shifts, some for just one, others for eight or more. However, in the course of observations, we observe a larger number of other officers in the same shift or during the course of an incident and, increasingly, we are able to recruit volunteers through our encounters with such officers.

A key concern for us has been anonymity. We have assured officers throughout that we will use fictional names and in discussing any incident, we will ensure that we include nothing that might identify a time/date, a station or anything else that might allow for identification. Partly as a consequence of our keen attention to anonymity, we have not reported on our fieldwork for the first two years. But this delay also reflects the need to be confident that our observations have some value. Anyone observing public servants using discretion will know that each decision and case could be handled differently by different officers (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000, 2003). We have found this to be particularly evident among police officers (and in one sense, this is one of the concerns that lies behind efforts to professionalise by introducing "scientific" evidence into thinking about actions). We will never come to an end point at which we "know" how officers use discretion. But we have begun to reach a point at which we believe we can talk to officers about what they do in ways that they recognise and make sense for them. In establishing the value of this work, we have discussed the observations reported here with officers of all ranks and have found some sense of confidence from their responses.

In the following sections, we reflect on the nature of the job that officers perform. It would be trite to note that much of what they do is unrelated to crime (that has been noted in so many of the ethnographic studies we have referred to above), but that is one aspect of our observations. Here, we are concerned with what it is uniformed officers do and what it is they need to master in order to perform that role effectively (Fielding, 1988; van Maanen, 1978). If professionalisation and credentialism is to have value, what is it that officers need to know and to learn in order to be competent to practice, to be expert?

From apprentice to journeyman

We have noted above that, as is the case for many public servants exercising discretion, different officers might approach the same situation and read and respond to it very differently. However, it is not just a matter of knowledge, of learning, of personality or of character, though these all have their place in making sense of the many ways in which officers respond. Experience, length of time in the job – that particular job – also matters a great deal. Observing officers learning, whether as fresh recruits or on transferring to a new role, reveals something of what it is to be and to become an officer in that role. Learning is a day-to-day part of the role of a uniformed police constable. It comes in different forms. In the locker room and around the kitchen, there are stories of recent shifts, of people arrested and of difficult cases encountered (Waddington, 1999; van Hulst, 2013). There are YouTube clips of officers, posted by the public who have filmed them, variously humiliated or caught out and made the object of public ridicule, and sometimes made the subject of team discussions of the "how would you

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have handled that?" variety. There are computer packages on everything from reforms to the anti-social behaviour powers available to officers to the proper use of equipment. There are courses, attachments and other opportunities to learn away from the day job. But, for all this, at the core there is something applied, performed, even physical, about being a police officer that is learnt only by doing.

By physical, we do not mean confrontational or aggressive. What we mean is well illustrated by observing officers unsure of their ground (and of their legal grounds in the case of the powers to stop and search or to attest). A probationer, Angie, just liberated from her period under a tutor constable, is expected to complete a portfolio that includes evidence of competence in the conduct of key aspects of the role. She is expected to take statements, to issue tickets for traffic offences to conduct searches and to arrest someone. Clearly, these tasks are fulfilled only as appropriate opportunities arise, but they are there, in the back of her mind. Is this an opportunity to demonstrate some key competence? On a warm autumn evening, in the company of an experienced male officer, Spencer, she encounters three young men and a woman in a car parked in an alley behind shops. One man, standing alone outside the car, clearly throws away a cigarette or something similar as he sees the marked police car approaching. While the male officer controls the scene, placing the smoker in the back of the police car and fending off the questions of the mother of another of the males, Angie conducts a search of the ground and finds the stub of a spliff still smouldering. Asked who it belongs to, all four pretend ignorance. Angie then begins to search all four and the car. She is aware that this is a safe context, made safe by her colleague, but she starts nervously and unsure of herself. "Go on!" encourages Spencer. And so she does, gaining in confidence as she works methodically and slowly, finding only evidence of the one spliff and other indications of cannabis use. Back at the station, she approaches the paperwork with the same slow methodical thoroughness, taking more than 30 minutes to process the first search, but less than ten for the last.

Knowing what is to be done, the law, the procedures, is as nothing to the experience of doing. Face-to-face with individuals, expressly "detaining them for the purposes of a search", taking clothing, patting them down and taking their details. This is no longer a role-play. This is a young male, about your own age, bigger and unhappy. How do you manage that anger? How do you dissipate that tension? Not some mock exercise with a fellow trainee or a willing volunteer member of the public, but someone who does not want to cooperate. That comes with time, watching your more experienced colleagues, learning from mistakes and learning what works in particular contexts. At the core, though, is the completion of the task regardless, in the face of whatever you confront. Knowing what has to be done, and doing it more and more quickly, more and more automatically.

