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‘It’s a profession, it isn’t a job’: Police officers’ views on the professionalisation of policing in England

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'It's a profession, it isn't a job': Police officers' views of the professionalisation of policing in England

Abstract

This article focuses on police officers' views of the professionalisation of policing in England against a backdrop of government reforms to policing via establishment of the College of Policing, evidence-based policing and a period of austerity. Police officers view professionalisation as linked to: top-down government reforms; education and recruitment; the building of an evidence-base; and the ethics of policing (Peelian principles). These elements are further entangled with new public management principles, highlighting the ways in which professionalism can be used as a technology of control to discipline workers. There are tensions between the government's top-down drive for police organisations to professionalise and officers' bottom-up views of policing as an established profession. Data is presented from qualitative interviews with 15 police officers and staff in England.

Keywords

Education / ethics / evidence-base / police / policing / professionalisation / profession / public management / qualitative

Introduction

This article explores police officers' views of the professionalisation of policing by presenting findings from 15 qualitative interviews with officers and staff from forces in England. It contributes to the sociology of professions and a growing body of

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literature on the professionalisation of policing (Lanyon 2007; Gundhus 2012; Green and Gates 2014). As Holdaway (2017) argues academics have tended to accept that the police are a profession. Policing literature has a limited (trait) conceptualisation of professionalism. Using sociological literature offers a broader palate and in doing so helps us to understand and position the complex and multiple views of police officers themselves. The article considers some examples which suggest how this might be done which help to initiate and frame more extensive future studies.

In recent years there has been increased emphasis on the professionalisation of policing in the UK, Australasia, and North America (Lanyon 2007; Neyroud 2011a; Fleming 2014). The impetus to professionalise is usually driven by demands for police reform related to crises in public confidence which lead to calls for improvements in training and recruitment, however in England this has been exacerbated by the recession (Paterson 2011). A new professionalism in policing in England focuses on improving and developing effective practice and building partnerships between higher education and police practitioners (Neyroud 2011b).

Despite the drive for professionalisation in the realm of policing and in other public sector organisations, there remains ambiguity as to what this term means (Vaidyanathan 2012) and what it means in practice for police officers. The professionalisation of policing in England is a contested and ongoing process, with tensions between top-down ideas of what policing as a profession should entail, bottom-up rank-and-file definitions and conceptualisations of policing as a developing profession, and the external drive from the state for a new professionalism in policing. The concept of police professionalism is flexible and can be used to promote self-

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interests (Lee and Punch 2004).

The article begins with an overview of the sociology of professions, the professionalisation of the police, and the English context. After outlining methods, the article presents findings including: the political drive to professionalise policing; education and recruitment; an expert body of knowledge via evidence-based policing; and ethics. These elements are entangled with new public management principles including a focus on performance and increasing efficiencies, highlighting the ways in which professionalism can also be used as a 'technology of control' (Foucault 1979) to discipline workers in the conduct of their work.

The sociology of professions

Since Parsons' (1947) early distinction between professionals and bureaucrats, professions have been regarded as particular types of occupations (Crompton 1990). The study of the professions is characterised by: professions as occupations (with a focus on professional work, labour markets and inequalities), and professions as part of social order and regulation (Adams 2015). Professionalisation involves strategies and practices by which a group make a claim for authority, expertise and status (Cant and Sharma 1995). It is the process through which occupational groups establish themselves as professions and plays a crucial role in maintaining trust or confidence in the workings of the market under the conditions of a complex modern society (Vaidyanathan 2012).

At one time 'The Professions' were an elite (Collins *et al.* 2009) including classic professions such as medicine and law, and semi-professions such as social work and

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nursing (Etzioni 1969). Early studies of professions, including the functionalist model (Merton 1982), focused on the traits or attributes which separated professionals from other workers (Collins *et al.* 2009), and defined the essence of a profession (Crompton 1990). The trait model has been critiqued for adopting the professional's own definition of themselves (Johnson 1972). However, Thursfield (2012) argues that we cannot entirely discount trait-based explanations of professions as this status is the outcome of negotiations which must draw upon existing conceptualizations. Now, most professional activity can be said to occur in the context of organizational settings including public sector services or large private sector firms (Muzio and Kirkpatrick 2011).

Abbott's (1988) sociological account of the system of professions avoids the issues raised via a trait-based approach. The analysis of professions should be extended so that experts are viewed as elements of a larger system that is shaped by inter-professional rivalry as well as by producer and client dynamics. Abbott refers to the link between a profession and its work as a jurisdiction, which can be contested by other occupations and professions, raising the central question of who has 'control of what, when and how?' (1988: 9). Occupations are successful in their quest for professional status when their members are able to successfully defend claims to esoteric knowledge in 'the face of pressures from consumers, co-producers and wider regulatory agencies' (Collins *et al.* 2009: 253). Recent studies have drawn on Abbott's (1988) framework. Faulconbridge and Muzio (2008: 8) argue that professions have undergone substantial changes in the wake of technological advances, globalization, and neo-liberal ideologies, policies and legislation. Professions become providers of value-adding, commercial services, while traditional

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ideals of professionalism are influenced by the logics of entrepreneurship and managerialism.

Studies have also highlighted how professional status is contested, negotiated and socially constructed, involving boundary-work and identity-work (Gieryn 1983; Deverell and Sharma 2000). In their study of actuaries, Collins *et al.* (2009) highlight how the quest for professional status is a contested and negotiated process. Cant and Sharma (1995) trace the changes to a group of lay homeopaths in the form of organisation, training and knowledge as they try to enhance their legitimacy. The professional project for homeopaths was full of dilemmas and sacrifices including bargaining with the government and medical professionals. Thursfield (2012) explores the construction of professionalism among trade union organisers noting a shift from a traditional conceptualization of professionalism towards a managerial professional model. Other studies of trade unions have highlighted how professionalism can foster mobilization potential in which members of a workforce engage in professionalism from below as employees defend rights they consider vital to their professional identities (Vaidyanathan 2012). Professionalism can thus be viewed as a set of boundary-setting practices (Deverell and Sharma 2000). Viewing professional boundaries as flexible allows us to acknowledge how professions attempt to rearticulate and reconstitute fields of knowledge (Fournier 2002)

Academics in the sociology of professions have also drawn on the Foucauldian notion of professionalisation as a mode of disciplinary control. This perspective on professionalism attempts to integrate the micro-politics of professionalisation with wider power relations via analysis of discourse and regimes of knowledge and power

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(Hodgson 2005). For Foucault: 'Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up' (1977: 202). Foucault views power and knowledge as two sides of the same social relations claiming that: 'power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1977: 27). Both power and knowledge operate through discourse. The 'production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse' is key for the establishment of relations of power (Foucault 1980: 93). Evetts (2006) argues that the discourse of professionalism is constructed by employers rather than employees to bring about occupational change, rationalization and to self-discipline workers. Fournier (1999) focuses on the deployment of professional discourses in occupational settings which are not traditionally associated with 'The Professions'. Here, disciplinary logic refers to the 'network of accountability within which the professions have to inscribe their practice and experience in order to establish and maintain their place in liberal government' (Fournier 1999: 288). Disciplinary logic is utilized in new organizational domains to 'profess "appropriate" work identities and conducts' through direct control (Fournier 1999: 280).

Police culture and professionalisation

Social scientific studies of policing from the 1970s assumed that the police possess a distinct a unique and distinctive occupational culture (O'Neill *et al.* 2007), identified via characteristics such as machismo, bravado, cynicism, racism, sexism, and an 'us and them' view of the world (Loftus 2009). However, viewing police as consisting of

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multiple police cultures helps to highlight the different elements of the police organization rather than presenting it as homogenous and one-dimensional (Foster 2003). Police work is typically presented as involving crime-fighting and blue-light emergency responses, in contrast to the reality in which the majority of police work involves social welfare tasks (Fielding and Innes 2006). In contrast to the pretensions of police professionalism, officers commonly portray policing as a craft in which learning comes exclusively through experience which officers intuitively possess (Bayley and Bittner 1984).