But it is also always different. On another occasion, two experienced male officers, Billy and Timothy, tasked with an anti-burglary patrol of a community, stop a male shortly before 11 a.m. They see a middle-aged man with a complexion as grey as his tracksuit. He is walking rapidly in the opposite direction. Billy spins the unmarked car around, winds down the window and tries to have a chat. The male makes to walk on, wanting nothing to do with them. He says he has had a shit day already, just back from seeing his doctor and getting his medication. He waives a small bag from a pharmacist. He is angry and walks away. Billy pulls the car up, gets out and stops him. "Don't eyeball me! We are going to have to search you now!" Timothy has put on his body camera to capture it all, but it quickly becomes clear that the man has mental health issues. He reacts to every effort to calm him down. Timothy tries and the guy just reacts: "don't tell me to calm down!" He says he has just been to his psychologist and he needs his medication.

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Again, he waives his paper bag from the pharmacists. Billy is now being as calm as he can be, certain that there is nothing in this stop now. The man does not want a copy of his stop form. Then he turns round. Yes, he wants the form. Then he does not want to wait for it. But he does. He does not want to be on camera, so turns away. Now he wants to get away to take his tablets. He is a jumpy, nervous and aggressive wreck. "Wind your neck in" does not help any. "I can't. I'm on edge". Timothy tries to calm things again, but it only aggravates the man further. "I need to go. I am no good for any of us right now". He is shaking violently. He heads off with his stop form. Later in the shift, Billy thinks about this stop, stroking and scratching his head as he ponders what he might have done differently, knowing he did not handle it as well as he might.

This learning, of theory but also of practice, and, by practicing, gaining competence does echo some common characteristics of professions. We can recognise the learning of, for example, a doctor, taught to apply dressings or stitches, to perform simple procedures competently before going on to more complex ones. But these are also the patterns of learning we find in apprenticeships. And while science or evidence might inform the actions of the officers, science and evidence are largely silent about the many forms and directions that encounters on the street can take (Willis and Mastrofski, 2014). Learning on the street from personal experience and from colleagues dominates (van Maanen, 1978). And this learning is reinforced by reflecting on that experience with colleagues or in the canteen later.

Always repetition

And each time a new role is encountered, we observe the same process, the same learning. An experienced officer, Roger, on attachment joins colleagues in traffic for a short period. He wants to learn what they do. Placed under the wing of Stanley, a seasoned Traffic Officer, he struggles to learn. The shift is spent checking lorries. Are they compliant, in good order and fit for the road? Crucially, are the drivers fit to drive? Tacho readers are now no longer paper disks with strange lie-detector like squiggles on them. Each driver has a card (like a bank card) that, when read on a machine carried by trained traffic officers, reveals their driving patterns over the previous month. Analysing these reveals the hours of driving and the periods of intervening rest. But interpretation is not easy. The readers show long periods of driving and numerous shorter periods interspersed by breaks. However, drivers may exceed the normal limits up to three times in a period between weekly rests. So, identifying the weekly rests is the starting point of any scrutiny. Some of the shorter drives might be allowed without being deemed to interrupt a period of rest if they are driving on and off a ferry, for example. And broken periods of rest are permitted in some combinations, though not others.

Roger is struggling to read and to calculate. Shown how, he is then told that the driver he has been scrutinising has not had enough rest. He must be fined £100 before he can drive further. Roger is now very nervous, reluctant to leave the vehicle. He is not sure of the calculation, is unable to answer a challenge from the driver and is very uncomfortable fining him without being sure of himself. He looks at the researcher seated alongside him. He is no better informed. The officer waits for Stanley to go through the grounds again. But Stanley is busy. He has another lorry and is looking at the Tacho reader. But he does so with such speed that it is as if he were scanning a barcode. He focussed on one day out of the past month. He sized up the readings and calculated the fine. It took him perhaps five seconds.

Talking later about how he learnt to do this, Stanley told of a course. It is tough, a pass-fail course. He did it some years ago, when the Tacho readers were using

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the paper disks. He much preferred them. You could tell when they had been tampered with, but he was less sure of the electronic readers. While on the course, he had revised every night. On return to the force, he took the Tacho reader out every day and used it as much as he could until he can now do it without thinking. He has since learnt more than the course could ever tell by taking cases to court and having the readings challenged and discussed in detail. He exhibits his knowledge with a display of the ins and outs of exemptions and European regulations.

This mode of learning, applying oneself deliberately to a task until it becomes second nature, embodied, is found in other core aspects of the job of uniformed officers. Anyone who observes officers for any length of time will be struck by their capacity to recognise people, to put names to familiar faces and to remember roads and houses. But even more impressive is the ability to remember cars and their registration plates. Speaking to Callum, an experienced officer assigned to proactive duties (i.e. he does not respond to calls but is tasked to seek out priority crimes and criminals), he talked of deliberately developing his memory skills. Much like a taxi driver learning the knowledge, he challenged himself to remember the names, licence plates, the model and colours of cars. Now, he does not notice he has acquired this ability until a researcher remarks upon it.

But as officers become more experienced, they take on different roles. Each new role brings new forms of encounters with the public. The knowledge involved, the learning required, is not necessarily more complicated or advanced. But each new role entails a physical learning. In the second instance, it is the ability to scan the readings and to isolate the day that looks wrong. Practice makes this second nature to Stanley. Unsure of his ground, Roger is as uncertain and tentative as Angie was in first conducting her searches. He looked to Stanley to reassure him and to be there to back him up. Talking to officers, this experience of uncertainty, a lack of confidence, is one they all recognise. And uncertainty is something we can see in those YouTube clips of officers being taunted or bullied by the public. Knowing he has to fine a driver, but unable to explain the reasons in a clear and categorical manner, Roger became nervous and hesitant, even vulnerable. In contrast, officers confident of their grounds reveal something further about what it is to be a police officer.

Craft

Over two days in December 2014, one researcher observed two neighbourhood officers, Thomas and Louise. The first observation is of a day shift, the second is a late shift. This is not the first observation of these two officers. The two days are dominated by mental health issues – in a way that feels artificial, as if scripted for a police drama (though we would note that this becomes a common impression we gain from different shifts). They open with the arrest of a woman who has repeatedly harassed a senior officer. She is a handful when drunk but is in a cooperative mood at 10 a.m. While she is processed in custody, Louise sits down at a computer. She has been reminded that she needs to complete an on-line training package on mental health. She takes a quiet moment to pick up the training where she last left it. On screen, the researcher can see film clips of an agitated man in a park. The screen then displays questions, prompting officers to select choices and outlining the most appropriate in the circumstances. She breaks off as the woman's solicitor arrives and the case progresses to interview, picking the training up again later that day.

Three days later, on the late shift, Louise is still doing the training package. It is nearly two hours long but allows her to do it in these small bursts and always picking up exactly where she last left it. The on-screen text and voiceover are discussing depression, listing symptoms that, she jokes, are evident in everyone in the community

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she is policing. Indeed, they are quite prevalent in the police station. Other officers are commenting and joking, though not about the community, more about the training. Every situation seems to lead to the inevitable use of powers to detain people under the Mental Health Act! The shift is very Q (never say "quiet") and so officers talk and exchange stories, joke and relax a little. But in the background, Louise is still completing the training package. She is the last and the sergeant is on at her about it.

She finishes the training and, almost immediately, Thomas and Louise are called upon to assist the response crews. They are overstretched as Christmas approaches and family tensions erupt across the force. The two officers are to check on a woman. Her sister has reported that she is suicidal and she has a child. Thomas and Louise are joined by Trevor, a Police Community Support Officer, and drive swiftly to the house, one of many similar semi-detached properties in an estate that, on a map, is laid out in circular patterns. The woman opens the door to an untidy but clean and Spartan home. It is warm and a young boy, may be nine months old, is on a rug in the front room. She is expecting the officers and is not upset as four people enter the small home. Louise and Trevor play with the child, cooing and laughing as they hold him. But they are also checking to see that he is healthy, responsive and unharmed. Thomas talks to the woman. She has had a major argument with her partner, the boy's father, earlier today. He has left, returning to his own place. Unsolicited, she repeats that she would never harm the child.

Thomas and Louise confer. This feels like a call for help. She has not called the police herself, but she has made sure that they were called. She is clear and cooperative, but she is also clearly in distress. They cannot leave the woman and child, but they do not want to take the child. They cannot section the woman in her own home. Can they persuade her to go to the hospital? Will the hospital even treat her? They decide to resolve the issue of the child first. Louise takes the lead, asking if there is anyone who can take care of the child? Father? Mother? The woman suggests the sister who has reported her concerns in the first place. Watching these exchanges, the researcher notes that Louise is very careful not to push. She wants the decision to be the woman's, to be one she directs and is happy with. The sister has cared for the boy before and has a daughter of her own. Some of his clothes are already there, so this is a regular arrangement. As Thomas calls through to ask for another officer to take the child, the woman then insists that it is the three officers who take him to the sister. She trusts them.