There is general acceptance in communities and by the public that the police should behave professionally (Green and Gates 2014). Kleinig describes professionalism in policing as 'a dedication to doing what one does out of a commitment to it, with a determination to do it to the best of one's ability' (1997: 45). For Birch and Herrington (2011), police officers will not act well merely because they are told to do so by their organisation's policies or codes of conduct, but will also themselves ensure they are acting professionally. Studies exploring police officers' understandings of professionalism have demonstrated officers' commitment to a service ideal and moderate support for self-regulation and calling, while noting that entry level officers display the highest professionalism (Crank 1990). The need to act professionally does not constitute a holistic approach to professionalisation. The alignment between the identified need for reform and change has been a crucial factor driving police engagement in activities which move them closer towards professional status (Green and Gates 2014).

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In his discussion of the professionalisation of American policing, Potts (1982) argues that police work is inherently different from the classic professions as they cannot claim possession of competence in a specified area (i.e. public safety) that supports a claim to professional status. Rohl (1990) identifies eight traits which assist in defining policing as a profession. These include: 1) operates as an organized body of knowledge; 2) involves a lengthy training or educational period; 3) operates so it serves its clients best; 4) operates autonomously and exercises control over members; 5) develops a community of practitioners via professional standards; 6) enforces a code of behaviour and ethics; 7) establishes uniform standards of practice; and 8) provides full professional mobility. However as noted above, the trait-based approach to professions has largely been discredited and critiques of this can be extended to the evaluation of police professionalisation via traits.

Existing literature on police professionalisation also tends to focus on education and training – cornerstones of police professionalization and modernization. Wood (2006) argues that the police can separate themselves from others via the use of research to inform tactical and strategic operations. Blakemore and Simpson (2010: 31) argue that the development of a culture of life-long learning can help policing to move away from the anti-intellectualism which is part of police thinking. This focus on higher education is reflected in the recent proliferation of university/academic-police partnerships in the UK, USA, Europe, and Australia for training, education, research collaborations and knowledge transfer activities (Goode and Lumsden 2016).

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The professionalisation of policing in England

The debate concerning police professionalisation in England is now over a century old (Rojek *et al.* 2012). The creation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 can be viewed as the beginning of modern public policing, with the idea of policing as a stable career emerging towards the end of the nineteenth century. At this time the majority of the lower ranks of policing were from skilled working-class or lower middle-class background (Lee and Punch 2004).

The 1960s witnessed a decline in public support for policing against a backdrop of various police scandals, resulting in attempts by senior officers to regain police legitimacy via improvement of the education and training of officers (Lee and Punch 2004).¹ In the late 1980s greater demand for the control of policing also took the form of government policies placing emphasis on achieving value for money by restricting staffing, encouraging civilianization quantifying effectiveness and efficiency, and attempts to curtail the powers of chief constables (Johnston 1988).² The suggestion that a better trained professional police force needed to be developed emerged again in the early 2000s (HMIC 2002), and from 2010 onwards via the various reforms and budget cuts to policing enforced by the Conservative-Liberal coalition government as a means of reducing the fiscal deficit post-2008 global recession. From 2010-11 to 2015-16 there was a 25 per cent real-terms reduction in central government funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs),³ and from March 2010 to September 2014 there was a reduction of 36,672 in police workforce personnel (excluding special constables⁴) (National Audit Office 2015). Holdaway (2017) draws our attention to highly publicized instances where police integrity has been brought into question in recent years including the Hillsborough disaster in which 96 football fans were

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unlawfully killed, the 1993 Stephen Lawrence murder investigation (which highlighted the extent of institutionalized racism within the police), and the 2012 Plebgate incident (involving a 'fracas' between constables on duty outside Downing Street and a Cabinet Minister).

In 2011 former Chief Constable Peter Neyroud published his Home Office commissioned review of police leadership and training in the UK arguing that police need to move from being a service that 'acts professionally' to becoming a 'professional service' (2011a: 11). Recommendations included: the creation of a new professional body for policing which will consolidate doctrine, guidance and meetings into distinct areas; and will own and develop a police initial qualification for entry into policing which extends to the creation of an overall professional development approach. The review also makes clear that nursing and medical education are the gold-standard for policing to follow (White and Heslop 2012), despite previous critiques of the evidence-base in these contexts and the issues related to the building of an evidence-base in policing (Lumsden and Goode 2016).

Following the Neyroud review, the Conservative-Liberal government established the College of Policing⁵ in 2012 - a professional body for policing which focuses on development of the best ways to deliver policing in an age of austerity and the utilisation of an evidence-base for policing (College of Policing 2015).⁶ As Holdaway (2017) notes the College of Policing is central to a regulatory framework which has placed government 'at a distance' from constabularies and police representative associations. Rather than being concerned with novelty, the police are 're-

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professionalising' which refers to 'periodic, authoritative, public claims that the police are a profession' (2017: 3).

Evidence-based policing (EBP) is at the heart of the College's plans towards delivering policing in an age of austerity and moving away from in-house training (Beighton *et al.* 2015). It is 'a law enforcement perspective and philosophy that implicates the use of research, evaluation, analysis, and scientific processes in law enforcement decision making' (Lum and Koper 2015: 1) and focuses on 'which practices and strategies accomplish police missions most cost-effectively' (Sherman 2013: 377). This gold-standard hierarchy of evidence (reflected in the College of Policing's adoption of the Maryland Scale) privileges randomised control trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews at the expense of mixed methods and qualitative methods (Lumsden and Goode 2016). Despite the progress made by the College since 2012, the 2016 report of the House of Commons Affairs Committee suggests that it still needs to do more to convince rank and file officers of its role in policing, and raises concerns that those in senior positions are not implementing guidance or adopting best practice. Moreover, there are questions concerning the political construction of various forms of EBP and its conceptualization and understanding by police officers and staff.

Methods

The discussion draws on data from 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with police officers and staff during a one-year secondment to police forces as part of an Enterprise Project Grant (funded via a Higher Education Innovation Fund) from 2014 to 2015. Participants included 4 women and 11 men, were aged from 20-55 years old,

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and were all from a white British ethnic background. Interviewees were identified by a Research Assistant in collaboration with a senior officer who had responsibility for external partnerships. The project focused on understandings of research and evidence-based policing. Interviewees were drawn from a group of police staff and officers who either had key roles in relation to the utilisation of research evidence or who had prior or current experience of undertaking research themselves and/or of collaborating professionally with academics. The sample included Inspectors and Chief Inspectors, analysts and staff with responsibility for Strategic Policy Development. The fact that the Senior Research Associate had a hot desk at three different police stations also led other officers and staff to volunteer to participate. The interviews initially constituted a purposive sample insofar as this involves a series of choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research (Palys 2008).

Although professionalisation was not the initial focus of the study, it emerged as a prominent theme in interview transcripts as participants reflected upon their experiences of EBP and academic research. Professionalisation was a theme which participants wanted to talk about due to the wider changes impacting on policing in England, which had been ongoing as part of a professionalisation agenda, most notably reflected in the establishment of the College of Policing two-years previously in 2012 as a professional body for policing, and the expansion of higher education courses and opportunities for training in policing (including graduate level and direct entry options). These changes in addition to the introduction of evidence-based policing were re-shaping the cultural and organizational contexts of policing and thus what it means to be a police officer.

Written consent was obtained for the interviews to be audio recorded using a digital recorder and fully transcribed by the Senior Research Assistant. Data was analysed via thematic analysis of key themes and patterns emerging from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke 2006). It also facilitated the identification of gaps and unanticipated topics, such as officers' views of professionalisation. The identities of forces, officers and staff have been anonymised and the project received full institutional ethical clearance.

'It's a profession, it isn't a job': Police officers' views of professionalisation

The political drive to professionalise policing

Respondents referred to the political impetus behind the government's attempts to reform policing in England. This professionalism from above can be viewed as a key aspect of police professionalism in the system of police regulation established in England and Wales (Holdaway 2017). For officers, policing had always been a profession and the recent features of professionalism from above implemented via the College of Policing were often viewed cynically:

I've always thought that it was a profession, a career [...] for most people it was pretty much a lifetime commitment. I find it disappointing [...] to listen to the rhetoric of politicians who genuinely believe that large proportions of the police are just buffoons wandering around in uniforms [...] (Interviewee 3, Inspector)

This officer's comment that politicians assume officers are 'buffoons in uniforms'

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sheds light on the long-held belief that policing is a professional skill with officers' gaining on the job knowledge and policing viewed as craftwork. This runs contrary and in tension to recent strategies from government and the College of Policing to further train officers and focus on higher education qualifications, while promoting an evidence-base for policing. Officers often portray policing as a craft with learning via experience possessed by officers (Bayley and Bittner 1984). Changes in the police organization can also encourage resistance from street-level police occupational culture demonstrating differences between management objectives and practitioners' views (Gundhus 2012).