Before doing that, Thomas and Louise discuss the woman's mental health. They seek advice from the families and children team who suggest sectioning her under the Mental Health Act. "Fat lot of use that advice is!" They consider social workers, but they only come out in response to a general practitioner (GP) referral. And what are the chances of getting hold of a GP at 10 p.m.? The sergeant has no fresh ideas. They try the woman's GP practice. They try the social landlord. Nobody is answering. After some time, they get a call. An out of hours GP will come to assess her. This is almost unheard of. It feels like years since they last saw a GP on-call at night. It may be a while before they arrive but, in the meantime, another officer, Neville, is left with the woman to ensure she comes to no harm while the officers take the boy to the sister's.

Discussing the case with the researcher as they drive away, Louise explains that she was anxious that the woman be left in control as much as possible, particularly with regard to her child. Louise is a mother of two and cannot imagine the distress that having a child taken away might cause her. To do that to someone already in distress would simply aggravate the situation and have untold longer-term consequences. But throughout, the officers were ensuring that their supervision knew why they were not taking the child, why they were not using a police protection order and why they

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were not sectioning the woman under the Mental Health Act. They felt exposed, aware that the safe option was to follow these procedures. But they wanted to do the right thing, to help in this particular instance. Was there also a reluctance to go down the formal route because of the consequences – the paperwork, the justification of the use of powers, the follow-up work involved? But both remark on the fact that, at no point, did they reflect on the training package Louise had only just completed.

In responding to a call, officers receive fragments of information in advance. They begin to form a view as to what they might expect on arrival at the scene. They talk it through as they approach. The moment the door opens, they must be receptive to a very different scenario and must use their own observations to assess the situation. What does the place look like? What is the physical state, the manner of the people involved? What lies behind the call for assistance? What then are the available options? Sennett (2008) refers to three abilities that are at the core of craftsmanship:

> The first involves making a matter concrete, the second reflecting on its qualities, the third expanding its sense. The carpenter establishes the peculiar grain of a single piece of wood, looking for detail; turns the wood over and over, pondering how the pattern on the surface might reflect structure hidden underneath; decides that the grain can be brought out if he or she uses a metal solvent rather than standard wood varnish. To deploy these capabilities the brain needs to process in parallel visual, aural, tactile, and language-symbol information (p. 277).

Some of this can be learnt. Theory and science can inform our understanding, but assessing each particular example requires experience in swiftly gathering sense data, assessing its worth and evaluating its underlying meaning. Checking with colleagues, considering options and, in an institutional setting, being conscious of accountabilities and *ex-post* scrutiny shape the form that action takes in each particular circumstance.

Craft or profession?

From Banton onwards, we have long recognised the range of duties that make up the daily round of a uniformed police officer. In observing officers during the course of an extended ethnographic study of the use of discretion, we have found the same. Officers deal with missing persons, concerns for mental health, domestic violence and other welfare concerns more than they handle theft or burglary. In contrast to Marshall (2015), we would suggest that the police constable still has to be all things to all people. While cybercrime may be a growing area of concern, the bread and butter of the routine work of uniformed officers is dealing with the public in exactly the way they have dealt with them in the past (Shapland and Hobbs, 1989). And in drawing a distinction between a craft and a profession, we do not wish to engage in a definitional dispute (Evetts, 2011). Rather, we seek to understand what it is to be an officer and, from that understanding, to begin to think about how officers are recruited, trained and developed. Identifying the craft aspects of the role is not to say that policing is not or should not be a profession. It is to emphasise the practical, applied aspects of the role that are ones not to be found in degree programmes. Much as doctors must practice in order to qualify, so must police officers.

What are we then to make of calls for professionalisation and, in particular, the expectation that police officers should have academic credentials? Green and Gates (2014) suggest that austerity measures encourage police forces to examine all costs that might be deemed non-core. In this category, training and development is an obvious target. Requiring relevant undergraduate degrees from all new recruits would represent a saving, passing some of the costs of training and development to the recruits themselves. At the same time, there is an assumption, in recent calls for

professionalisation and for qualifications, that a better educated officer is, quite simply, a better officer. Such assumptions connect certificates with professional practice in a manner that is problematic. Indeed, Marshall (2015) himself confuses skills, tools and qualifications in one short statement. Yet it expresses a need for recognition in a time of uncertainty and austerity. It is suggestive of efforts to carve out an independent, autonomous realm, complete with clear standards of admission and self-regulation as a response to widespread criticism of the use and abuse of powers by officers. Rather than a process of professionalisation from below, this is a process driven from above and from outside (Evetts, 2011; Holdaway, 2015) and more about the control of discretion than the development of a competent workforce.

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