This cynical attitude towards the state drive for policing to professionalise was found in the majority of interviews. It was linked to performance management measures and mechanisms which acted as 'technologies of control' (Foucault 1979) introduced by the state and (in the below example in relation to sanction detections) as a means of keeping forces in line. Professionalisation here is linked to the measurement of performance at the organisational level:

Cynically, you have to wonder what the objective is and where they're going with it [...] An awful lot is said about changing police culture in certain areas, and some of what is said doesn't really exist or is driven by politicians. As an example, all the business around sanction detections⁷ – it's not the police who introduced a performance measure that was on numbers and percentage of detections, it was government [...] (Interviewee 3, Inspector)

When asked what the main driver was behind the increased emphasis on

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professionalising the police, this officer referred to the impact of recent austerity measures. Austerity was viewed as a rationale for implementing changes to policing in order to control and manage police forces, while holding them accountable. Here, professionalisation is wrapped up with the requirement for forces to reduce demand and improve efficiencies:

Simple – one word for you – *austerity*. That's the big thing [...] you've got [...] shrinking resources, shrinking budgets and things like that, so we've got to maximise the most of what we've got [...] the College of Policing is pushing towards professionalising the way in which we do business in policing [...] (Interviewee 8, Inspector)

This reflects an attitude in policing which Green and Gates (2014: 81) draw our attention to in which 'no one likes being told what to do,' while top-down impositions are viewed as coming from those lacking expert knowledge or insight into the daily challenges of policing. These police officers may embrace changes to current practice if they determine for themselves that it is beneficial and necessary, rather than feeling that change is being imposed. The discourse of professionalism in the context of policing is employed and/or claimed by both sides – police and politics, and the subject of disagreements and consternations (Evetts 2006).

Education and recruitment

Respondents discussed their roles and responsibilities in trait-based terms including a focus on education, qualifications and recruitment. A Chief Inspector highlights how the professionalisation of policing is linked to qualifications. In the longer-term

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policing will be able to attract recruits from various sections of communities, due to its professional status perceived to be in line with the classic professions of medicine and law. Thus officers were aware of top-down attempts to legitimise policing as 'A Profession':

It's difficult for us to recruit from ethnic minority groups certainly Asian - because they don't feel the police service is professional enough. So you look at doctors, solicitors, they're one social scale or professional scale and then police - well to get into the police all you've got to do is be able to read and write [...] But you don't need to have a professional qualification [...] so is it high enough in the social scale or the professional scale? [...] if we professionalise policing [...] we raise the standard [...] (Interviewee 11, Temporary Chief Inspector)

Professionalisation is also viewed as increasing the diversity of the police workforce. Another officer was positive about the professionalisation of policing in relation to recruitment and performance, highlighting how it allows for the introduction of performance-related pay:

I'm all for it [...] we're talking about APP - authorising professional practice - and I had some involvement with APP in relation to Search whilst I was at the College of Policing [...] particularly around some of the Winsor⁸ recommendations [...] being rewarded for skills and qualifications that officers may have [...] I know there's a huge amount of resistance to it [...]

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from within this organisation [...] – from rank and file officers, [...] because it's *almost* performance-related pay [...] (Interviewee 6, Inspector)

This highlights the role of financial targets, performance monitoring and evaluations in remuneration structures and staff appraisal systems in a new form of managerialized professionalism (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008). The below officer reiterates this by suggesting it would help to have entry points for officers entering the profession:

[Use] entry points for constables [...] the vast majority, you have to have a degree, so it's probably to try and encourage people with degrees and that thirst for knowledge to come in maybe? (Interviewee 5, Temporary Inspector)

As organisations are faced with leaner budgets and governments become more demanding, we see changes being badged under auspices to professionalise the service and the learning and knowledge of workers (Evetts 2006). One means through which this is achieved is via the credentialism of employees in training and education (Collins 1979).

Building an evidence-base

Building an evidence-base via academic research and police-academic partnerships has been a key factor in the College of Policing's programme to professionalise the police service, and in addition to education, qualifications and recruitment was viewed by interviewees as directly tied to the professionalisation of policing (Gundhus 2012). The police officer below highlights the links to the Winsor Review,

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recommendations that policing should be viewed as '*a profession*' not '*a job*', and the

College's function as a hub of excellence. The Winsor Review pay review in 2013 made recommendations that the police should develop and manage a scheme to enable promising officers to progress from constable to inspector in three years (and two years for serving officers). Again, the officer makes explicit an awareness that these changes relate to attempts to *raise* policing to the same level as the 'Classic Professions' such as medicine and law:

It's all linked in with the Winsor Review and he talked about, you know, '*it is a profession, it isn't a job*'. He's now the Chief Inspector of the HMIC [...] he wants it to be like [...] lawyers and doctors are seen as a profession [...] So that's why we've got the College of Policing [...] that's meant to be the hub of excellence. (Interviewee 5, Temporary Inspector)

The 'what works' agenda is likened to the adoption of an evidence-base in professions such as medicine in the 1990s, again demonstrating that nursing and medicine are viewed as the gold standard for policing as a profession to strive towards (White and Heslop 2012).⁹ This interviewee also compared policing to the medical profession while highlighting the central role of performance measurement in determining the production of outcomes for policing. They draw attention to the need to measure successes and meet targets in policing as part of new public management principles:

That then adds to our professionalisation, when you compare us to the medical profession [...] Now some people will [...] shy away from it [...] will say, 'That's not really applicable to the police is it? We don't produce pens'. But

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we do produce outcomes that you can measure. You can measure how your part of society feels and how – and how sub-parts of that society feel – you can measure income-generation to the area, can't you? You can measure regeneration. You can measure social deprivation. (Interviewee 7, Temporary Chief Inspector)

A Chief Inspector further highlights the influence of health-care type scenarios in evidence-based practice, as assisting in the development of 'what works' for policing, and also the role of innovation. In contrast to the above officer, he highlights the need to go beyond targets:

The College have a whole raft of different ways of improving professionalisation but one of them is the relationship between academia and the police service, evidence-based practice, moving more towards health care-type scenarios, because we've had so many targets for so long and - we generally achieve most of them - but that's through a whole range of projects, initiatives, that are all self-made, self-evaluated, and doomed to success. And now we need a bit of savviness in all of that about what really works. (Interviewee 10, Chief Inspector)

Therefore, in police perceptions of professionalism there is a dichotomy between the experience-based perception of professionalism and a standardized perception of professionalism which is adopted as a technology of control with top-down constructions and definitions of professionalism filtering down from state via the College of Policing as a professional body, and the related adoption of the evidence-

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base. The latter borrows methods and strategies from science, technology, and organizational theories (Gundhus 2012) and thus aligns with the ethos behind new public management. Officers are aware of these various constructions of professionalism. They resist the claim that policing needs to go through the 'professionalisation process' *per se*, and instead view it as an existing professional occupation, particularly in relation to the ethics of policing.

Peelian principles: the ethics of policing

The police officers engaged in professionalism from below to defend rights that they viewed as central to their professional identities (Vaidyanathan 2012). This was notable in relation to their discussions of the role of ethics and Peelian principles – a historical and symbolic marker of the police's historical professional status. Peelian principles have developed a mythical quality (Emsley 2014). The principles, formulated by Charles Reith in the early twentieth century, were linked with his belief that policing in England was different from continental Europe. The nine principles were a summation of how the British police evolved and its foundations (Emsley 2014).

For the below officer, the attestation taken by officers and Peelian principles were central to policing's identity as a profession, distinct from other occupations, and with its own identity and culture. This extends to the notion of policing as an occupation with a moral purpose and grounding. However, in the below quote the officer also links the need to measure reductions of crime to policing's ethical principles:

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[Professionalisation] ties in with the attestation that we took originally, or our oath or our affirmation [...] it's actually fundamentals, it fits in with what's often referred to as Peelian principles [...] he did say [...] that the absence of crime is the true measure of policing [...] if you [...] talk about our values [...] I don't think it does any harm to have it laid out, so that there is that clarity, and that this is an expected standard. And if anything, as an individual, you should be at a higher standard [...] (Interviewee 7, Temporary Chief Inspector)

An Inspector references the revised College of Policing Code of Ethics, and the consequences of breaching this Code:

A Code of Ethics is produced – the code of ethics I would hope is the same code of ethics that was there before the Code of Ethics was produced. Certainly, breaching the code of ethics, even before the Code of Ethics, would have been a disciplinary matter [...] I didn't think we were unprofessional before [...] (Interviewee 3, Inspector)

The comment – 'I didn't think we were unprofessional before', highlights a tension in how officers view the role of the College in consolidating and developing various guidelines and strategies. For this officer, policing has always been a professional vocation as reflected in their ethical codes, and thus the new Code of Ethics is not viewed as helping to professionalise the service. It also includes a reference to esoteric knowledge particular to policing. As Abbott (1988) argues occupations are successful in their quest for professional status when their members are able to

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successfully defend claims to esoteric knowledge in 'the face of pressures from consumers, co-producers and wider regulatory agencies' (Collins *et al.* 2009: 253). However, in these interviews claims to esoteric knowledge are utilised as means of defending policing as a traditional profession, against top-down *processes* of professionalisation.

Also implicit in this excerpt is the notion that police forces should be able to deal internally with breaches of code and disciplinary matters, rather than be subjected to external political interference. This reflects the often deeply entrenched aspects of police culture which can be inward-looking. As Loftus (2009: 3) notes police culture is 'alive and well' and the resilience of characteristics of the police role mean that transformations in policing will remain incomplete. Moreover, these interviews demonstrate that the use of new public management principles in relation to drives to professionalise the service can help to 'reinforce the existing and pervasive crime control mindset' (Loftus 2009: 16) and to galvanise officers in protecting their culture and identity from the impact of external political pressures.

Discussion and conclusions

This article discussed police officers' views of police professionalisation in England and focused on the political agenda; education and recruitment; evidence-based policing; and the ethics of policing. Professionalism in the context of policing is a discourse used to promote and facilitate particular occupational changes (Evetts 2006). For Manning (1977), police professionalism is a strategy utilised by the police to defend their mandate and to build self-esteem, autonomy, solidarity and cohesiveness. Professionalism in this study was linked to a desire to influence society

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via practice (Thursfield 2012), reflecting the notion that the public expect the police to behave professionally (Green and Gates 2014). By being professional officers felt that they could gain acceptance for their work and be taken seriously by other professionals, the public and the state (Deverell and Sharma 2000).

Professionalisation entails a certain sense of belonging (Vaidyanathan 2012). Social status and privilege, linked to education, qualifications and recruitment were important aspects which helped individuals to self-identify as professionals and were also evident in the ways in which the above officers alluded to the centrality of Peelian principles. Police officers were confronted with a need to achieve status in the police organisation via education, qualifications and recruitment, the development and utilisation of evidence-based knowledge (in partnership with academics/universities), the acceptance of new public management principles (including performance management mechanisms), and in terms of the improvements they make to organizational efficiency (Thursfield 2012).

However, officers also questioned the legitimacy of the organising model and the political agenda because it challenged their view of themselves as professionals. This was the case with the police officer above who claimed to already view policing as a profession and police officers as professionals, most tellingly reflected in the statement that policing is '*a profession, it isn't a job.*' Holdaway notes that most police officers 'seem to assume that the police are already a profession and then go on to talk about professionalising the service' (2017: 3). However, as Fleming (2014) notes in relation to police professionalism in Australia there are officers who struggle with the idea of attaining professionalism. Reasons for this may include already

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viewing themselves as professional, or because they believe that attempts to obtain professional status are doomed to fail.

Some officers spoke of the need to resist managerial professionalism reflected via performance management strategies, and external attempts to drive police professionalisation. The shift from professions as based on partnership working, collegiality and informality, associated with fairly unmanaged work, to professions focused on performance, and increasing levels of managerialism, bureaucracy and commercialism, is one which is always a fragmented and contested process of change, rather than transformational and complete (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008). Therefore, the exercise of managerial coordination and organizational control is only possible when it complements professionalism (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008).

As Gundhus (2012) argues new knowledge regimes are often met with resistance, not only because of the stubbornness of police occupational culture, but because they threaten what is perceived as meaningful professional practices. Strategies of resistance which officers engaged in included implicit reference to policing as craftwork, despite them also recognising the spread of the evidence-base to policing in England (Bayley and Bittner 1984; Crank 1990). There were also ideological efforts to distinguish police work from other occupations – or to justify it as having always been a profession, entailing the use of boundary-work which included protection of autonomy over professional activities by referring to the ethics of policing and also identifying the external political drive to professionalise policing (Gieryn 1983). The above interview excerpts also indicate that despite some resistance to top-down reforms to policing, these officers felt that being labelled as a

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profession gave policing and police officers a higher status in the eyes of the public and politicians (Evetts 2006). This was seen as key to attracting future recruits to policing, and for encouraging diversity in recruitment.

It is acknowledged that these interviews only offer a brief insight into officers' views of professionalisation. Future studies would benefit by focusing on officer and staff views of professionalism at various levels (and ranks) of the organisation, socio-demographics including gender, ethnicity and intergenerational differences, and the influence of operational aspects of policing. For instance Evetts (2006) notes that one result of professionalism is an occupational identity crisis, particularly experienced by older and more experienced workers.

Policing literature has tended to have a limited trait conceptualisation of professionalism, and using sociological literature offers a broader palate, and in doing so helps us to understand and position the complex and multiple views of police officers themselves. The article considered some examples which suggest how this might be done which help to initiate and frame more extensive future studies. By noting the previously taken-for-granted discourses of professionalism in policing related to government, College of Policing, and police leader definitions of (new) professionalisation, we can contribute to social scientific studies of the professions, and demonstrate how professionalisation is an ongoing, contested, malleable and negotiated process (Fournier 2002). Tensions exist in terms of officers' views of the external state's drive for the organisation to professionalise, and their views of policing as an already established profession. Moreover, the four themes discussed in this article (the political drive to professionalise; education and recruitment; the

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evidence-base; and the ethics of policing) were enmeshed with new public management principles. This included performance, demand reduction, and increasing efficiencies in policing, which highlight how professionalism can be used as a technology of control to bring about occupational change and discipline workers, while the resilience of characteristics of the police role and culture mean that transformations in policing such as professionalisation will remain incomplete.

¹ For over 35 years officers in England and Wales were trained to a national curriculum at Police Training Centres and completed two years of an apprenticeship. From 2005 police forces have been mandated to design their own training models in alignment with local needs (White and Heslop 2012).

² The debate concerning control and accountability post 2010 included the further civilianization of police roles, for instance via the introduction of fast-track appointments at Superintendent level and above.

³ In 2010 the government changed how police forces in England and Wales were governed by introducing elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in 41 of the 43 police forces. PCCs are responsible for setting out in an annual police and crime plan the objectives they will address, allocating funds needed to achieve them, and holding police forces accountable (National Audit Office 2015).

⁴ The Special Constabulary is the UK's part-time police force consisting of volunteer members of the public who have full police powers.

⁵ Prior to the creation of the College of Policing in 2012, there was the National Police College at Bramshill, established in the post-war years as the principal staff training site for police in England and Wales.

⁶ The College is the statutory body responsible for setting standard in policing. This includes creation of a single Code of Ethics for police forces in England and Wales.

⁷ 'A sanction detection is counted as any police-recorded crime where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions included are: charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings' (HMIC date unknown).

⁸ The Winsor review is an independent review of police officer and staff remuneration and conditions, published in 2011 (and a further update in March 2015 reporting on which recommendations had been achieved). The review provided the government with recommendations on how a modern pay structure could be achieved in policing (GOV.UK 2013).

⁹ A detailed discussion of evidence-based policing is beyond the scope of this article but is discussed in detail in Lumsden and Goode (2016).

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